Malaysian Batik Sarongs: A Study of Tradition and Change

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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Volume I
Declaration

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and, ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

Rafeah Legino
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<td>Batik Malaysia Berhad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITM</td>
<td>Institute Technology Mara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KRAFTANGAN</td>
<td>Malaysian Handicraft Development Cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MARA</td>
<td>Malay for Indigenous People’s Trust Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MBHB</td>
<td>Malaysian Batik and Handicraft Berhad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PATA</td>
<td>Pacific Area Travel Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PKKM</td>
<td>Corporation for the Development of Malaysian Handicraft</td>
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<tr>
<td>PPMP</td>
<td>East Cost Batik-Makers’ Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RIDA</td>
<td>Rural and Industrial Development Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UiTM</td>
<td>University Technology MARA</td>
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<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
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<td>UPE</td>
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<td>Glossary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adab</td>
<td>A protocol of manners, behaviour and etiquette that is practiced in Malay culture, which is interrelated with goodness, modesty, morality, courtesy, decency and humanity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apit kain</td>
<td>The vertical of the two framing borders that is placed at the right and left side as a framing border of the kepala kain (the head/ the central panel) and the badan kain (the body/the larger left and right panels).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baba</td>
<td>The male Peranakan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Badan kain</td>
<td>The body or the larger panels that are located at the left and right of the batik sarong. It is divided into two by the kepala kain and the apit kain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baju kurung</td>
<td>Traditional national dress, which is a long sleeved blouse that is worn by women in Malaysia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batik Pelangi</td>
<td>Early traditional prototype of the batik process in Malaysia. Pelangi means rainbow and refers to the colourful pattern effect that is created from the tie-dye process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bumiputra</td>
<td>Literally ‘sons of the soil’, which include Malays, other ethnic groups and its indigenous people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canting/Tjanting</td>
<td>A small metal tool used as a container for melted wax for drawing a pattern on fabric.</td>
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<td>Kain sembahayang</td>
<td>A batik sarong that is worn as a woman’s prayer garment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kebaya</td>
<td>A traditional long sleeved blouse-dress worn by women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kemban</td>
<td>A batik sarong that is worn by women and tied around the upper part of the body.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kepala kain</td>
<td>The head or the central panel which is located in the middle of the batik sarong.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minangkabau</td>
<td>Malay people from West Central Sumatra in Indonesia who settled in Negeri Sembilan.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nyonya</td>
<td>The female Peranakan.</td>
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<td>Pantun</td>
<td>Malay poetry.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peranakan</td>
<td>The descendants of the Malaysian Chinese, Indians or others that have adopted much of Malay culture, including language, dress and cuisine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raja sehari</td>
<td>Bridegroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Songket</td>
<td>Woven fabric with the gold or metallic threads.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tepi kain</td>
<td>The upper and lower edges of the batik sarong that is decorated with climbing plants or flowers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tritik</td>
<td>Sewing and stitching the drawn motifs on plain fabric and then the dye-resist process is applied.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tumpal</td>
<td><em>Pucuk rebung</em> (bamboo shoots) motifs that face each other creating a mirrored repetition that is dominantly placed the <em>kepala kain</em> (the central panel).</td>
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Abstract
In Malaysia, batik sarongs were introduced from the Island of Java. The batik technique is a continuous tradition, which contributed new decorative techniques for fabric printing. Sarongs were adapted as common comfortable clothing and were suitable for the tropical climate. Malaysian batik makers began to make their own sarongs to meet the demand of the local market and over time developed their own expression of the art form. Malaysian batik was influenced by its location, history and cultural diversity. The position of batik in art and culture was interrelated to the issues of cultural development in the country. This research explores the preservation and maintenance of batik sarongs as an integral part of the textile cultural heritage. The specific focus of this study is on traditional batik sarongs produced in Malaysia with their design characteristics identified. The overview of related literature examined models of analysis of textiles – such as kimonos, shawls, saris and Javanese batik sarongs – to organize this research. These provided important interpretive tools for cataloguing the fabric designs. Documents and pictures of batik sarongs were selected from the earliest records made by Malaysian and foreign writers. A diverse range of samples of Malaysian traditional batik sarongs were viewed, photographed and catalogued. They were gathered from personal collections, museums, and galleries in Malaysia. In addition, samples of Malay batik sarongs were sourced from museums and galleries in Singapore, Jakarta and Melbourne.
In this research, I was able to draw directly on my experience with Malay traditional batik sarongs, which I have worn every day and collected over the years. A digital camera and scanner were the primary tools used in documenting the batik motifs that came from drawings, slides, photographs or actual samples. The digital images were important in the process of tracing, which was aided by the use of Adobe Illustrator© software. The drawings from the tracing were used to analyse the characteristics of design layout and motifs to show their complexity, influences and development. The photos and tracing method assisted in cataloguing batik archival data to be stored in cultural heritage organizations. These significant design influences have impacted on the clothing traditions and craft techniques in Malaysia. Moreover, the implementation of the national cultural policy identified key characteristics in Malaysian batik design, and promotes batik makers to adhere to design principles as a form of maintaining national heritage and to avoid disputes over cultural ownership. The research recommends ways to study Malaysian traditional batik sarongs and improve the conservation quality, while safeguarding the textile heritage.
Chapter 1: Introduction of the research

1.1 Introduction

The art of Malay clothing through the traditional batik sarong in Malaysia represents the continuity of tradition and change with multiple cultural resonances. The batik sarong is a lower garment that is used to cover the body from the waist to the ankles and is usually worn by Malay women. Batik sarongs were adapted as common everyday clothing for Malay people in this country, but its use also spread to the other ethnic groups in Malaysian society such as in the Chinese and Indian communities from the time the garment was introduced from the island of Java. The Malays in the states of Kelantan and Terengganu continue to produce batik sarongs that “adopted the Javanese technique and proceeded to develop a local industry” (Arney, 1987, p. 35). Their layout, motifs, ornamentation, and techniques were brought to the East Coast of Malaysia, where they were adapted to the local culture.

The specific focus of this study is on traditional batik sarongs that are produced locally in Malaysia. The term ‘traditional’ refers to the widespread techniques of batik making, in which hot wax is applied to cloth either through canting or metal-block stamping. The making of the batik sarong continues to be produced through the traditional process with wax and metal block stamps. These textile craft decoration skills are handed down from generation to generation in family businesses. In this study traditional also refers to the motifs and the design layout features that are used, that have sprung from Malaysian culture and environment, its colours and the continuous use of batik sarongs as clothing culture.

In contemporary Malaysia, the population is formed from many ethnic groups, which include Malays, Chinese, Indians and indigenous tribes. The term ‘Malay’ refers to the dominant ethnic group that had settled prior to colonisation and immigration. They still practice their customs and cultural traditions, including the application of the batik sarong. The culture of wearing the batik sarongs is not restricted to the Malay people in Malaysia, but also is worn in neighboring countries such as Indonesia, Singapore and Brunei. The batik sarong that is produced in Malaysia is referred to as Malaysian or Malay traditional batik sarong and is predominantly crafted by people of Malay origins.
In this study, the analysis of the art form is to determine how it reflects the context of Malaysian material culture and traditional values. Specific characteristics of design motifs, layout and colour will be explored in this research. Clothing is a rich form of material culture. Cultural requirements have been incorporated with art and tradition to create designs based on traditional aesthetics unique to Malaysia. In relation to contemporary Malaysian society, the traditional batik sarong designs need to be thoroughly documented from an historical perspective in order to show how the designs and motifs evolved to reveal their complexity and development. The research also explores the continuity of traditional batik techniques, which are still practiced by some batik makers in Malaysia.

The research consists of three main components. The first involves an exploration of the traditional art of the Malaysian batik sarong, comprising the history of batik, the techniques employed, and the development of the designs. A review of the relevant literature, photographs and drawings, as well as field visits to sample collections from batik makers, museums, galleries and private collections supports this investigation. The second component of this research involves an exploration of the multiple influences such as techniques, motifs and pattern layout that have impacted on traditional batik sarong composition in Malaysia. The process of analysing samples utilised tracing technology to catalogue one hundred samples of traditional batik sarongs dating from the 1950s to 2008. This tracing technology provided a valuable tool for cataloguing purposes. The third concern of my research is to suggest ways to improve the quality of conservation, cataloguing and safeguarding the heritage of textiles. This research also aims to comprehend and interpret the directions of the National Cultural Congress (1971), which confronted the diverse issues of the roots and regional identity of Malaysian arts and culture. Through my research I aim to contribute a sense of awareness and understanding of the arts and handicrafts of Malaysia. I acknowledge Lim’s (2005) approach to the way art and culture incorporate external influences. As she states “the artistic traditions of Southeast Asia are so varied, complex, and diverse that is difficult to find the underlying philosophy and the animating principles that weave them together” (p. 13). I argue in this study that links between various features from the physical environment, history and culture have been incorporated into the development of batik sarong design in Malaysia.

1 The Conference of National Cultural Congress, University Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, 16-21 August 1971.
1.2 Background to the research

Early written testimonies show that batik has had a longstanding place in the clothing culture of the Malay Archipelago. Raffles (1817), Mijer (1919) and Baker (1920) discussed how batik sarongs were common to the Javanese island and how they were also widespread in other countries including Malaysia. Batik sarongs feature in the Sejarah Melayu (or Malay Annal) (translated by Leyden, 1821), which document Malay culture and dress. They are also described in A Descriptive Dictionary of British Malaya (Dennys, 1894). In this anthology, under the term ‘dress’, a general explanation was provided about the range, type, use and styles of Malay dress, which were seen as appropriate for the hot climate of the country. It showed a variety of Malay dress, and described the variety of sarongs that are easily accepted and adapted as common comfortable clothing. The dictionary notes that women and men wear the sarong as everyday dress, either day or night, while at home or as a garment for special occasions.

Abdullah (1983) stated that the spread of the use of the batik sarong as clothing in Malaysia is linked with the regional and international trade activity that developed from the golden age of the Malay Empire of Srivijaya (7th-13th centuries) and Majapahit (1293-1500). Later, when Malacca (1402-1511) became the capital of the Malay Kingdom and a trade centre, various types of fabrics were brought from India, China, and the island of Java. There were numerous fabrics, including cotton, silk and gold thread that were used for clothing. The clothing culture of the batik sarong remained even during the period of British colonization of the Malay Peninsula (or Malaya) from 1786. It was noted by Swettenham (1910) that “the painted cotton sarong [was] so much admired by Malays” (p. 113). He noted that the Malay community usually wore the sarong, made from different types of fabric, usually cotton, decorated with batik printing technique.

I grew up noticing how varying styles of batik showed cultural differences between various groups, and noting at the same time that the batik sarong was common to all Malays. I was born and raised in the rural area of Johor, in the south of Malaysia close to Singapore, surrounded by Malay Javanese culture. Regarding my own cultural heritage, both my grandparents were from the central island of Java and migrated to Malaysia in 1939 before Independence in 1957. I remember when I was young, my family and relatives always dressed in Malay Javanese batik to attend marriage ceremonies and they looked completely different from their neighbours. It is interesting to note that I have been exposed to the
culture of wearing batik that was strongly influenced by the Malay Javanese sarong style. We usually wore batik sarongs when we were at home (as shown in Figure 1.1 and Figure 1.2).

I observed that other Malay ethnic groups had design variations in their batik sarong styles. To give some examples of variation in batik design principles I can look at my own relatives’ dress traditions. My husband’s family is Malay Minangkabau, my mother-in-law was Malay from Malacca and my father-in-law was Minangkabau from Negeri Sembilan. There are similarities and differences between the Malay Javanese and Malay Minangkabau in their dress styles. Both use sarongs that have similar patterning and motifs, however the garments worn with the sarongs are different in their traditional styles. These observations developed over time into a rich knowledge about the geographic and cultural traditions. My grandparents on both sides have extensive collections of beautiful batik sarongs that they started gathering before they married. Batik sarongs are usually obtained from relatives and friends – sometimes they are a special gift from husbands to wives, especially if the husbands are sent interstate to work. My admiration of their beautiful sarong collections raised my enthusiasm and awareness for preserving the heritage of batik sarongs.

2 The Minangkabau people, whose cultural heartland is in the mountainous region west of central Sumatra (Indonesia), established a community in Malaysia in the early fifteenth century (Ledesma et al., 2003, p. 332).
Figure 1.1: The comfortable batik sarong worn as everyday clothing. The researcher (left) in 1983 with her aunt. Photo by Rafeah Legino, 2008.
Figure 1.2: The researcher and her husband’s grandmother wearing batik sarongs while at home. Photo by Rafeah Legino, 2008.
In this research, I have drawn directly on my experience with the traditional batik sarongs, which I have used and worn when at home or when attending special functions. The research emerged from my earlier experience and practice as an academic and artist over the past twelve years. During this time I have endeavoured to provide useful cataloguing and archival data about batik to be used by cultural heritage organizations. In 1999, in the final year of my fine arts degree majoring in printmaking, I began to research batik sarongs. I visited batik makers who produced batik sarongs in Terengganu and Kelantan. I documented and collected their work to capture the breadth of design. As a part of my practical training at the Asian Art Museum, Kuala Lumpur, I visited many textile collections, selected textile collections for exhibitions, and organized and catalogued other artefacts. I initially explored the design of batik sarongs by tracing the motifs, and analysing them using the principle of pattern construction (Proctor, 1969). See for example Figure 1.3, 1.4, and 1.5 which show some samples of my printmaking works inspired by explorations of motifs used in batik sarongs. At first I experimented with shapes through the printmaking media (such as collagraph printing on paper), then I continued conducting some print tests. My research was also concerned with the subjects and styles featured in batik sarongs. I explored Malaysian designs of the kepala kain (the central panel) located in the middle of the batik sarong layout. This section often shows a variety of harmonious floral and geometric designs, and their compositions sometimes look like landscapes and sloping hills.

I started working as a lecturer in the Liberal Studies Department, University Technology MARA, in the city of Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia in 2001. I also undertook a Master of Art and Design degree by research to investigate the Malay batik sarong culture. I realized that as Malaysia was colonized by various groups of people, each conveyed their religious, cultural values and artistic influences through the medium of design. By examining batik sarong motifs I identified characteristics of Islamic design features. The silkscreens, Figures 1.6 and 1.7 are examples of how I expressed the fundamentals of Islamic design principles that were derived from batik sarong motifs and then transformed into a symmetrical arrangement. During this time I also completed research on the design of Malay traditional attire focusing on the baju kurung or Malay traditional dress.
Figure 1.3: Composition I, Collagraph, 1998. Photo and artwork by Rafeah Legino, 2008.
Figure 1.4: Bamboo shoot I, Photo silkscreen on paper, 1999. Photo and artwork by Rafeah Legino, 2008.
Figure 1.5: Bamboo shoot II, Photo silkscreen on paper, 1999.
Photo and artwork by Rafeah Legino, 2008.
Figure 1.6: Left, top and bottom: Continuity series I, Photo silkscreen on paper, 2000. Photos and artwork by Rafeah Legino, 2008.
Figure 1.7: Top: Continuity series I, and bottom Continuity series II Computer printed on paper, 2003. Photos and artwork by Rafeah Legino, 2008.
1.3 Aim
The major aim of this research was to investigate the characteristic Malaysian design elements that are represented by batik sarong motifs, patterns, colours and layout. These design features of Malaysia’s batik sarong heritage are meticulously analyzed to uncover their embedded influences, traditions, change and cultural significance.

1.4 Objectives
The objectives of the research were to:

1. Examine the history, spread and development of the batik sarongs in Malaysia.
2. Analyse and categorize the data and samples of Malaysian traditional batik sarongs with suitable classifications of style.
3. Identify the characteristics of design, motif, pattern, layout, style, colours and function in Malaysian batik sarongs.

1.5 Research questions
The research questions guiding the study, its analysis and categorization of Malay traditional batik sarongs were:

1. How was the batik sarongs culture spread to Malaysia and further developed?
2. What are the considerations for preservation and maintenance of the batik sarong design as a cultural heritage?
3. What are the features of tradition and change in Malaysian batik sarongs?
4. What are the characteristic designs (motifs, patterns, layouts, colours) that determine traditional batik sarongs as Malaysian?

1.6 Rationale
The traditional batik sarong is commonly used as part of everyday clothing in Malaysia. It is multi-functional for Malays and other ethnicities in Malaysia. The characteristics of traditional sarong design are applied through the layout, motif, pattern and colour of the sarong. These features are important in determining the functional and symbolic meaning of the designs. Sarongs are used for ceremonial and festive occasions as well as everyday clothing. Differences are identified through the printed designs on the sarongs. The symbolic use of motifs and colour are required to signify a particular social standing and if
the sarong is a gift, their incorporation in the design. Meaning is also associated with religious and cultural influences, which are transmitted through the batik compositions.

Through this research on development and innovation in Malaysian batik sarong design traditions and technique, the need for extensive academic enquiry and documentation has become apparent in order to preserve the art form for the future. These sentiments were endorsed through the support and encouragement of Datin Paduka Seri Endon Mahmood, the first wife of the fifth Malaysian Prime Minister, Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, in her campaign in *Batik Guild Magazine* (2005). She said, “let us take pride in our Malaysian heritage and make the idea of a Malaysian batik industry with an international presence a reality” (p. 5). At the time of conducting my initial research on batik, controversy emerged in the field of arts and cultural management concerning Indonesia’s successful claims to be the rightful and original creator and custodian of batik at the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention of UNESCO at Abu Dhabi, in September 2009. Despite the controversy, Malaysian batik makers have continued to produce sarongs that display traditional techniques and influences, and retain a strong Malaysian aesthetic in the choice of colours and motifs.

Internationally, in relation to this declaration, some professionals discussed a range of issues about batik. After the declaration, Collins (2009) conducted a series of interviews with key players. Some of these discussions were reported in *The Telegraph* online newspaper. One of the UNESCO cultural experts stated that “the recognition of Indonesia’s cloth did not preclude other countries from claiming batik as well – just that Indonesia's government had gone to the trouble of submitting a claim” (Nagaoka, 2009, ¶ 6). Other evidence presented by Hitchcock (2009) suggested that commonly, “the batik shirt was invented as a formal non-Western shirt for men in Indonesia in the 1960s and was adopted by the new African leaders, and later on, Nelson Mandela” (Hitchcock, 2009, ¶ 9). The deputy keeper of anthropology at the Horniman Museum in London also clarified that the batik produced in Malaysia is different from the Indonesian techniques, designs and colours. The characteristics of the batik that Malaysia and Indonesia produce are different:

Indonesia produces a very fine batik, which they have been producing for centuries. Malaysia produces a printed wax-based version that they have been using for maybe a century. (Kerlogue, 2009, ¶ 12)
This is an important consideration that will be explored in this study. My research considers the origins of the technique, and how it has evolved in a Malaysian context, but does not enter into the debate of cultural ownership. In addition to this it is important to note that art and cultural management is a relatively new field of study, which has only recently been recognized as a distinct discipline and profession in Malaysia. By choosing the traditional batik sarong as a research topic I am able to link the tradition with developing art and cultural management issues in this country.

Maxwell’s (1990) documentation on the various textiles in South Asia claims that the textile arts in the region are probably influenced by various foreign cultures, which have affected their design characteristics. Consequently this research may influence the way Malaysian traditional batik sarongs are perceived as a form of traditional and cultural identity. I also hope that this research will encourage further thoughts and ideas on the subject so that more academics may pursue study in the management, preservation and development of other Malay art forms. I am aware that the particular tradition of Malay batik sarong and other objects of material culture will undergo change in the course of time due to globalisation and the way attitudes have changed towards traditional clothing culture. I anticipate that this research will help to cultivate a greater awareness of the history and traditions of batik sarongs for future generations by providing a significant source of information and illustration.

This research aims to systematically document various samples of motifs on batik sarongs. The emphasis is on sarongs that were produced in Malaysia. I have looked at how Javanese batik traditions have influenced Malaysia’s batik sarong designs and techniques. My research provides clear and unequivocal evidence that Malaysian designs differ from Javanese batik sarongs. The research has produced a comprehensive catalogue that illustrates the development of the Malaysian sarong design. The catalogue allows for a possible resurgence of interest in the art form and provides a valuable reference for cultural heritage departments, designers, and Malaysian and international academics. The challenge of preserving the heritage and traditional technique of batik for purposes of regeneration is difficult but possible. Therefore this study offers a comprehensive description of the tradition and changes of batik sarong design that have been produced by Malaysian batik makers. In this study I photographed each of the batik sarong samples to trace the motifs in an effort to preserve and record the batik design and techniques. The prominence of
Malaysian batik as everyday clothing culture is gradually being replaced by modern fashion and fabric due to globalisation. These economic, cultural and lifestyle changes in clothing trends have meant that the time and labour involved in producing a batik sarong is in competition with mass produced globally fashionable products. The first step in safeguarding the batik sarong’s continuation is to instil a sense of awareness and value in its cultural significance. Hopefully this will inspire artists and textile experts to learn traditional techniques from today’s batik makers to pass onto future generations.

Figure 1.8: Primary school students in Indonesia drawing patterns on cloth with canting. Photo purchased from UNESCO Photo Bank: 30209183, 2009.
1.7 Preliminary Definitions

The following brief definitions are useful in this study, and a more thorough discussion will be undertaken in chapter three and four of this study.

Malay - is one of the dominant ethnic groups that inhabiting and descending in Malaysia.
Malaysian - refers to all ethnic groups in Malaysia that include their heritage.
Traditional - is a continuity safeguard as cultural tradition.
Batik - a technique that is used in decorating a cloth with a wax-resist dyeing process.
Sarong - the traditional cloth lower garment that is tied at the waist and worn by men and women in the Malay Archipelago.

1.8 Thesis outline

The research is divided into two volumes: the first volume consists of six chapters. The second volume presents the catalogue of samples of batik sarongs that were documented using photographic methods and identifies various traced motifs.

In this introduction I have highlighted that the Malaysian traditional batik sarong represents the continuity of traditional textile heritage and clothing culture. This rich form of Malay material culture should be conserved for future generations. I outline the objectives of my research and provide an overview of the background rationale for my enquiry. I consider both the historical and artistic developments of Malaysia’s batik and then the cataloguing challenges that arise from documenting the diversity in the design of sarongs.

Chapter two gives an overview of the research process of investigating characteristic elements through the design analysis of the batik sarong samples from Malaysia. Related literature in comparative textile research of kimonos, shawls, saris, and Indonesian batik sarongs are reviewed as part of an interpretive analysis and a paradigm to organize my research. Further, in reviewing textile garments from different cultures and regions, this research is informed by analysis models used by textile experts. The collections of documents, pictures, photographs and traced batik samples were then organised according to various motif categories that are specified in detail in chapter five. They were catalogued according to the technique and design development of batik sarongs in Malaysia.
Chapter three explains the background of the physical, historical and cultural features of Malaysia. The discussion provides an overview of arts organizations and their interaction with batik and its development in Malaysia. The role and support of government institutions is also examined. This is followed with a discussion of how this is interrelated with the national cultural policy of Malaysia and how the government has used this as a platform to show the growth of sarong design and national identity.

Chapter four describes the definition of batik, and the origins and development of its techniques in Malaysia. The semantic origins of the words batik and sarong are provided in regards to the art form being introduced to Malaysia from Java. The evolution of batik techniques is compared against their Javanese origins. This chapter also discusses how batik sarongs are worn as part of the clothing culture in a Malaysian context.

Chapter five illustrates the different types, patterns and designs of traditional batik sarongs. I investigated how perceptions of cultural issues were interrelated along with the sarong designs that were produced by Malaysian batik makers. The symbolism of various motifs employed display religious and cultural influences. The samples were gathered from museums and personal collections and provide examples of the continuity of design and style expressed through the application of motifs. The utilisation and reconstruction of design motifs demonstrate a collective notion of national identity. Each batik sarong sample was documented by photographic and tracing methods and then compiled into the catalogue in Volume II.

Chapter six, the concluding chapter, reflects on the findings that Malaysia’s distinctive cultural policy has influenced the production of batik sarongs. The continuity of the use of the batik sarong as common clothing culture, as well as other functional decorative objects with its innovative designs, remains a traditional characteristic. Further, batik sarongs are not only used for clothing, but also for wedding gifts, souvenirs for family members, friends or delegates. The chapter highlights government support for safeguarding batik sarong techniques as a rich expression of textiles tradition. In the conclusion the rationale is to explore how batik sarongs’ cultural influences and their usage have become an iconic representation of Malaysian identity. Since the introduction of the sarong it has had an ongoing role in Malaysian cultural development and design innovation. The investigation and breakdown of key design features and symbolic motifs assisted in the thorough
classification of distinctive design aesthetics. A detailed analysis of the motifs, patterns, layout, styles and colours from the samples documented were traced and categorised to illustrate what is characteristic of Malaysia’s batik sarong tradition. The second volume comprises a catalogue of one hundred works that were collected during this study. The samples are organised by their technique and design features. In each case the sample is fully identified and the motifs highlighted through tracings.
Chapter 2: Approach and research process

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I discuss the research process of investigating characteristic elements through the design analysis of the batik sarong samples from Malaysia. I have identified how these motifs, patterns, colours and layouts have symbolic and cultural significance and have evolved from rich traditions and a variety of historical influences. The research begins with the data collection from primary and secondary sources that are associated with the traditional batik sarong design in Malaysia. This includes documents and pictures from libraries, archives and museum collections. The examination and categorization of the documents include the Malay Annals, Malay poems, Malay epics, and the literature from the colonialists who came to the Malay Peninsula, including Portuguese, Dutch and British colonial authors who lived and worked in Malaysia. Besides, the comprehensive interpretive review on batik, other textile clothing such as the kimono, shawl and sari, as well as the Javanese batik sarong, are also considered as examples of subjects that have been presented as useful research models that have given textile experts tools for building their analysis.

In this chapter, I also present the institutions that cooperated with my study, by allowing me to view and photograph their textile artefacts collections. Samples from personal collections were also obtained for this study. All the samples were documented into digital images for the pattern tracing and cataloguing. A selection of one hundred samples is included in Volume II. This documentation and cataloguing, using relevant software and contemporary resources, represents a major contribution of this research undertaking.

2.2 Review of the related literature

Research on the batik sarong in Malaysia draws heavily on the literature on batik sarongs from the island of Java. There are numerous historical descriptive accounts written as early as 1817 by Raffles in The History of Java, and subsequently extended by several authors: Mijer (1919), Baker (1920), Lewis (1924), Adam (1935), Steinmann (1958), Kafka (1959), Muehling (1967), Belfer (1972), Spee (1982), and Elliot (1984). Raffles (1817) reported on a few activities of arts and handicraft in Java that included the batik manufactures with an overview of the batik process in creating various pattern designs. He highlighted that the batik fabric was established in the Javanese community as part of their clothing culture,
and from batik cloth they made a batik sarong, which is “common to all classes in the Archipelago” (p. 96). Numerous studies have focused on the techniques and processes of traditional batik making and have drawn attention to the Javanese traditions in the batik craft (Mijer, 1919; Baker, 1920). Many researchers examined the role of pattern in Javanese batik design (Lewis, 1924; Adam, 1935). A number of studies have examined the type of batik sarong that exists in traditional clothing culture (Kafka, 1959; Belfer, 1972; Spee, 1982; Elliot, 1984). My research is concerned with Malaysian batik sarong makers’ techniques and their preferences in motif selection. The existing literature helps to establish some basic knowledge on the subject, especially in the areas of the history and the techniques. There is cultural diversity between Malaysia’s three dominant ethnic groups who accept the design, style and application of the traditional batik sarong. The combined influences provide a rich field for research on the origins and influences of other regional cultures on the development of Malaysian batik sarong design.

The previous documentation on batik sarong artefacts has helped in the management of the textile’s heritage. Each study contributed either to the similarities or differences of various areas such as the history, technique and design. In Malaysia, the traditional sarong is part of the national clothing culture, which has been adopted since the Malay empire of Malacca was colonized by the Portuguese (1511), Dutch (1641) and British (1826). Leyden (1821) translated the Malay Annals from classical Malay language – written on traditional paper in old Jawi script – into English. This text notes a variety of objects, including the sarong as part of Malay dress. In the Malay epics such as Hikayat Anggun Che Tunggal and Malay poems by Winstedt (1914), the beauty and the uses of Malay dress were described in poetic form. Marryat (1848) observed that the Malay women in Borneo wore a sarong to cover the body (as illustrated in Figure 4.14 in Chapter 4). Barbosa (1866) also noted that Malay men and women of Malacca dressed in beautiful silk and cotton cloths, made into sarongs and shirts with other accessories. Dennys (1894) distinguished the significance of the sarong. He reported that the good quality batik sarongs were Javanese and discussed the range of sarongs according to the fabrics used (which sometimes included gold thread or songket). He then related this to people’s taste and the cost of the material.
Previous research on batik has not only focussed on these two Asian countries, but has also been conducted in other countries. For example, in North America the batik technique contributed to and influenced the textile arts movement from 1893 to 1937 (Lillethum, 2002). Each country reveals distinctive tendencies in their clothing identity and also in their organisation of decorative design. This issue directly relates to the current research into batik sarong development in Malaysia. It provides a benchmark on how to safeguard traditional heritage, examined through both primary and secondary documents and images. Such documentary evidence was gathered and examined in its material cultural context as part of the analysis of the fabrics to determine the ways in which socio-cultural and historical influences have contributed to the batik sarong aesthetic.

Samples of batik sarong artefacts were selected from museums, galleries, batik makers and personal collections, which were visited, viewed and photographed. The exploration and use of the Adobe software is a vital tool for conserving and cataloguing the various design samples. Tracing techniques are used in making drawings of the layout, motif and pattern configurations of the sarongs. There were difficulties identifying the characteristics of the traditional batik sarongs of Malaysia, because Javanese sarongs have had such a strong influence on Malaysian design. There have been limited studies in Malaysia. Along with the Malay texts, there were some in Indonesian, Dutch, Japanese, German and English. Research on Malaysian traditional batik sarongs is a growing field. For the past twenty years, this subject has been developing as an ongoing field of research by both local and foreign researchers.

Amongst the earliest studies was that of Abdullah (1983), which highlights how batik spread through trade between the Malays and Javanese. In her study, she discovered that the batik sarongs made in Indonesia have been popular in Kelantan since the 1900s and this encouraged the Malays in Kelantan to start learning and making batik. This was highlighted in her fieldwork that documented the development of the batik industry in Kelantan from 1911 to the 1950s. Batik making workshops were also established in other east coast states of Malaysia such as Terengganu and Pahang. Arney’s (1987) research provides a comprehensive overview on how batik became incorporated into Malaysia’s textile culture up to its contemporary status. She discussed the expansion of both traditional designs and innovations in Malaysian patterns. Her examination of batik
samples from Terengganu and Kelantan identified the intensity of design, including the traditional characteristics and the innovation of colour, pattern and process. Foremost, she believed that Malaysian batik significantly contributed a new method in the development of textile decoration. The tradition of batik gradually became a niche industry that serves the demand of batik in Malaysia today. Mostly, batik production increased according to the needs of the consumer. Malays bought batik for everyday clothing, ceremonial occasions, and it was sold to the tourist market.

The study of the splendour of the traditional Malay batik sarong by Mohamaed (1990) included various illustrations of flowers and plant motifs and showed that they are strongly related to the Malay woodcarving style. He also argued that the features of Malay design merge with religious and cultural elements. Roojen (1993) documented the most comprehensive collection of batik design samples from the Malay world (this included Indonesian and Malaysian batik sarong samples). The study is preceded by a discussion of the background and cultural history of the Malay Archipelago, the batik design’s significance in Malay traditional dress, along with various examples showing the application of batik cloth. The analysis was categorized into the styles of classical batik, Pasisir batik, batik in Sumatra, and batik from Malaysia.

In Malaysia, batik is famous as a method, and has contributed to the ornamented fabrics developed purposely for decoration. In the late twentieth-century, batik was also chosen as a medium to promote the Malaysian identity, for example “stewardesses on Malaysia’s national airline wear a charming blue floral batik” (Leigh, 2000, p. 45). The batik cloth that was designed for Malaysia Airlines (MAS) used a combination of floral, geometric and other craft motif designs, which are distinctly Malaysian. The type of batik people wear conveys symbolic meaning and represents aspects of class, regional origins and ceremonial roles of Malaysian identity. Aziz (1990) and Shawal (1994) documented the uses of the batik sarong as everyday clothing or ceremonial. Every traditional textile culture has its own sense of heritage surrounding the development of technique, aesthetics and production across generations. The interpretative and analytical research of textiles in Asia has been largely influenced by 20th century Western academics who have gone on to influence the research of Asian born textile experts exploring their own cultural heritage.
An interpretive paradigm, which was developed through assessing the reviewed literature, also examined the different types of cloth as clothing. I began by researching models that explored the cultural heritage and production techniques of different clothing textile art forms. Research on the Japanese kimono (Dalby, 1988), the Kashmiri shawl (Irwin, 1973), the Indian sari (Shah, 2002) and the Javanese batik sarong (Raffles, 1819; Lewis, 1924; Kerlogue, 2002) were examined as models of interpretative investigations. The various structures and models of analysis have influenced the presentation of my research into Malaysian batik sarong traditions. These analytical considerations include the historical background to batik production and the design classification of artefacts as referred to in Table 2.1. One such influential approach was Dalby’s (1988) study of the kimono. She discussed the kimono’s cultural significance as the national Japanese attire for women and its iconic importance in displaying cultural identity. This important study represents “one of the richest aspects of material culture available to the anthropologist” (O’Connor, 2005, p. 42). She presented a model of design analysis, layout and features of the kimono. Dalby (1988) studied the sociology of the kimono and revealed the curiosity of Japanese clothing. Clothing changed according to the period, influences, design innovations and its functions. In studying the kimono Dalby determined how it was adapted as clothing that represented the Japanese culture. She referred specifically to the late nineteenth century modern kimono, how it reflected changes in society and how it attained its present form. She identified its importance as material culture, having been shaped through culture, history, art and fashion. Through the thorough analysis of the kimono, Dalby determined that this garment had specific themes, variations and functions depending on the period. She researched the social and aesthetic meaning and variety in kimono designs, which contributed to cataloguing Japanese dress. Through her research, Dalby has contributed to maintaining the kimono as a national costume and a cultural icon. Dalby’s research methods used were useful in exploring the batik sarong in Malaysia.

The Kashmir shawl offers a parallel example. Irwin (1973) identified that the history, techniques and process were the initial points from which to appreciate the Kashmir shawl. He also examined its style, fashion, the design characteristics and the type of decorative motifs. The shawl spread to several countries and combined with different influences. The variety of designs, for instance from France and other European countries, were introduced and produced to respond to market requirements. Hence, the contributions of a variety of
designs have developed the culture and style of the Kashmir shawl. This view is supported by Ames (1986) who argued that even after a number of centuries the Kashmir shawl was still used as a clothing accessory. The designs have shown some combination between tradition and European style as Ames emphasised: “The Kashmir shawl and its French imitation will thus be seen to represent two inseparable and major art forms of the nineteenth century” (p. 15). Jafri (2006) discovered that the Kashmiri shawl contains a vast variety of designs including the motifs, layouts, colours and techniques. Further, research into the history of the Kashmiri shawl presents an example of how a culturally symbolic item can be adopted and accepted into other cultures. The shape of the Kashmiri shawl is a rectangular or square piece of cloth and when worn as a shawl is usually placed on the shoulders, as an accessory rich in motifs (Irwin, 1973; Ames, 1986; Jafri, 2006).

The sari, which is traditionally worn by Indian women, is different in terms of shape and its decoration when compared to the other garments or dress (Shah, 2002; Maxwell, 2003). Shah (2002) studied Indian attire and determined that “the climate of a country plays a vital role at least in the nature and mode of wearing costumes” (p. 8). Hence, the costumes in India can be classified in four categories namely sari, ghagra, salwar and sarong. The most fascinating traditional dress designs for males or females in India bear influences from the Muslim and Western cultures. Indeed, Maxwell (1990) claimed that the art of textiles in South-East Asia is probably influenced by different foreign cultural influences, which have affected their design characteristics. Consequently these above mentioned authors’ research is useful in examining similar elements and factors that have impacted on the Malay traditional batik sarong as a form of traditional clothing and cultural identity. In addition, this research will hopefully inspire further questioning on the subject so that more academics are encouraged to study the management of other Malay art forms. Table 2.1 provides a summary of these developments.
Table 2.1: Review of the textile analyses, which directed the research analysis model for the Malaysian batik sarong.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject and Authors</th>
<th>Overviews of examination</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
- The function of kimono as clothing.  
- The characteristic of kimono.  
- Culture, history, art and personality through cataloguing.  
- The history and development of kimono as clothing culture.  
- The richest aspects of material culture for anthropologists.  
- Historical meaning through the analysis: social and aesthetic (contemporary kimono). | Sociological. |
| **Indian sari** Shah (2002) and Maxwell (2003). | - History and development of saris as clothing.  
- The expression of women’s creativity – can inspire anyone.  
- Beauty is emphasised through motif design.  
- Sari is practical.  
- Drape – the way in which fabric hangs and forms folds, especially when made into a garment.  
- Tradition (a long-established custom or belief, often one that has been handed down from generation to generation). | Cultural and aesthetic. |
- Discovered its style and promoted fashion.  
- The characteristic of shawls: rectangular shape with a plain edge and large semi naturalistic floral cones in the borders.  
- The decorative motifs.  
- Its influence and development: depicted in contemporary European portrait painting and costume engravings.  
- The function of shawls. | Historical and aesthetic. |
| **Javanese batik sarongs** Raffles (1817), Mijer (1919), Baker (1920), Lewis (1924), Adam (1935), Steinmann (1958), Kafka (1959), Muehling (1967), Belfer (1972), Spee (1982), Elliot (1984), and others. | - The meaning of batik and its history.  
- The history of technique and process in making batik sarong: traditional handcrafts.  
- The analysis of batik patterns and motifs: symbolism related to social status, local community, nature, history and cultural heritage.  
- The uses of batik sarong: to carry a baby, brides and marriage, as part of traditional garments.  
- Cultural influences on batik patterns and motifs: Hindu and Buddhist, Islamic, Chinese, Indian, Persian, Indo-European (colonial era) Japanese and local culture.  
- The awareness of cultural values of batik and its establishment. | Material culture. |
2.3 Archives and images

After reviewing the study of textiles and garments, the data collection for this study included written records, pictures and drawings of sarongs as supporting secondary sources. The data for the literature review was gathered from libraries, archives, museums and galleries of Kuala Lumpur, Singapore, Jakarta and Melbourne. The information was updated through the online Open Library (http://openlibrary.org/). The Online Archive (http://www.archive.org/) was useful in updating and retrieving the historical information. As identified earlier, the data was gathered from the earliest records: from the Sejarah Melayu or Malay Annals, the Pantun or Malay poems, Hikayat or Malay epics, books from the adventurers who came to the Malay Peninsula, and the Portuguese, Dutch, and British authors from the colonial eras who lived in Malaysia. Most of the images were recorded through drawing and photos. Other images were from films and slides that were then scanned. Later documentation after Malay Independence included local and foreign authors who were concerned with the Malay material culture.

A digital camera was the primary tool in documenting the various samples of batik sarongs. I photographed any appropriate events, such as ceremonial occasions that featured the use of the batik sarong. Additionally I attempted to capture the scope of clothing exhibitions through photos. Importantly, all images that were obtained in this research were transferred to the computer and edited through the Adobe Photoshop© before tracing the design with Adobe Illustrator©. In the process of editing, usually the images were modified if they lacked quality or the composition had to be cropped. This equipment and specific software are important in order to assist the process of documentation for the stages of classification, which involves comparing various samples of batik sarongs. The method was employed when visiting sites and selecting significant batik sarongs to be photographed.

2.4 Artefacts sourcing, analysis and photography

The batik sarongs are the main focus in this research. The instruments that assist in this study are, as Prosser and Schwartz (1998) stated: “both the camera and the photograph [which] are flexible tools used to collect data in various ways” (p. 122). I viewed and photographed a diverse range of batik sarongs to carry out my research. These were gathered from personal contacts such as family and friends as well as sourced from
museums, galleries, and craft institution in Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Singapore and Australia (see Appendix I and II).

In Malaysia, especially in Kuala Lumpur, I explored during my field study period from June to August 2008, batik sarong collections that dated from around the 1950s along with photos from the ethnology collections. I obtained a range of photos from the media resource unit at the National Museum (see Figure 2.1), Museum of Asian Art, Islamic Arts Museum, and Malaysian Handicraft Development Corporation. While I was researching the textile collections at National Museum Kuala Lumpur, most of the fabric collection was being moved to a new museum specifically dedicated to textiles. The National Textile Museum, in Kuala Lumpur, which officially opened in January 2010, provides the historical origins of textiles in Malaysia. I visited the textile collections at the Terengganu State Museum (see Figure 2.2) located on the east coast of Malaysia. In the Kelantan State Museum (see Figure 2.3) most of the batik sarong collection is exhibited in the handicrafts section. Generally most of the collections originate from the 1960s to 2000s. The images were gathered through their photographic department.

Malacca – which is an historic state located in the southern region of the Malay Peninsula on the Straits of Malacca – has an interesting batik collection. Malacca was colonized by Portuguese by 1511 (see Figure 2.4). Malacca’s uniqueness lies in its historic places. In 2008 Malacca was listed by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. While conducting my research I visited the Malacca Sultanate Palace Museum, where the information about the early history of Malacca was highlighted for the “city’s importance as a trading hub and centre for the dissemination of Islam” (Lenzi, 2004, p. 79). At the Malay and Islamic World Museum (see Figure 2.5) I viewed the *Pameran 50 Tahun Busana Malaysia* (The 50 years of Malaysian clothing exhibition). The exhibition showed the variety of traditional Malay clothing, which included the use of the batik sarong. There was a range of fashion exhibited from the 1920s to the 1960s.

In the state of Malacca, the *Peranakan* Heritage Museum (see Figure 2.6) is a private museum created in a two-storey house that belonged to three generations of a *Peranakan* family that was built in 1896. The *Baba* (men) and *Nyonya* (women) culture
refers to people of Chinese descent. The atmosphere in this house shows the fusion of the material cultural heritage in the Peranakan community: Chinese and European architectural design, and mix of styles of furniture, ceramics, textiles, jewellery accessories, and clothing. The Baba and Nyonya clothing highlighted the combination of design with diverse elements of Chinese, Malay and Western influences. Baba and Nyonya adopted Malay food, clothing and language, however they maintained their Buddhist traditions. The museum’s collection was significant because their batik sarong uses a unique array of motifs often featuring bouquets of flowers with a blend of Chinese and European aesthetics that they combined with the traditional Malay sarong layout. This collection contains some very early pieces dating back to the end of the 19th century. These fascinating exhibits of batik clothing culture featured sarongs, which were always worn by women with matching kebaya (top shirt or dress). The luxuriousness of the mixing of cultures shows a rich array of design motifs in their sarong collection.

I had an opportunity to meet and survey a few small shop owners that sell traditional clothing and accessories for the Baba and Nyonya (see Figure 2.7). One of them was a family business (the name of the boutique is Toko Ce’ Rose); in this boutique they sell various sarongs, batik sarongs, kebayas, shawls, accessorises and jewellery, which include batik sarongs for the Peranakan community. Most of the batik sarong designs have differing combinations of floral and fauna motifs that were combined elegantly with the motifs in the kebaya. The more complex designs signify a person’s wealth and status. Most of Peranakan’s batik is sourced from local batik makers to supply regional trade as well as domestic and international tourists.
Figure 2.1: The National Museum of Kuala Lumpur. Photo by Rafeah Legino, 2008.
Figure 2.2: The State Museum in Terengganu. Photo by Rafeah Legino, 2008.
Figure 2.3: The State Museum in Kelantan. Photos by Rafeah Legino, 2008.
Figure 2.4: The surviving gate of the A-Famosa Portuguese fort in Malacca. Photos by Rafeah Legino, 2008.
Figure 2.5: The Malay and Islamic World Museum. Photos by Rafeah Legino, 2008.
Figure 2.6: The *Baba Nyonya* Heritage Museum, Malacca. Photos by Rafeah Legino, 2008.
Figure 2.7: The Malay shops in Malacca, which sell a variety of Baba and Nyonya products. Photos by Rafeah Legino, 2008.
In Singapore, I visited the *Peranakan* Museum (see Figure 2.8), which has the most comprehensive and finest collection of *Peranakan* artefacts, including batik sarongs. The National Museum and Textile Museum in Jakarta display a variety of Indonesian fabrics, which demonstrate different techniques such as traditional weaving and batik.

I approached Malaysian batik makers to compile samples for documentation. In Malaysia, the batik makers that still produce batik sarongs are only in the states of Kelantan and Terengganu. I obtained some of the batik sarongs from the villages around the city of Kota Bahru (the state of Kelantan) and the city of Kuala Terengganu (the state of Terengganu), which are active batik sarong producers.
Figure 2.8: The *Peranakan* Museum, Singapore. Photos by Rafeah Legino, 2008.
Figure 2.9: The National Museum and Textile Museum, Jakarta. Photos by Rafeah Legino, 2008.
2.5 Motif tracing

The tracing technique for this project was used in identifying and recording the design characteristic of the batik sarong samples. For the examination and tracing process, one hundred high quality digital images were assembled for the purpose of tracing and analysis. This section provides details of the tracing method that was carried out through this study. The pen tool from the Adobe Illustrator© program allowed a variety of lines from the batik motifs to be traced. The process comprised:

1. Adobe Illustrator© software needs supporting equipment such as a scanner and printer to complete the tracing process.
2. The pen tool in Adobe Illustrator© is used for tracing pictures. Becoming proficient with Adobe Illustrator© requires practice with the pen tool for creating line art and to draw a variety of lines.
3. Figure 2.10 shows an opened page of Adobe Illustrator© icon, and then in Figure 2.11 displays the image ready to be traced. The picture is normally in the JPEG high quality resolution.

Figure 2.10: The Adobe Illustrator© Program. Photo by Rafeah Legino, 2008.
4. The image needs to be locked to prevent it from moving while tracing. The zooming tool is used on the exact area that has to be traced. By selecting the hand tool the image can be moved around by clicking, dragging or scrolling the mouse to the chosen area.

Figure 2.11: The textile picture in JPEG format. Photo by Rafeah Legino, 2008.

Figure 2.12: The tracing process. Photos by Rafeah Legino, 2008.

5. The pen tool from the Tools palette will show the line drawing according to the contour of the image (see Figure 2.12). The pen tool can be used to construct different types of lines such as straight, vertical, horizontal, diagonal or curved.
6. Circles and other basic geometric shapes are drawn using the relevant tool from the selected palette. For example in Figure 2.13 in tracing the centre of the flower, the ellipse tool is selected.

Figure 2.14: Line drawing from the tracing process. Photo by Rafeah Legino, 2008.

7. Figure 2.14 is an example of the line drawing that is created through the tracing techniques. In textile decoration, repetition is an important element of artistic design and in Illustrator; there is no difficulty in creating repetition – using the copy and paste commands, or reflect or rotation on repetition or rotation.
8. Once the tracing is completed, it is then placed with other related motifs. The tracing is stored electronically and attached with the original photograph in the electronic catalogue.

9. Captions are used to record the design features of the layout, motifs, and dimensions, the origin or name of the, also the date and the batik maker’s name if available. This data can then be referenced as a stimulus for design purposes or simply revisited as a sample of the research.

2.6 Design analysis and cataloguing
The batik sarong samples were categorised according to the technique used in making them. There were catalogued along with tracings (drawing) in Volume II. The categories are the batik sarongs made using **teritik** (see catalogue nos. 1 and 2), the batik sarongs made using wood-block (see catalogue nos. 3 to 8, and 11), the batik sarongs made using hand painted (see catalogue nos. 9 and 10), the batik sarongs made using metal-block (see catalogue nos. 12 to 70), the batik sarongs made using hand drawn (see catalogue nos. 84, 90, and 95 to 96) and the batik sarongs made using screen-printing (see catalogue nos. 71 to 83, 85 to 89, 91 to 94, and 97 to 100). The fabrics that I viewed and traced were examined for their layout, types of motif, pattern arrangement, modification of motif, and the changes over time are summarised in Table 2.2.
Table 2.2: The design analysis for the samples of the batik sarong.
**Layout** – Various motifs are arranged within the structure of the design panels, which creates specific compositional elements in the batik sarong. There are four main sections of the batik sarong in Malaysia (see Figure 2.15). These are the kepala kain (the central panel), the badan kain (the body or the larger left and right panels), the apit kain (the framing border) and the tepi kain (the upper and lower borders). The design and the continuity of the layout of the batik sarongs in Malaysia has been drawn in the layout analysis in chapter five, while the development of the design can be viewed in the catalogue in Volume II.

**Types of motif** – The hundred samples of batik sarongs indicate the range and type of motifs. The type of motifs was classified into the floral motif (composed of flowers, leaves, shoots, tendrils, fruits and stems), fauna motifs (birds and butterflies) and geometric motifs (squares, rectangles, triangles, circles and stripes). These three types of traditional motifs are used usually in patterning of design for batik sarongs in Malaysia. The use of motif is sometimes arranged either with a single type of motif or with a combination motifs. Therefore, the pattern design is expanded over time by combining several types and styles of motifs that are organised in every section of the batik sarongs. The continuing change in the motifs’ design is reflected through the classification of the one hundred samples of the batik sarongs.

**Motif arrangement** – Every sample of the batik sarong was distinguishable through its motif arrangement. There are different types of motif arrangements that are within the kepala kain (the central panel), the badan kain (the body), the apit kain (the framing border), and the tepi kain (the upper and lower borders). In addition to this, the element of repetition also contributes to the “rhythm and unity in which a motif or single element appears again and again” (Ragans, 2000, p. 461), as is displayed in the design of batik sarongs. There are several styles of repetition present in the motif arrangement for batik sarongs; for example, there are reflection or mirror repeats (see the design arrangement in the kepala kain), the half-drop, brick, ogee, diamond repeats (see the variety pattern in the badan kain) and the border repeat (this was applied for the apit kain and tepi kain).
Figure 2.15: The layout of a batik sarong that shows its segments.
Photo and drawing by Rafeah Legino, 2008.
Modifications of motif – Motifs for the batik sarong design were classified into two main designs streams, which I characterize as stylized and abstract styles of motifs. Most of the motifs that are printed onto the batik sarongs are derived from nature and combined with a geometric element. The further discussion of motifs will be continued particularly in chapter five and interlinked into the catalogue in Volume II. Chapter three introduces the cultural, geographic and historical influences that have contributed to the formation of a Malaysian batik sarong style, while chapter four explores the innovations in techniques in Malaysian batik production that produced a brighter palette with distinctly Malaysian design motifs.

2.7 Summary
Chapter two outlines the approach and research process. It builds on the work of a number of textile researchers who have informed and influenced my evidence gathering methods and analysis of the samples. The review of the related literature is supported in chapter three by contextualising Malaysia’s batik against its historical and geographical origins. The next two chapters incorporate photographic and written documentation, with chapter four presenting the historical developments of batik sarongs in Malaysia.

In this chapter the topics of archival images and the sourcing of artefacts were explained to demonstrate the methods of enquiry that were employed in gathering a large body of samples. The chapter segments into the breakdown of Malaysian batik sarong design features for analytic purposes and provides support and illustration of the later discussion of Malaysian characteristic traits in its sarong tradition. The types of motifs, how they were catalogued, the tracing tools and techniques that assisted in motif identification and classification are explained.
Chapter 3: Cultural context: Malaysia

3.1 Introduction
This chapter provides an overview of the position of batik in terms of Malaysia’s location, history and cultural diversity and discusses how this craft is interrelated with national issues of cultural development and planning. Significant cultural and historical influences have impacted on the clothing traditions and craft techniques of batik sarongs in Malaysia. Moreover, the implementation of the National Cultural Policy in 1971 has created key characteristics in Malaysian batik design, and promoted adherence to particular design principles in order to maintain the national heritage and avoid disputes over cultural ownership.

3.2 Geography
Malaysia, the capital of which is Kuala Lumpur, is situated in tropical Southeast Asia. The Federation of Malaysia consists of thirteen states and is divided into two regions: eleven states are located in Peninsular Malaysia (also known as West Malaysia): Perlis, Kedah, Penang, Perak, Selangor, Melaka, Johor, Negeri Sembilan, Pahang, Terengganu and Kelantan; and the eastern states of Sabah and Sarawak are on the Island of Borneo, between West Malaysia and East Malaysia (see Figure 3.1). The regions are separated by the South China Sea. Thailand borders the north of the country, Indonesia is to its south, separated by the Strait of Malacca, and the Philippines are to the east.

The weather in both East and West Malaysia is warm, wet and humid with an average temperature of 27°C (throughout the year). Malaysia’s tropical climate provides a lush biodiversity of flora and fauna within its jungles and highland habitats. These flourishing ecosystems are described by Ladesma and Lim (2009):

There’s an extraordinary tropical biodiversity in the Malay Peninsula and in Borneo, with over six hundred species of birds; more than two hundred kinds of mammals; many thousands of flowering plants species among them the insectivorous pitcher plant and scores of others of known medicinal value; and over one thousand species of brightly coloured butterflies. (p. 721)
Figure 3.1: Map of Malaysia Rafeah Legino. Adapted from The University of Texas at Austin, Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection. Country Maps Malaysia. http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/malaysia.html. 12/02/2012.
The colourful tropical environment in Malaysia has given inspiration to crafts people and provided them with a rich source of motif design for batik sarongs. By identifying the flora depicted in the batik design motifs it is possible to distinguish regional tendencies derived from flora selected by different batik artisans. Aside from the ornamental motif designs, which have been adapted from the tropical surroundings, the garment has long been favoured by Malays, as it is ideal for the climate.

3.3 Trade and early contacts
Malaysia’s strategic position in the Malay Archipelago linked it to major trade routes (Wallace, 1869). Malacca had a significant role in the country’s history by being a major trading centre. Importantly, Malacca was well known as being the central political and commercial base of the Malay empire (1400-1511). Situated on the sea routes, the city was able to take advantage of the trade winds brought on by the monsoons. Local products such as spices, gold and tin were exchanged for various products from the Middle East, India and China (Smith & Bastin, 1967). In referring to the type of goods traded from various countries, Hyot (1996) wrote: “Malacca’s location made it the most convenient place to receive goods like silk, camphor, and pottery from China, sugar from the Philippines, and cloves, nutmeg and sandalwood from Moluccas” (p. 19).

Trade activity based in Malacca was not only confined to China, India, the Philippines or even the Middle Eastern countries. Trading was also intertwined with other countries in the Malay Archipelago. Hooker (2003) stated that in the past “the sea routes for any of the cargoes from Eastern Indonesia and Java, and from China, Indochina and Borneo, lay through the Straits of Melaka” (p. 60). Elsewhere, Hussin (2008) argued that because of Malacca’s significant location, economic growth increased substantially. Perhaps it was the accessibility of Malacca to sea routes that contributed to the centre being overthrown by the Portuguese in 1511. The invasion was not only historically pivotal, with the Portuguese overturning all the institutions of the Malaccan Empire and controlling its trade, it also laid the foundations for other colonial powers to compete for power and resources in the region. These momentous events impacted on the development of the Malaysian textile industry.
Figure 3.2: Map redrawn by Rafeah Legino, 2012, showing the location of Malacca and its trade routes. Adapted from *Batik Fabled Cloth Java*, (p. 23), by Inger Mc-Cabe Elliott, 1984, New York: Clarkson N. Potter.
3.4 History

The strategic location of Malaysia, with its sea-routes left it wide-open for trade and foreign influences, deeply impacted on its historical trajectories (Yusof, 1980; Sodhy, 1983). A number of studies have found that from 1350 to 1511 Malacca was the centre of the traditional Malay kingdom and developed into the main trade centre in the Archipelago (Dobby, 1939; Miller, 1964; Andaya, 1982; Kennedy, 2007). Traders and settlers from India and China embraced the religions of Hinduism or Buddhism (Andaya et al., 1982; Spruit, 1995). These two main religions were established in the country during the early kingdoms of Langkasuka, Srivijaya and Majapahit. Sultan Parameswara, the ruling founder of the Malay Kingdom of Malacca, converted to Islam so he could marry a Muslim princess from Pasai, Java. This royal marriage is thought to have been a pivotal event in the introduction of Islam to the kingdom (Kennedy, 2007). Islam spread to Malacca through Indian traders from Gujerat, and Sumatran traders. Kennedy points out that in the past, the port-kingdom of Malacca was not only a trade centre but also provided “the opportunity of practising and spreading the tenets of Islam under the favourable influence of a Muslim court” (p.4). How Islam flourished in the Malay Archipelago was clearly stated by Hyot (1996): “Islam had come to South-East Asia peacefully during the thirteenth century, brought directly by Arab traders and missionaries and indirectly through Indian Muslim traders” (p. 12).

The established and ordered kingdoms and the robust trade of Malacca were seen to be beneficial to the Europeans who competed in colonising the Malay Archipelago. Miller (1964) noted:

But one must not forget that before the Portuguese came, to conquer, trade and crusade, much of the settled part of the peninsula had for a century been vassals of the first truly Malay empire which had its heart in Malacca. (p. 21)

Previous studies reported that in 1511 the Portuguese seized Malacca and held it until the Dutch conquered it in 1641 (Ryan, 1969; Andaya et al., 1982; Kennedy, 2007). By the early 1900s the British had gained control of the Malay land and named it British Malaya. During the period of British rule other countries such as Japan (1939-1945) took over the territory, as did also the Chinese Malaysian Communist Party. After many obstacles and challenges, Malaysia became independent on August 31, 1957.
3.5 The Culture of Malaysia

Malaysia is a multicultural country with a very diverse population and the society that can be categorised into the general groups of Malay, Chinese, Indian, in addition to the indigenous ethnicities. As can be seen in Figure 3.3, the photos are easily distinguished by the differences among ethnicities, even though the clothes or uniforms worn also reflect their status; the photos also show various accessories that represent Malaysian multicultural groups. The unique interaction of cultures has contributed to the present day heritage and national Malaysian cultural identity. Ryan (1972) argues that “Malaysia is a plural society and therefore has a very rich cultural heritage based on the separate traditions of the various races, which constitute Malaysian society” (p. 1).

Freedman (1960) and Andaya (1982) assert that in Malaysia, Malay culture refers to the ethnic Malay people who are generally Muslim, speak the Malay language, and practice the Malay culture and customs. Other studies have considered that a tradition or feature of Malay culture is that “the Malay people have a strong sense of community spirit and they place great emphasis on Adab or mannerisms” (Tan, 1992, p. 67). The Malaysian Government recognises a range of ethnic groups to be Malay. These include the Javanese, Bugis, Banjar, and the Minang. These people are from various regions, in addition to the indigenous or Bumiputera from East and West Malaysia. Bumiputra is a Malay term widely use in Malaysia, embracing indigenous people or orang asli (original people) of the Malay Archipelago. The orang asli (original people), live on mainland Malaysia. They make up less than one percent of the population. They are jungle dwellers and classified into nomadic, semi-nomadic and those who practise shifting cultivation. Andaya (1982) explains bumiputra is another term that refers to Malays and indigenous people and includes orang asli, as well as those who are not considered from the dominant mainstream Malay ethnic group. Before 1980, the bumiputra census consisted of up to thirty-eight different language groups in Sabah. Indigenous groups in Sarawak and Sabah, include the Iban, the Melanau, the Kadazan, the Bajau and the Murut.

Miller (1964), Ryan (1972), and Leete (1996) examined the development and foundation of Malay culture and how the customs and beliefs of the Malays were affected and influenced by three different religious and associated cultural practices. Animism was the earliest beliefs of the Malays and is still practiced by the Malay aborigines. According to Ryan (1972) “the religion [of] these original inhabitants was animist, that is, they believed
in the widespread existence of spirits which dwelt in trees, stones, animals or other objects” (p. 6). Later, Hindu, Buddhist and Islamic influences became an integral part of everyday Malay life (Miller, 1964). These beliefs have impacted on the iconography of batik sarong design.

Figure 3.3: The many faces of Malaysia represent a multicultural society with diversity in ethnic dress. Retrieved April 11, 2009 from Flickr: http://www.flickr.com/photos/anything-everything/370869690/. (Image removed due to copyright restrictions).
The relationship between Malaysia and China can be traced back to the early fifteenth century, particularly during the whole period of the Malacca Sultanate (1402-1511). The first mingling of cultures arose when merchants from China, India and Java made Malacca a trading centre. Dobby (1939) and Ryan (1972) pointed out that if the Sultan of Malacca had any threats from the Siamese, China always offered protection and proved their power. At the same time, through this link, a cultural exchange between the Malays and the Chinese occurred, for example, through the marriage of Princess Hang Li Po from China to Malacca’s Sultan Mansur Shah (reigning from 1459 to 1477). In fact, Dobby (1939) also states that during the period of European colonisation in Malacca, Chinese people were “partly linked by regular trade connections to China, partly permanent immigrants with a capacity to do manual work” (p. 467). During Malaya’s occupation by the British, Chinese and Indian immigration increased. Both groups worked as labourers with the Chinese in the tin mines and the Indians in rubber plantations. Nagata (1975) stated:

The most massive immigration of both Chinese and Indian minorities was originally stimulated by British colonial interests, which required their labour and skills exploring fully the potential mining and agricultural resources of the peninsula. (p. 118)

In fact, the small unique community of Peranakan in Malaysia is recognised as having its own distinct culture. Peranakan is a term used for the descendants of late 15th and 16th century immigrants to the Malay Archipelago during the colonial era. These Peranakan communities consist of Chinese Peranakans (Baba and Nyonya), Indian Hindu Peranakans (Chitty) and Indian Muslim and Arabic Peranakans (Jawi). Generally, the Peranakan continue their ethnic and religious origins, but have assimilated into the language and culture of the Malay people.

It should be noted the Peranakan clothing was akin to the Malay dress: kebaya either short or long, and the batik sarong. Raghavan (1977) states that:

The most common basic domestic attire of Chitty males and females is the Malay costume. The men wear the sarung, and the women the sarung kebaya. The adoption of typical Malay attire is most pronounced among the women, both young and old. (p. 453)

The uniqueness of the batik sarong culture in the Peranakan community can be seen in Figure 3.4. This group is the Peranakan Baba and Nyonya who usually live in Malacca and
Penang. In the photograph, the women are wearing the traditional Malay batik sarong as a skirt and the *kebaya* as a dress.

Figure 3.4: *Baba* and *Nyonya* communities in Malaysia.  
3.6 An overview of the arts and cultural management

The diversity of a country’s arts and culture needs prudent management if its traditions and heritage are to be preserved and maintained. Arts and cultural management is an area that needs to be continually emphasised; this entails ensuring that appropriate systems are in place to protect arts and culture whilst, at the same time, considering economic growth. A challenge in any community or country is to determine “the role cultural products play in displaying the nation to its people and the world” (Radbourne, 1996, p. 2). This underscores the importance of having skilled people managing Malaysia’s arts and cultural institutions and organisations. In Malaysia, arts management is an emerging professional field that, to date, is not as widely recognised as it is in many Western countries; there are however encouraging signs of increased support for this field.

Given the responsibility they have, arts managers should have well-honed thinking skills, be strongly conversant with business practices, and have an ability for generating creative ideas. A major task role of arts managers is to protect the creative product, which is produced either by the artist or the craftsperson. Radbourne (1996) suggests that the term “management implies power to control and change, or to accomplish” (p. 4), and entails a recognition of the importance of documenting, cataloguing, and preserving arts or artefacts in order to create a repository of rich cultural and historical heritage for any community. It is this aspect, which is particularly pertinent to the current study, which is a ‘forensic’ cataloguing project with respect to Malaysian batik. The project has been undertaken to document and catalogue the history of batik and, in particular, the batik sarong in Malaysia with the aim of preserving for posterity this important aspect of Malaysian artistic and cultural history.

In recent years, Evrard and Colbert (2000) have emphasised the importance of arts management. Even in the Western world the discipline is recognised as a relatively new field, one that needs ongoing research in relation to its many and various sub-disciplines. It encompasses the visual arts, literary arts, and performing arts (music, theatre, opera, dance and film). Each sub-discipline or area is unique and each is signified by its particular approaches to creating, perceiving, attending, presenting, and displaying; each sub-discipline, further, is associated with its own organizations and institutions, including galleries, museums and exhibition spaces in general, as well as concert halls and other performance or presentation venues. The field is undoubtedly broad and needs ongoing
research to investigate, detail, and evaluate the contributions of a wide range of agencies and individuals.

The arts are embedded in or integral to a concept of culture, and arts management has an important role to play in protecting and developing a country’s culture and artistic products. Byrnes (2003) appropriately comments, “arts organizations are learning to effectively integrate long-term strategic thinking while developing sensitivity to the changing environments that shape the beliefs and values of the entire culture” (p. 11). The American philosopher and educator, John Dewey (2003), wrote that arts organisations are generally concerned with “the management of professional non-profit or public arts and culture organizations” (Dewey, 2003, p. 1). To this we must add today the contribution of commercial enterprises. This is inherent in Chong’s (2009) suggestion that “arts management is an exciting field that allows people to combine business, artistic and organisational skills with activities that make a difference to the lives of individuals and communities” (p. 7); importantly, we also have here acknowledgement of the role of arts managers with respect to the communities they serve.

Arts and cultural management in the United States has developed well-established systems. The U.S. has “created a multi billion-dollar entertainment industry that is a mix of large professional profit and many smaller professional and non-professional non-profit fine arts businesses” (Byrnes, 2003, p. 1). Shrewd management has many benefits for government, business and society. The strategy entails advancing the field of the arts so that it has significant value. In addition, not only are arts bodies prioritising profit-making ventures in the arts, growing business, but also, and most importantly, they are conscious of the need to implement strategies concerning the future of the arts.

The literature in arts management (e.g., Radbourne & Fraser, 1996; Palmer, 1997; Roodhouse, 2006; Chong, 2009) is increasingly attesting to a belief in the field’s future potential. Further, the term ‘cultural management’ is used to “designate a wide set of practices relating to the management of cultural organizations and cultural activities for achieving a variety of aims, including production, distribution, exhibition, education, and other related activities within a variety of sectors such as the non-profit, for-profit, and public” (Devereaux, 2009a, p. 66). Devereaux (2009b), in arguing that the field is a strongly emerging one, has identified several symposia that have been held in arts and
cultural management; these have provided “an opportunity for a variety of experts in the field, which included scholars, researchers, and practitioners, to engage in focused discussion around issues of importance in the development and current state of cultural management as a field” (p. 236). Ingles (1997) has observed that “there has been a significant growth in the number of government and privately run organizations addressing the concerns of developing and promoting traditional and contemporary arts as well as preserving the cultural heritage of the region” (p. 24). In part, recent developments in the field of arts and cultural management have developed dramatically as a result of technological innovations.

Increasingly, cultural management in Malaysia is being strongly supported by different governmental bodies. As Smith (2003) has commented, “no other country exemplifies such a strong example of the practicalities of managing cultural diversity, with three ethnically distinct communities” (p. 115). Furthermore, the three main communities in Malaysia – the Malays, the Malaysian Chinese, and the Malaysian Indians – have their own cultural identity that contributes to the country’s pluralistic society. Historically, to a large extent, Malaysian culture has developed through the interaction and exchange of cultural practices by these three communities. For example, as Abdullah (1982) has said, “Malay culture has incorporated varying elements from Indian, Muslim, Indonesian, Chinese, and Thai cultures, among others” (p. 93). Smith (2003), similarly, in discussing cultural management in Malaysia, has commented how different features contributed to historical, economic, and socio-cultural development, aided by administrative and corporate bodies involved in promoting the arts. The acceptance of cultural diversity is evident when observing community participation in different religious festivals and inter-faith visits on special religious days between neighbours, colleagues and friends. At the governmental level multiculturalism is promoted by recognising religious public holidays – Hari Raya (for Muslims), Chinese New Year (for Buddhism), Deepavali (for Hinduism), and Christmas (for Christians). As Abdullah and Pedersen (2006) have said: “These holidays and other secular celebrations are vital for promoting inter-religious harmony and intercultural understanding” (p. 18).

This governmental support for intercultural understanding has promoted diversity as part of Malaysia’s identity. These socio-cultural diverse influences are embedded in the art and craft traditions, and batik is just one craft form that requires a systematic approach to
ensure its preservation. Leigh (2000) described and listed the classification of material culture in Malaysia:

Malaysia’s material culture consists of all those items that can be seen and felt. Textiles, jewellery, weapons, houses, mats, and basketware [sic] are material. On the other hand, religion, language, and kinship patterns are not material, yet they are integral parts of the culture and link with the material culture. (p. vii)

In order to preserve and sustain existing arts and culture there is a need to have formalised systems to fulfil this task. The maintenance of batik sarong clothing culture is a good example of an arts management issue. Cataloguing, collecting and researching batik for a museum’s archive and future heritage records is a collaborative process and involves documentation of the techniques and processes involved. The Unit Perancang Ekonomi (Department of Economic Planning unit) has, as a result of government initiatives and guidelines for cultural development policy, investigated how four major cities in other countries have built infrastructure to house cultural collections and events, provided arts education and training, and engaged in renovation of significant sites; this is to provide a benchmark for similar work to be undertaken in Malaysia. It is summarised in Table 3.1 below.


| Other Asian cities have recognised the importance of a vibrant arts and culture scene |
|---|---|
| Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates | Seoul, South Korea |
| • Under the Saadiyat island project, the Abu Dhabi Government established a long-term collaboration with various world-renowned institutions, such as the Louvre and Guggenheim, for the use of their brand name and loans from their collections. | • Seoul released “Vision 2015, Cultural City, Seoul” to increase the city’s competitiveness by reinventing the city landscape and developing a high quality culture. |
| • The provision of US$27 billion involves building a biennale exhibition space, arts school and arts college. | • Seoul will invest US$7.9 billion to build more performing arts theatres, increase the number of art galleries from 25 to 50, and museums from 67 to 150 by 2015. |
| Beijing, China | Singapore |
| • In Beijing, the government is investing US$289 million to renovate historical places of interest, such as the China National Museum. | • Under the Renaissance City Plan, the government set out a vision to turn Singapore into a Distinctive Global City for the Arts. |
| • In 2006, China announced that it would build 1,000 new museums across the country, such that every significant city would have a modern museum. | • Key cultural institutions such as the Singapore Art Museum and the National Museum showcase works from renowned museums, including the Vatican Museum, the Louvre and the Topkapi Palace Museum in Istanbul. |
There were significant differences in the arts and cultural strategies instigated in the four Asian countries as shown in Table 3.1. In Abu Dhabi, the project for Saadiyat Island was supported by the government, which collaborated with various world-renowned institutions, such as the Louvre and Guggenheim that allowed their trademarks to be used and also lent works from their collections. It is planned to invest US$27 billion in constructing a biennale exhibition space, an arts school and an arts college. Haupt and Binder (2007) commented on these ambitious plans:

Local artists are aware, of course, of the astronomical sums being spent on the museums on the island of Saadiyat. And they have also heard of the intentions to build up independent art collections that also include the country’s own contemporary art – which ought to be a matter of course. But so far, the country’s institutions do not seem to have made any efforts to secure important works by purchasing them. (¶ 11)

Similarly, large projects are planned for Seoul as part of Korea’s arts policy directives. The city of South Korea announced “Vision 2015, Cultural City, Seoul” a plan to transform Seoul into a culturally rich city. In this plan, the government will invest around US$7.9 billion for the 10-year project to construct performing arts theatres and increase the number of art galleries and museums by 2015. While Korea’s policy focuses on future innovations, in Beijing, the government has allocated about US$289 million to renovate historically significant sites in China. The vision also includes the building of 1000 new museums across the country. Singapore’s arts and cultural policy has outlined its mission of establishing itself as a Renaissance City and a global leader in its arts infrastructure. In working towards this goal, cultural institutions such as the Singapore Art Museum and the National Museum in Singapore will showcase works from international galleries and institutions.

These four countries offer some benchmarks or role models for Malaysia. The government’s challenge is not only to acknowledge strongly the pivotal role of culture and the arts in Malaysia, but also to provide appropriate funding and other support that will ensure the preservation of the country’s cultural heritage for the benefit and enjoyment of future generations. This entails providing support for the broad field of arts and cultural management.
3.7 The National Cultural Policy of Malaysia

National Cultural Policy issues have arisen in multicultural societies such as Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore, along with questions of who can claim to be the originators of certain similar artistic traditions. Issues around ownership of a cultural tradition often depend on the position taken by the institution in charge of classification and its anthropological interpretations. This raises the question of the link between culture and policy, which has been discussed by writers such as Miller and Yudice (2002) and McGuigan (2003). With respect to this study, policy is the system by which every cultural and social institution maintains its heritage, and safeguards its continuity. Miller and Yudice (2002) suggest that social institutions transmit policy through two main classifications: the aesthetic and the anthropological. Initially, the aesthetic is referred to as any artistic output that emerges from creative people and is judged by aesthetic criteria, as framed by the interests and practices of cultural criticism and history. Each community has its own sense of aesthetics, which is influenced by its own traditions and creative practices. An anthropological interpretation is different from an aesthetic one, because it “takes culture as a maker of how we live our lives, the sense of place and person that makes us human – neither individual nor entirely universal, but grounded by language, religion, custom, time and space” (Miller & Yudice, 2002, p. 1). The issue of national cultural identity has been made difficult in Malaysia and other countries in South East Asia that have had to struggle for independence from colonial rule. Managing and promoting artistic practices from diverse traditions across the region is not a simple matter. In defining the cultural artistic links between regions there needs to be acknowledgement of the elaborate interplay of socio historical influences. The effect of various phenomena make “the artistic traditions of Southeast Asia so varied, complex, and diverse that it is difficult to find the underlying philosophy and the animating principles that weave them together” (Lim, 2005, p. 13).

Importantly, every South East Asian nation has experienced somewhat similar cultural histories on the one hand, yet different cultural histories on the other. Cultural transformations have been caused by such factors as colonisation, war, and migration. In Malaysia, during the period of British rule, the three main ethnic groups were segregated into different working industries. This separation of different ethnic groups created obstacles for social mobility. Some groups prospered in the business sector while others felt disadvantaged, and this led to serious social discontent and inter-ethnic riots in 1969.
Malaysia’s history and cultural traditions have grown from a pluralistic society. However, the Malays in Malaysia are “differentiated from the other two major Malaysian ethnic groups, the Chinese and the Indians, by being closely associated with the religions of Islam” (Mastor, Jin & Copper, 2000, p. 96). Malaysia went through difficult times from its transition under colonial administration to the post second world war era, leading up to independence in 1957; this factor, as well as its historical and pluralistic background, have resulted in different artistic and cultural traditions. The country’s pluralistic society has produced a variety of beliefs and practices that are represented in its diverse arts. As Abdullah (1982) suggested, “The remarkable thing about Malay arts is how much they blend into the life of the people. A fine example of artistry is in the Malay art of batik” (p. 96).

As emphasised, the use of batik sarongs in Malaysia arose and became accepted as Malaysian clothing due to the trade of batik to Malaysia. Historically, cultural diversity in this region can be attributed to trade, colonisation, intermarriage and religious expansion. Bekker (1951) has commented that “the most obvious channel of cultural contact throughout Southeast Asia was trade, and we are inclined to think of the trader as a pioneer of an expanding civilization, followed in short order by the missionary and the colonial administration” (pp. 4-5). The diverse artistic traditions are explained in terms of the values of Asian culture’s “kaleidoscopic and panoramic tapestry of races, histories, languages, religions and cultures and political systems, traditions, genius and distinctiveness” (Bajunid, 2004, p. 291). In the region there exist the major religions and philosophies: Islam, Buddhism, Confucianism, Shintoism, Hinduism, and Christianity. In every region of Asia, the differences and the similarities of art and culture have inspired travellers to experience this rich history of fusion, “the attraction of heritage places fuels the lucrative tourism industry, domestically and internationally, where visiting heritage places, museums, events and cultural festivals is a major industry” (Taylor, 2004, p. 417).

As mentioned, historical events such as Malaysia gaining independence in 1957 – and later Singapore’s independence from Malaysia in 1963 – need to be taken into account when considering shifts in cultural identity and the formation of formal bodies to promote arts and cultural management. Through policy, the government has endeavoured to create a sense of national identity for all Malaysians: “in all societies, cultural forms are intimately linked to a sense of social and national identity” (Lindsay, 1995, p. 655). It cannot be
expressed too strongly that the colonial system destroyed the roots of national identity; the forced migration of different ethnic groups changed the social makeup of Malaysia, transforming it into a multicultural society. The challenge for policy makers was how to define and then how to present Malaysian cultural values through the arts.

Following the tragedy of the race riots in Kuala Lumpur on May 13, 1969, the government made serious attempts to promote cultural awareness through the formation of a cultural policy that was drafted in 1971 through the Kongres Kebudayaan Kebangsaan (National Cultural Congress). A conference was held by Prime Minister Y. A. B. Tun Haji Abdul Razak bin Hussein, and in his speech he highlighted that “the incident of May 13 gives us a good opportunity to study the conditions of society and our country fully, think carefully and consider the future direction and orientation of our multi-racial society” (Hussein, 1973, p. 5). The National Cultural Congress is an important strategy in leading a vision that emphasizes Malaysia becoming a developed nation with a balance between the spiritual and physical attributes. The three important components of Malaysia’s national cultural policy were: “The National Culture of Malaysia should be based on the indigenous culture of the people of this region; suitable and salient elements of other cultures may be accepted and made an element of national culture; and Islam is an important element in the formation of the said national culture” (Kongres Kebudayaan Kebangsaan, 1971, p. 2).

Therefore, through the Congress, Piyadasa (2003) states that:

The need for a more cohesive and unifying cultural vision for the nation was deemed necessary and the congress brought together Malaysian academics, writers, artists, architects, dramatists and musicians to work out the basis for the new, unifying ‘national’ cultural vision. (p. 84)

The setting of Malaysian cultural development within a multi-cultural society could be compared to Singapore, “moving from primary production to a diversified economy” (Yudice, 2002, p. 144). The Malaysian government also gave priority to promoting the export of small cultural industries like batik, weaving, and others. Fortunately, this initiative in arts policy valued and supported the preservation and promotion of heritage and traditional art forms. Through the implementation of the Cultural Policy in 1971, cultural programs were merged together with economic and technological planning. Although the initiative focused on cultural planning and development, the cultural policy of 1971 provided detailed guidelines for the implementation of national culture.
In contrast, Zain (1977) – who was the former director of the National Art Gallery; Director-General of Culture, Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports; and Director-General of the National Film Development Corporation – wrote a paper about cultural planning and development in Malaysia. He commented on how the three components of the National Cultural Congress were implemented. He stated, “in a multi-racial, multi-cultural society the need to have a national and a common culture for the purposes if a national unity is an extremely urgent one” (p. 53).

He was very persuasive in his discussion of how a multi-cultural policy should be implemented. He referred to common notions such as *Rukun* (principle), *Negara* (nation), and *Rukun Negara* (principle of a nation) and their significance for Malaysia. These became the guiding principles for all Malaysians. A unified cultural and national identity was developed to maintain political independence from colonising powers and in developing its own unifying sense of cultural identity. The Malay language (*Bahasa Malaysia*) became the official language of Malaysia and was seen to be a common integrative force as it had been spoken as the lingua franca for centuries amongst a diverse group of peoples numbering around 200 million people. The government also had to establish a cultural and arts administration to direct and protect Malaysia’s arts heritage. Malaysia’s economy has gradually grown due to modernisation, but the country has not forgotten its traditions in representing its national identity. It is true to say that cultural and artistic institutions in Malaysia have been strengthened and supported by policy since 1971 through funding arts institutions, research, exhibitions, promoting training and cultural production. However, Malaysia is a complex society so naturally there is still work to be done in trying to create a uniform national identity. The question of access in participation and representation of all groups is not always achieved. Certain groups have less power and influence in the process of the construction of national identity. For example women have had less opportunity in the past for higher education and career advancement. Nowadays Malaysia still has the challenge concerning its multicultural identity especially in the area of the arts. Economic growth takes priority over protecting artistic heritage and often arts funding is considered only for economic benefits such as for promoting tourism. In regards to the government’s support for batik as having its own iconic Malaysian craft tradition this will be further developed in the next segment.
3.8 The management of batik in Malaysia

In Malaysia, textiles are part of the country’s material culture and include weaving, dyeing and batik techniques. Batik technique is used in the production of traditional Malay sarongs, but also used for other fabric products such as shirts, shorts, scarves, ties, home and office accessories, other soft furnishings and also as a medium for creative art works. As an iconic craft tradition batik is one of the cultural practices that is given assistance by the government.

The government of Malaysia has continuously given support to various arts and cultural areas, including handicraft production. This is detailed in the review of the Economic Planning Unit of Malaysia, which began in 1950 with the publication of the Draft Development Plan of Malaya, and at present is expressed in the Tenth Malaysia Plan. Indeed as Leigh (2000) notes, the development of the crafts sector in Malaysia is believed to be a pathway to developing culture, crafts and historical awareness:

> The Malaysian government has sponsored craft production, not only as a way of promoting and instilling a national cultural identity, but also as a means of providing an economic livelihood for poor rural Malays. (p. 8)

Specifically, by focusing on batik development in Malaysia, the government’s legislature listed batik as an embedded “handicraft product” as clearly mentioned in the 1979 Act of the Perbadanan Kemajuan Kraftangan Malaysia (Malaysian Handicraft Development Cooperation):

> “Handicraft product” means any artistic product which is graced with cultural or traditional appeal and is the outcome of any process which is dependent solely or partly on manual skill, and includes any batik product; and “batik product” means any article, however produced, which bears a batik design on or at any part thereof. (p. 6)

The continuation of batik as a living craft and cultural artefact can be attributed to the regard in which it is held as a cultural icon by institutions and the government. The art of batik is one of the sub categories of Malaysian textile craft. A great deal of support for the batik industry has come from the government, particularly in terms of financial stimulation, promotion and encouragement. The Ministry of Culture, Arts and Heritage was assigned to head the agency for instigating any programs linked to culture, arts and safeguarding Malaysia’s national heritage. For example, during the Ninth Malaysia Plan
(2006), about RM442.4 million was located for culture, as described in detail in Table 3.2. Within the allocation “of this total, 63 per cent will be used for the preservation and conservation of cultural heritage and 37 per cent will be for the implementation of various arts and culture programmes at the state and district levels” (Ninth Malaysia Plan 2006-2010, 2006, p. 472).


<table>
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<tr>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>8MP Expenditure</th>
<th>9MP Allocation</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Culture and Arts</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cultural Centres</td>
<td>69.9</td>
<td>55.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Balai Seni Lukis Negara</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>22.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Akademi Seni Kebangsaan</td>
<td>39.7</td>
<td>20.0</td>
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<td>FINAS</td>
<td>7.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Craft</td>
<td>67.0</td>
<td>63.5</td>
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<td><strong>Heritage</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Museum</td>
<td>79.0</td>
<td>65.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Archives</td>
<td>105.1</td>
<td>113.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Historical Heritage Preservation</td>
<td>85.2</td>
<td>100.0</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>454.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>442.4</strong></td>
</tr>
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</table>
The Department of Museums in Malaysia safeguard, exhibit and preserve valuable samples of batik sarong artefacts. Such institutions that archive batik also promote the art form through events both domestically and internationally. This ensures that the tradition of batik is maintained and preserved for the future. The archival institutions provide continuity of documentation for any events and programs that involve Malaysian batik. Conserving and preserving heritage products, including the textile arts, is a priority for Malaysia:

As part of efforts to inculcate greater awareness of and appreciation for Malaysia’s rich cultural heritage, the Textile Museum will be established in 2006. The Museum will help to disseminate knowledge and information as well as promote research on *tenunan*, *songket* and *batik*, and will feature textiles from all states, which will provide a good source of information for students, researchers, academicians and craft entrepreneurs. (Ninth Malaysia Plan 2006-2010, 2006, p. 470)

The establishment of the Textile Museum preserves various fabrics that are made from different techniques, as well as the batik method, which produces traditional sarongs. It is important “to safeguard the textile heritage which is one of the most traditional industries amongst the crafts sector” (Yatim, 2006, p. 11). It is important that a textile museum, which provides essential references, should co-operate with other institutions and craftspeople engaged in any aspect of textile production. This will help ensure that the significance of textile production is supported into the future, and “will include research and development on new ways to enhance craftsmanship, as well as developing new designs and technology” (Ninth Malaysia Plan 2006-2010, 2006, pp. 470-471).

MARA (Malay for Indigenous People’s Trust Council) and KRAFTANGAN (Malaysian Handicraft Development Cooperation) are two major institutions involved in maintaining and continuing the development of batik that is produced in Malaysia (Arney, 1987; Leigh, 2000). These institutions, along with *Yayasan Budi Penyanyang* (which is involved in the promotion of Malaysian culture, arts and heritage), cooperate in preserving the tradition of batik. The development and the historical aspects of batik in Malaysia will be discussed further in chapter four.

Malaysia started to celebrate its batik heritage in 2003. In the same year, *Yayasan Budi Penyayang* launched ‘Malaysia Batik Crafted for the World’ in collaboration with the
Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism, the Ministry of Entrepreneurial Development, and the Ministry for Rural Development. The launch was followed by events such as the batik design competition, batik carnival, batik exhibition, and symposia and conferences that have all continued as part of the main agenda until now. The Gallery of Seri Hendon was opened in 2007 to invigorate the batik handicraft movement in Malaysia, giving batik designers greater opportunities to exhibit their Malaysian innovations. This gallery assists in leading and facilitating several batik collaborations that involve the batik program. For example, “many of the products available have been designed by past winners of the batik design of [the] Piala Seri Hendon [competition]” (Yunus, 2011, p. 144).

The launch of the 1Malaysia Plan in 2010 was implemented by the Prime Minister, Najib Tun Razak. At the same time, batik clothing designed by KRAFTANGAN (Malaysian Handicraft Development Cooperation) became the official dress for the event. As can be seen from Figure 3.5 (below), the pattern was designed by combining the 1Malaysia logo, Malay motifs, Chinese motifs, Indian motifs and ethnic motifs from Sabah and Sarawak (West Malaysia). This design represented harmony between the multi-races in Malaysia. This official batik dress is enforced by the Malaysian government and all government worker have to wear batik every Thursday (see Appendix III). A few of these motifs that are similar to what is used in the batik for 1Malaysia are included in the samples of batik sarongs presented in Volume II.
Figure 3.5: The Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak views models wearing batik shirts designed for the IMalaysia programme. Retrieved February 04, 2010 from http://www.utusan.com.my. (Image removed due to copyright restrictions).
3.9 Summary
This chapter links the significant aspects of Malaysia’s geography, history, and culture, which have been formative in batik’s continuity as an iconic form of traditional clothing. Historically, Malacca was recognised as a strategic trade centre in the Malay empire and with trade came innovations in techniques and designs in the craft of making batik sarongs. So even before colonisation, Malaysia had many cultures coming together through trade, its own empire’s extension, immigration and intermarriage. The global interactions with various cultures that occurred over time produced a pluralistic society. The different traditions and faiths of Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam across the Malay Archipelago have made their mark on the motifs incorporated into Malay batik sarong design.

The Portuguese and Dutch were early colonisers who were later followed by the British and the Japanese. Having continuously been under foreign rule and finally gaining independence in 1957, Malaysia strongly pursued the formation of a national identity. In order to protect Malay heritage, governmental bodies were formed. The esteemed place that batik sarongs have been given as one of the iconic art forms in Malay culture is evidenced by current National Cultural Policy. This formal protection given to batik came about as a result of multiple historical and cultural influences and as a way of preserving and differentiating Malay traditions from those of Malaysia’s neighbours. In this study the batik sarong is viewed as an integral part of Malay material culture.

This chapter also discusses the field of arts and cultural management and the particular contribution of this field for the preservation and development of a country’s cultural artworks and artefacts. This is presented in particular in relation to the Ministry of Art and Culture’s role in preserving and developing batik sarongs as mandated by the government of Malaysia. The role of the government and other institutions in textile heritage management and development is discussed within the context of cultural policy. Finally, the chapter emphasises the importance of preserving and cataloguing the rich heritage of Malaysian batik traditions.
Chapter 4: History and development

4.1 Introduction
This chapter provides clarification about the term batik and examines the history of the decoration process of its techniques. The history of batik technique is discussed in order to determine its exact origin as well as the subsequent spread of the technique as it evolved from the islands of Java to Malaysia. Classifications of traditional batik techniques are also examined along with a description of the processes of batik making adopted in Malaysia. In the second part of the chapter the sarong is defined and discussed in relation to the application development of batik design.

Batik is a medium for decorating cloth. Historically, the batik sarong became widespread and was adapted as part of Malaysian clothing. Sarongs are traditional clothing made from a variety of fabrics and worn by both men and women. In Malaysia, the states of Kelantan and Terengganu still produce batik sarongs using traditional processes that involve the batik block technique (stamping a block of motifs with hot wax on plain white cotton).

4.2 The term batik
The word batik is used in Bahasa Indonesia but it also applies to Bahasa Malaysia and has the same meaning in the two languages. The term appeared “for the first time in Dutch texts of the 17th century, although the word is probably Indonesian” (Stokoe, 2000, p. 8). My examination of the relevant literature showed that there are two possible origins of the word batik; the first comes from several authors such as Adam (1935), Arensberg (1978), Spee (1982), Warming and Gaworski (1981), Abdullah (1983), Elliot (1984), and Stokoe (2000) who determined that the word is derived from the syllable tik or titik which means dot, drop and spot. Warming and Gaworski (1981) stated:

The root word, tik, is derived from Malay, and originally in a narrow sense meant dots or drops, while in a broader context it came to mean write or draw. (p. 143)

A second, slightly different explanation was discussed by Tirtaamidjaja (1966), Muehling (1967), Djajasoebrata (1972), Arensberg (1978), Arney (1987), Roojen (1993), and Stokoe (2000). They stated that the term ‘batik’ is derived from a Javanese word, the verb mbatik or ambatik, which literally means drawing, painting, writing or dripping, and “these words aptly describe the batik technique, whereby the worker draws her design with wax that drips
Batik is recognized as a traditional textile decoration technique across cultures. Lewis (1924), Linton (1954), Picken (1957), Steinmann (1958), Kafka (1959), Krevitsky (1964), Yusof (1984), Gittinger (1985), Hamzuri (1985), Djoemena (1986), Arney (1987), Fraser-Lu (1988), and Lin (1991) describe batik as a process of applying dyes on cloth using a wax-resist technique, where areas of fabric are covered with wax to prevent them from absorbing dye. There are two types of traditional batik: hand-drawn and printed batik. In hand-drawn batik, the hot melted wax is applied manually through canting (the tool used for drawing the motifs on the fabric with liquid wax), whereas in printed batik, it is applied by pressing pattern blocks onto the cloth. Both methods can be applied to cotton and silk. The cloth is later dyed. Those parts, which have been treated with wax, will not take up the dye, and the design is created after bathing the cloth in colour. The cloth is then washed in hot water to remove the wax and this results in a design. In Malaysia, Arney (1987) mentioned that the meaning of batik was wider, and not only refers to the process but:

> It can refer to one of several types of cloth: cloth printed with traditional batik designs; cloth that is block printed with wax (*batik cap*, pronounced chap with an a as in far); or cloth decorated with hand-drawn designs (*batik tulis*). Ambiguities in the local definition of batik are even more complex. (p. 14)

### 4.3 The origins and history of batik: from Java to Malaysia

Researchers have not been able to pinpoint the exact origin and date that batik was created. Arney (1987) identified that the local classifications in the Malay Archipelago are varied and detailed, so too is the long history of batik techniques around the globe. Keller (1966) suggests that “batik is so old a craft that its true origin has never been determined, but it can safely be presumed to be at least 2,000 years old” (p. 13). Before discussing the origins of Malaysian batik, it is interesting to consider other batik artefacts from different regions before its long tradition was established in Java and then later in Malaysia. In *The History of Java*, Raffles (1817) discussed that batik was part of the common arts and handicraft manufactured in Java, and it was particularly created for textile clothing. In Javanese clothing, the cloths termed *batik* are distinguished into “*batik latur puti*, *batik latur irang*, or *batik latur bang*, as the background may be either white, black, or red” (p. 188). Mijer (1919) mentioned that whether batik’s origins were Javanese or not was never firmly established: “the investigation shows that there never was a time when the art of batik did
not flourish in Java” (p. 1). Regardless, although the art of batik making was established and practised in the Javanese islands, the available dates and other historical evidence does not prove that the Javanese invented the art form. Certainly, however, Robinson (1970) referred to the remains of temples in Indonesia, which showed characteristic batik designs: “temple ruins of the thirteenth century in Java and Bali carry decorations carved on stone figures strongly resembling known batik techniques” (p. 40). Keller (1966) also had a similar insight:

Ruins of a temple on Java dating back to about the 13th century show fragments of stone figure wearing garments decorated with motifs strongly resembling the sarong of the 20th century in style and decoration. On the grounds of this evidence, by the 12th century batik had reached Java, where it had established itself as an important part of Indonesian culture and the economy. (p. 14)

Whilst Robinson (1970) reinforced the view that batik particularly flourished in the island of Java, its origins were unidentified: “there is no certain information as to the exact place of origin of batik or when it was first practiced” (p. 39). Indeed, it has been argued that batik technique developed independently in numerous parts of the world. In Java as mentioned by Rouffaer (1904), the textile trade, which included batik making significantly developed the economic growth of the country. The batik industry prospered from the 1830s as a result of the reduced production of printed fabrics from India, and the spread of bleached cotton textile imports. The stamping technique that was used in making batik also improved due to increasing imports of printed cloth from Europe. The development of wooden or copper stamps that printed the design on the cloth increased batik production compared to the technique of canting. Loeber (1926) stated that the Javanese batik ornamentation, with its numerous motifs was more likely to have evolved from the batik technique that was introduced and brought to Java from the Coromandel Coast of India along with the Hindu culture. Hiroshi (1970) supports this theory. He asserted “by the time of the Madjapahit Kingdom in the 12th Century, some production of batik was being carried on among the natives” (p. 41). The legacy of the initial Hindu influence in batik production was greatly expanded over the centuries. In Wertheim’s (1969) *The Changing Pattern of Labour Relations*, he mentioned about a part of his expedition to Mataram with the Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies (1678-1681) Rijcklof van Goens:

In his account of a mission to Mataram Rijcklof van Goens describes how some thousands of female workers were employed at the *kraton* [palace] in batik industry and other crafts. (pp. 237-238)
Chattopadhyaya (1963) provided another viewpoint, which supports the assertion that batik originated in India. In her compilation of traditional Indian textiles and handicrafts, she argued that batik was very similar with *kalamkari* as it followed the same technique:

> Batik is another ancient art, which originally travelled from India to Indonesia and, when it died in India [stopped production], was brought back from that country. The original Indian technique, in which textiles were covered with clay, gum, wax or resin before dyeing the fabric, was elaborated by the Indonesians, giving the cloth a very distinctive character. (p. 12)

Steinmann (1958) also clarified the prolongation of the batik technique and suggested that “the earliest historically established proof of the existence of batik-work in India was dated from 1677” (p. 15). Meanwhile, several other authors like Kafka (1959), Hiroshi (1970), Robinson (1970), Belfer (1972), Spee (1982), Burke et al. (1983), Elliott (1984), Fraser-Lu (1988), Hitchcock (1991), and Stokoe (2000), were all fascinated with the study of batik culture and, through collecting batik samples from Java, they also explored the art form’s Indian influences. Figure 4.1 is an example of a piece of cotton cloth from the East Coast of India, from approximately the late 19th – early 20th century. This artefact is made with the combination of mordant-resist and batik technique. This batik cloth – with a lattice design and used as a sarong – was usually produced for export to Thailand in the early 19th century. Indian produced textiles were used in Thailand for diverse purposes, such as room dividers, floor coverings and hangings.
Figure 4.1: The lion cloth *Pha nung* or skirt-cloth preserved at the Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, Ohio, USA (India, East Coast, late 19th – early 20th century). Photo from CAMIO ®: CMA_. 1925.119.
There is a contrasting theory that batik originated not in India but in China. According to Steinmann (1958):

It is true that some screens, without any doubt decorated by a ‘resist’ or batik process, and probably made by Chinese artists, preserved in the Imperial Treasury ‘Shōsoin’ at Nara (Japan), go to prove that batik was known in Japan already in the eight century during the Tempyo, or Nara-period (A.D. 710-749), a period which was close in contact with the artistic life of the Chinese T’ang dynasty (A.D. 618-907). (pp. 13-14)

Steinmann’s hypothesis is supported somewhat by Kafka (1959), who claimed that “batik originated in either China or India, possibly as long as 1200 years ago” (p. 5). Other scholars, including Keller (1966), Robinson (1970), Martin (1971), Meilach (1973), and Fraser-Lu (1988), also contend that batik’s origins can be found in either India or China. What is not in contention however is that batik production has flourished in Java where artisans have been continuously making batik cloth over a very long period of time, whereas in other cultures the prominence of batik work had decreased. As for the origins of batik, that is, in which country it was invented, Keller (1966) implied that we simply cannot say:

Archaeological findings prove that the people of Egypt and Persia used to wear batik garments, and the same can be said of the people of India, China, Japan, and most countries in the East. In Africa, batik occurs in the symmetrical tribal patterns; in India, in the ancient paisley pattern; and in China and Japan it has lent itself perfectly to delicate Oriental designs. (p. 13)

Figure 4.2, catalogued by Spee (1982), shows an example of a cloth that was “found in a grave (old Peruvian) of the post classical period (800-1532) of the pre-Columbian cultures” (p. 10). Figure 4.3 is “a cotton batik fragment dyed with indigo, found in Fostat near Cairo, and was probably from between 1230-1350 A.D.” (p. 11). Even though the batik technique is widespread and mostly popular in the Malay Archipelago, Spee (1982) has the impression that “batik originated in Asia and spread from there to the islands to the south, to Arabia and eventually to the western world” (p. 12). The difficulty in finding the accuracy of the origins of batik is actually related to the very nature of a piece of cloth, as noted by Hitchcock (1991) “textiles do not survive well in the hot and humid conditions which prevail in Java, and their history is difficult to trace” (p. 86). What can be said with some certainty however, is that Malaysia’s location as a trading centre meant that many cultural traditions were cross-fertilised there, with batik being no exception.
Figure 4.2: An example of batik cloth from Peru (1800-1352). From *Traditional and modern batik*, (p.10), by Miep Spee, 1982, Kenthurst: Kangaroo Press. (Image removed due to copyright restrictions).
Figure 4.3: An example of batik cloth from Fostat, Egypt (1230-1350). From *Traditional and modern batik*, (p. 11), by Miep Spee, 1982, Kenthurst: Kangaroo Press. (Image removed due to copyright restrictions).
It is conceivable that batik was introduced from Java during the time of the Malay empire from 1402-1511. Later reports of trade were documented by Barbosa (1866): “there also come thither many ships from Java” (p. 191). It can be concluded that batik and other materials were introduced to the Malay Peninsula through traders:

_Hubungan perniagaan dan perdagangan orang Melayu Semenanjung dengan orang Indonesia wujud berabad-abad lama dahulu sejak zaman Kerajaan Melayu Melaka lagi. Hubungan perdagangan ini tidak pernah berakhir walaupun kedua-dua Negara ini dijajah oleh dua penjajah Eropah yang berlainan._

Business and trade relations between the Malay Peninsula and Indonesia existed for centuries long ago, since the time of the Malacca Kingdom. This trading relationship did not end when the two countries were occupied by two different European colonies. (Abdullah, 1983, pp. 42-43)

Importantly, another source of evidence from the British rule of Malaya came from Swettenham (1910), who served as a British officer, and studied the Malay culture and languages. An example of his work is _Vocabulary of the English and Malay Languages with Notes_. In the ‘notes’ section of his book, he presented an example of the dialogue about batik that was a conversation between a seller and a buyer who wanted to buy cloth at the bazaar:

_Âpa angkau jûal di-sini?_
What do you sell here?
_Sahya mau bli kain sârong bâtek, bûata-an Jâwa, bûlih-kah dâpat di-sini?_
I want to buy some sarongs, Javanese, can I get them here? (p. 213)

Dennys (1894), further, distinguished the significance of sarongs, observing that the good quality batik sarong was from Java, and discussed the range of sarongs according to the aesthetic and the expense of the material, noting the type of textiles used (such as the gold thread or _songket_). In _The Adventures of John Smith in Malaya 1600-1605_, which was compiled by Hale (1909), it is noted that batik sarongs from Java were used as part of the clothing worn by the Malay communities, and showed a variety of styles. “A truly beautiful picture she made as she stood there dressed in her soft batik sarong (the usual petticoat made of fine hand painted linen, and brought from Java or Sulu)” (p. 15). Figure 4.4 was catalogued by Swettenham (1907). The picture shows a piece of batik sarong “made in Java where the prevailing colour of the body is blue, of the border and centre-piece bistre and white” (p. 137).
In support of this, Harrison (1920) stated that the batik sarong from Java was recognized through its design.

The cotton sarongs figured with birds and flowers and beasts, prettiest, perhaps, with a native-blue ground and brown figures, come from the Dutch island of Sumatra, and are Malay-made there. The figures upon them are made by a kind of wax printing. (Harrison, 1920, p. 202)

Winstedt (1925) recognized another characteristic in Javanese batik sarongs: “several kinds of batik skirts are popular in the Peninsula, which can be identified by pattern, texture and smell” (p. 67). Although the exact origins of batik remain a mystery, there is no doubt that in Southeast Asia, Indonesia is famous for its high quality batik and other products. Djoemena (1986) suggests that spice production and the strategic geographical location of the Javanese islands on the trade routes between the north and the south as well as between the west and the east made them a favourite location for merchants to stop and trade their goods. Indirectly, foreign arts and cultures became easily accepted, and this was certainly the case with the art of batik. Further, evidence discussed here strongly supports the contention that Malaysian batik is derived from the island of Java. Roojen (1993) states that the “textile traditions in the states of the Peninsula obviously share common origins with those of other regions in the Malay world” (p. 149). Batik making in Malaysia is still practised in the two states of Kelantan and Terengganu (Figure 4.5) where traditional techniques started with the tie-dye process, which produces batik pelangi and batik teritik; later, batik was created using wood block and metal block stamping.
Figure 4.4: An example of batik sarong from Java. From *British Malaya: An account of the origin and progress of British influence in Malaya*, (p. 136), by Sir Frank Swettenham, 1907, London: J. Lane.
Figure 4.5: Map of Malaysia Rafeah Legino, showing the location of Kelantan and Terengganu. Both states still produce batik. Adapted from The University of Texas at Austin, Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection. Country Maps Malaysia. http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/malaysia.html. 12/02/2012.
4.4 Traditional batik techniques development

In Malaysia, before the use of wax-resist dyeing that was learned from Java and adopted as a traditional batik technique, the batik pelangi\(^1\) was the first medium employed. In the classification of the types of textiles in India, Chattopadhyay (1975) mentioned that “bandhani, as the craft of tie and dye is called, is both a complicated and sophisticated method of decorating cloth by just manipulating the dyes” (p. 44). In the history of Malaysian batik, the rainbow technique was recognized as the earliest one practised. A study by Wray (1906) at the turn of last century of kain pelangi or batik pelangi, portrayed characteristics that were fashioned by the Malays of the Straits and the Federated Malay States:

This had no pattern, but was dyed to represent the colouring of the spectrum, the colours grading one into the other. In the kain pelangi, on the other hand, there is a regular pattern, but the colours employed are the brightest tints obtainable with aniline dyes of various hues; hence its name. (p. 17)

Abdullah (1983), Mohamaed (1990), and Hashim (1996) discovered that in Malaysia, the basis of batik technique started with the kain pelangi or rainbow batik obtained through the tie-dye technique. In Terengganu, a Malay woman known as Minah Pelangi developed batik pelangi before it spread to Kelantan and other states. Hashim (1996) stated that:

Traditional batik of the pelangi (rainbow) type came to be used in Malaysia as early as during the reign of the third ruler of Terengganu, Sultan Zainal Abidin II (1773-1808). A certain Minah Pelangi was the most famous producer of batik during this time. (p. 21)

Figure 4.6 is an example of the first decoration method applied on cloth that was introduced and practised by Malaysian batik craftsmen. It shows the production of pelangi, which begins with tying plain white cotton cloth using a rubber band or string, then bathing the cloth in dye before washing and drying.


This rainbow fabric is made from traditional materials, dyes and colouring techniques. The materials used are produced from fruits and colours of the skins of local wood. (Abdullah, 1983, pp. 43-44)

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\(^1\) The batik pelangi was created by using the tied-dye process.
Further, innovation using the tie-dye technique extends to other mixed materials to make more complex patterns. Batik makers by “sewing or stitching will produce the *tritik* impression” (Ismail, 1997, p. 237). Figure 4.7 shows the process of making batik *tritik*, which starts with transferring the drawing onto the plain cloth; followed by sewing or stitching through the outline of drawing with string and then tying them; and then bathing the cloth in dye to create a variety of colours. This process is explained by Ismail (1997):

The tied or sewn cloth will then be dyed several times in order to produce the colourful rainbow effect. The first dye will leave the tied or sewn parts white. These parts will be coloured during the second dyeing while other parts will have to be died to protect them from the second colour. The whole process is repeated until all the desired colours are obtained. The overlapping of a few colours will produce the rainbows colours. (p. 238)

The historical accounts of Terengganu’s batik *pelangi* were researched by Minah Pelangi, and in Kelantan by Abdullah (1983). Abdullah stated that around 1911, Haji Che Su Ishak, from Kelantan, experimented with batik *pelangi* production. He and his partners opened a batik business, which survived and operated during the First World War (1914-1918). Haji Che Su’s batik *pelangi* production was well known in the local market in Kelantan and was also exported to Thailand, and was generally admired and worn by women. Figure 4.8 is an example of the batik sarong made through the batik *tritik* process. Ismail (1997) provides a clear explanation of its uses and function:

*Kain batik pelangi* is often used as shawl and as breast cloth (a long narrow strip of material which when wound around the chest left the shoulders bare) by the ladies-in-waiting. (p. 238)

Haji Che Su’s *batik pelangi* making developed over time. Abdullah (1983), Arney (1987) and Mohamed (1990) mentioned that in 1914, Haji Che Su started to explore and produce batik cloth through another method, which was known as batik *pukul* or batik block. Batik making through wood block printing was really famous in Kelantan, while Haji Ali did the same in Terengganu. In 1932, Haji Ali learned this wood block technique from a Javanese trader in Singapore. Haji Ali also had an example of a batik wood block from Java, which he asked wood carvers to model. The technique for making batik wood block is different from batik *pelangi*, and the blocks were usually employed the skills of Malay wood carvers to create the specific design motifs. Figure 4.9 shows the process of making batik wood blocks, which were carved from wood with specific design motifs. The block is placed on
the colour and then printed on plain cloth. This wood block “must have been influenced by the sophisticated skills of Malay wood carvers” (Arney, 1987, p. 47). The use of the wood block technique could produce many more sarongs per day, but the application of colours and motifs was limited, which usually comprised two or three colours and the first colour was black then followed with other colours (see Figure 4.10). This is a sample of a batik sarong, which was decorated through wood block printing and dates from around 1920. It is preserved in the State Museum in Terengganu. In addition, the wooden block prints were also practised and developed in India for making fabric decoration. Lewis (1924) determined that the ‘the use of wooden blocks to print or stamp designs on cloth, especially cotton, is still quite common in India, though by no means so general as in former years’ (p. 1).

According to Mohamaed (1990), Haji Che Su continued producing batik through the wood block method in Kelantan until 1926. The methods changed when a Javanese man named Raden Mukhtar arrived in Kelantan to work with Haji Che Su. Raden Mukhtar introduced the use of copper blocks and wax, as another method in making batik, and the batik was recognized as *batik pukul conteng* or *batik lilin*. The business of batik making was expanded through Su’s son Yusuf Haji Che Su. In 1928 innovations in batik making were explored by Yusuf. He went to Bangkok to meet with Dr. Schmidt, a German from the chemical company Windsor & Co. From him, Yusuf Haji Che Su learnt about chemical dyes that were useful for batik production and innovated a new formula and later produced batik stencils. After the stencilled batik was introduced, this medium started competing with wax batik. The main differences lie in the production method: the wax design can be seen in wax batik compared to stencil batik. However, stencil batik can be produced in larger quantities due to its easy production technique, as the dye merely needs to be applied on a patterned screen and then printed.

Through the study by Abdullah (1983), she states that the use of metal blocks and wax as another method in making batik was learned from the Javanese batik makers. She indicated, in Kelantan, when Haji Che Su died in 1938, batik production was taken over by other companies, for example Mahmud & Sons, and Ibrahim & Sons. The batik industry decreased during the Japanese rule of Malaysia from 1941 to 1946. In that time batik was only produced for families and relatives. Likewise in 1936, another batik producer from Terengganu, Haji Ali, met a Javanese businessman in Singapore. Through the meeting he
learned about the methods and processes of batik block printing, and acquired a few samples of Javanese copper blocks. With these blocks, he started to make his own batik blocks for his family business. The batik that was developed and produced by Haji Ali was stable and increased steadily until the 1950s. His family members have continued with the business. Industrial development of batik grew around the small towns in Kuala Terengganu, such as in Paya Bunga, Bukit Payong, Kuala Ibai, Pasir Panjang, Cendering, Pulau Rusa, Beladu and Marang.

Figure 4.6: The tie-dye technique in making batik pelangi. Photos purchased from National Museum Kuala Lumpur, 2008.
Figure 4.7: Making batik *teritik*.

1. Transferring the design motif on cloth.
2. The outline of the drawing is sewn.
3. Bathing the cloth with colour.
4. The batik *teritik*.
Figure 4.8: Sarong, made by batik *tritik* technique, (1980s).
Photo purchased from Terengganu State Museum, 2008.
Figure 4.9: Making batik sarongs using wood blocks.
Photos purchased from Terengganu State Museum, 2008.

1. The wood block.

2. The wood block is placed on the dye.

3. The batik maker stamps the white cotton with the wood block.

4. The finished cloth with a variety of motifs.
Figure 4.10: A wood block printed batik sarong.  
Photo purchased from Terengganu State Museum, 2008.
Figure 4.11 shows the process of making the batik blocks. This traditional method was practiced in Kelantan and Terengganu. The wax and resin are heated on a stove until melted, and the block is dipped into it before being printed on plain cotton cloth. The process is continued and repeated depending on how many layers of colour are used. Significantly, batik sarongs from Terengganu are well known for their use of layers of colours as in the single-layered batik sarong, two-layered batik sarong, three-layered batik sarong, four-layered batik sarong, and five-layered batik sarong. Roojen (1993) suggested that “a characteristic of Terengganu sarongs is that the layers of colour often overlap” (p. 157). Another technique applied to produce batik sarongs is known as batik discharge, normally using only two colours. In order to obtain the desired effect, the first colour must be dark, for example blue or brown. The traces of wax left on the fabric are not removed, and the cloth is dyed with a second, lighter colour.

Abdullah (1983) and Mohamaed (1990), in reviewing the development of batik production after the end of World War II in 1946, found the batik industry had been experiencing a decline, but was revived by Mohd Yusuf who moved his premises from Lorong Gajah Mati to Kampung Puteh, Kota Bahru, Kelantan to produce block batik. Previously, the plain white cloth was imported from Thailand, but after 1949 the cloth was imported from India and England. At this time Mohd Yusuf’s batik enjoyed a golden age and had a lot of distributors to broaden the reach of the product around the Malay Peninsula, Thailand, Burma, Sarawak and Brunei. Sheppard (1972) stated that the batik industry on the island of Java had become insolvent because of the Second World War, but that this “provided an opportunity for the latent artistic talent of the east coast Malays to fill the vacuum” (p. 121). In 1953, around the town of Kota Bahru, batik production developed in other businesses apart from that of Mohd Yusuf; indeed, there were up to sixty such enterprises. In the same year, batik making and the weaving industry in Terengganu and Kelantan faced competition from Japanese batik production.

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2 The researcher wishes to thank En. Mokhtar from Bukit Bayas, Kuala Terengganu, for this information.
Figure 4.11: The metal block used to transfer the design with hot wax onto cloth. Photos purchased from Terengganu State Museum, 2008.

1. Wax.  
2. Resin.  
3. The wax and resin is melted.  
4. The copper block.  
5. The wax is placed on cloth using the block.  
6. The sarong is printed with wax.
Mohamaed (1990) discovered that fortunately, not all of the batik factories closed down, thanks to subsidies from the Rural and Industrial Development Authority (RIDA) that helped small rural enterprises. Batik making in Kelantan was continued by Mohd Salleh in Kampung Puteh until 1957 when he founded the family firm of Mohd Salleh & Sons, which then became Mohd Salleh Company in 1965. This was a successful batik enterprise, which stood as a model for other batik-makers in Kelantan until the 1970s. It is interesting to note that this company received many local and foreign visitors, among whom were the 5th Sultan of Malaysia, Al-Sultan Abdul Halim Mu’azam Shah Ibni Almahrum Sultan Badlishah, Queen Elizabeth II of England, Prince Philip, Princess Anne, the Pacific Area Travel Association (PATA) delegation, as well as numerous organizations and associations, both from Malaysia and abroad. The batik makers in Kelantan only became united in the Persatuan Pembatik-pembatik Melayu Pantai Timur (East Coast Malay Batik Makers’ Association) in 1966. At this time the batik industry underwent significant change due to the new unity among batik-makers.

Similarly, the important events that occur around the 1960s resulted in the spread of batik making from the East Coast to Kuala Lumpur and the West Coast. In the same year the Majlis Amanah Rakyat (MARA), which was based in Petaling Jaya, continued the programme that had been started by RIDA to help rural enterprises. The Crafts Development Centre of MARA carried out a study of the techniques and motifs suited to the creation of a new type of batik. Don Jourdan, a consultant from the United Nations, contributed his experience regarding batik making in Java. He introduced measures to improve production techniques and encouraged the production of batik to be sold by the yard. MARA also founded Perbadanan Pemasaran Batik Bumiputra Berhad (Malay Batik Marketing Corporation) to help batik-makers from the East Coast sell their products wholesale or through Puspamara or retailers. Batik Malaysia Berhad (BMB) revamped Malaysian Batik and Handicraft Berhad (MBHB) to function as a body responsible for providing services to batik makers, including the marketing of their products. Due to the association’s efforts in the early 1970s, some new ideas were implemented and improved awareness among batik designers resulted in a new identity by the late 1970s. Their creations looked luxurious, interesting and stylish. The new Malaysian batik still retains traditional arabesque motifs and the convoluted flora designs like the kerawang and awan larat (both terms of Malay traditional decoration) can be found in embroidery and
A batik factory in Selayang Baru (Figure 4.12) that featured up-to-date facilities and techniques became a competitor to MBHB (Arney, 1987; Mohamaed, 1990).

Furthermore, throughout the 1970s, “Malaysian batik producers had a new market and an increasingly efficient infrastructure; at the same time, young Malaysians were being trained by MARA Handicraft Centres on the east coast and MARA Institute of Technology (ITM)” (Arney, 1987, p. 52). The MARA Institute of Technology (now University Technology MARA or UiTM) was established as an institution in higher learning that offers a diploma and degree course in the field of textile design through its Faculty of Art and Design. Later, the Pusat Kemajuan Kraftangan MARA (Centre for the Development of Handicraft) was founded in 1974, but changed its name first to Lembaga Kraftangan Malaysia (Malaysian Handicraft Authority) and then, in 1979, to Perbadanan Kemajuan Kraftangan Malaysia or PKKM (Corporation for the Development of Malaysian Handicraft) and moved to the states of Kelantan and Terengganu. This association provides training for youth, and technical assistance and advice for crafts and batik-makers; it has also offered a new marketing opportunity for batik-makers. In addition, the traditional batik techniques was explored and combined with the other tools in order to produce a new impression for design. For example, the use of paintbrushes produce various strokes, which sometimes combined with the canting or even the stamped metal blocks. The institutions have successfully trained students and conducted several collaborative research ventures (between MARA, KRAFTANGAN and UiTM) which have improved the quality of Malaysian batik making. Figure 4.13 shows a man producing batik ela or batik yardage using canting. The hot wax is drawn through canting on the fabric according the required design, and then painted with colour until it is finished.
Figure 4.12: Iranian Princess Manigeh Pahlavi visiting the factory at Selayang Baru, Kuala Lumpur on August 28, 1973. Photo purchased from National Archives of Kuala Lumpur, Ref. No: 2001/0042233.
Figure 4.13: A man draws the design on cloth with canting for making batik *ela* or batik yardage. Photos purchased from National Museum Kuala Lumpur, 2008.
In Malaysia, however, the batik industry in Kelantan and Terengganu faced a recession in the late 1980s as mentioned by Mohamaed (1990). This was due to three factors, namely the overall economic recession, the importation of Thai batik (which was sold at a lower price while being of higher quality due to the use of Japanese machines), and the emergence of fake\(^3\) batik from Thailand imitating the batik patterns of Kelantan and Terengganu. As a consequence, the demand for batik from Kelantan and Terengganu dwindled, affecting the income of the batik industry. Moreover, BMB (Batik Malaysia Berhad), which had been marketing the batik from Kelantan and Terengganu, reduced its orders. Finally, due to the decline in demand, many batik factories had to reduce their production and downsize. Despite all these efforts, batik was still smuggled into the country from Thailand, and the slump in the batik industry in Kelantan and Terengganu lasted from 1982 until 1986, when the situation gradually started to improve. From the 1990s onward, the two main mediums of the traditional batik technique – (metal block-stamping and hand-drawing with *canting*) were gradually developed, which established and produced various styles of design.

Throughout the study, in 2008, when I visited to the batik producers in Kelantan and Terengganu (see Appendix IV), it was apparent that the tradition in making batik use traditional techniques is continuing and productive. Most pieces are produced in small workshops set up beside houses that are shared with family members or friends as a small business. There are also a number of batik factories in both states that were established for production and distribution, for example in Kelantan, Razali Batik and Nordin Batik, and in Terengganu, Noor Arfah Batik and Sutera Semai Batik. On the other hand, in Kelantan, it is now very difficult to find manufacturers of the batik sarong. Most batik-makers produce batik by the yard. They also produce the batik *pelangi* (tied-dyeing method), a method used for the production of shirts and *kain pareo* (women’s skirts). There is only a very limited market for batik sarongs, and manufacturers only produce it on demand or on order for batik-makers in Kuala Terengganu. Batik sarongs are still produced in Terengganu, especially in Kuala Terengganu. The government institutions continue to provide support for conservation, promotion, innovation and the safeguarding traditional batik in the contemporary era.

\(^3\) Batik sarongs made using a printing process that does not use the traditional wax-resist.
4.5 The definition of ‘sarong’ and its development

In Malaysia, sarongs have been adopted as part of the national garments. The evidence of sarongs having a long-standing place in Malay clothing culture can be found in various historical or literary texts. In the review of literature, I examined historical documents that included *Sejarah Melayu* (Malay History or Malay Annals), *Pantun Melayu* (Malay poetry), and *Hikayat Melayu* (Malay legends or Malay epics), as well as other documents that were produced by foreign travellers and the British officers who served on the Malayan Peninsula. The common use of sarong throughout the Malayan Archipelago was observed by Raffles (1817):

The principal article of dress, common to all classes in the Archipelago, is the cloth or *sarong*, which has been described by Mr. Marsden to be “not unlike a Scots highlander’s plaid” in appearance, being a piece of party-coloured cloth, about six or eight feet long and three or four feet wide, sewed “together at the ends, forming, as some writers have described “it, a wide sack without a bottom.” With the Maláyus [Malay], the sarong is either worn slung over the shoulders as a sash, or tucked round the waist and descending to the ankles, so as to enclose the legs like a petticoat. The patterns in use among the Maláyus [Malay] or Búgis are universally Tartan; but besides these, the Javanese pride themselves in a great variety of others, the common people only wearing the Tartan pattern, while others prefer the Javan [Javanese] bátek or painted cloths. (p. 96)

A discussion of traditional Malay textiles is inevitably linked to the history of Malay clothing (Ismail, 1993, 1997). The sarong is used for everyday Malay clothing (Sual, 2003) and traditional Malay clothing with its interrelated aesthetics (Aziz, 1989, 1990, 1995). With renewed sensibilities in relationship to multi-cultural issues in Malaysia, the sarong has been accepted as a crucial garment in the dress style for every ethnic group. The sarong is not only worn by Malays, but by all the people of Malaysia who use it as an ordinary garment as well as using it as a sign of Malaysian cultural identity. As noted above cultural diversity has been central in Malaysian history.

In the Malay language, sarong literally means a covering or envelope, which in fact describes its use. It is a piece of cloth, generally coloured, six or eight feet long and three or four feet wide, and usually sewn at both ends (Crawfurd, 1820a). The word sarong was borrowed from the old Malay word *sarung*, with the spelling changing from *sarung* to *sarong* (Aziz, 1990). The meaning of sarong is interrelated with its shape and function. The sarong was described as “the body cloths or main part of dress consisting of a single piece of cloth wrapped round the lower part of the person” (Crawfurd, 1852, p. 162). The
term sarong has also become a common noun, which appears in English dictionaries and encyclopaedias. Food (1895) stated that during the colonial period of the Malay Archipelago, the “Malay words are constantly applicable and appearing in English; they come mostly through the reports of such adventurers as Captains Barker, Lancaster and Wood; partly also by way of the Dutch who had begun trading in the Malayan islands” (p. xiv). Therefore, the compilation of the Malay words by Swettenham (1910) in *Vocabulary of the English and Malay Languages with Notes* was derived from his socialization with the local Malays and his study of their language, culture, and the sarong, as part of Malay clothing culture.

Through the history of Malaysia, one of the great impacts after the British rule and independence in 1957, was some documentation that explored the country through various fields including the arts and culture. Ultimately, all the investigations that were established by the foreigners actually provided a safeguard for the continuity of the traditions and heritage of the country. Importantly, for example, Leyden (1821) translated into English the *Sejarah Melayu* (Malay History or Malay Annals), which came from the classical Malay language and was written in traditional Jawi script. Interestingly Leyden recorded one strong piece of evidence about garments carrying important symbolic significance. He noted that sarongs were used after the bathing ritual: “after bathing, they changed their garments, and Sangsapurba arranged himself in the cloth, *derapata deremani*[^4], and the queen in another term *burudaimani*[^5], after which they entered on the duties of government, and mounted the golden throne of authority, and the state drums were beat” (pp. 28-29).

The Malay dress culture is referred to in the *Malay Annals* (1821), and Wilkinson (1908) also defines the character of the *bendaharas* who were administrators in the Malay Malaccan kingdoms.

The importance of clothing is evident, because they changed their garments four or five times a day, using different styles complete with coats and turbans with a variety of colours. This historical documentation not only mentioned features of Malay clothing, but also included the other material culture objects as Wildman (1899) notes in relation to Leyden’s translation of the *Malay Annals*. The earliest study of Malay culture and history was authored by Leyden (1817) and later sustained by Winstedt (1925). Winstedt states

[^4]: It was a sarong worn by the king.
[^5]: It was a sarong worn by the queen.
that the *Malay Annals* was an important source of detailed understanding in dress culture for Malay people. Leyden’s writing gives a narrative account of the development, character, and identity of Malay clothing culture. Cloth was part of their lives: not only to cover their bodies, but to indicate their personality and social status. Nonetheless, in the 20th century, the *Malay Annals* still remain a relevant reference and provides valuable information that explains the Malay arts and craft heritage. Ali (1993) states:

Numerous objects are mentioned in the *Sejarah Melayu*, or *Malay Annals*, a semi-historical account of the Malacca sultans, their ancestors, and their descendants, first written in 1482, by a Johor prince, Raja Bongsu, also known as Tun Sri Lanang. The objects include textiles, weapons, metalwork, furniture, musical instruments, tombstones, vessels, buildings, gardens, and fortifications. (p. 382)

The evolution of Malay dress grew gradually as the Malacca Empire and trade centre expanded its influences because “for centuries the fashions and stuffs of India, China, Persia, Arabia, Europe have [has] been pouring in to it” (Winstedt, 1925, p. 32). However, apart from the above example, Winstedt’s also established that the style of dress for the peasants or villagers was plain and comfortable for daily use and very adaptable:

It has depended for its continued vogue on an infinite adaptability: it can serve as a nether garment, a bathing cloth, a night shirt, a turban, a wallet, a cradle, a shroud; it was retained and respected as a shibboleth of Islam when the use of trousers became almost universal. (p. 35)

Although this early document records that the cloth was used, it gives no further description or illustrations. In the *Hikayat Melayu* or Malay epics, for instance *Hikayat Anggun Che Tunggal*, and Malay poems by Winstedt (1914), the beauty of Malay dress was described as well as its importance in everyday life. Indeed, one of the most important collections of *Pantun Melayu* 6 or Malay poems collected by Wilkinson and Winstedt (1914) contains the following verse:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Asal kapas menjadi benang,} \\
\text{Asal benang menjadi kain.} \\
\text{Sudah lepas jangan dikenang,} \\
\text{Sudah menjadi orang lain.}
\end{align*}
\]

From cotton coarse our thread we fashion,
From the thread our fabric’s wove.
No remorse! When sped our passion,
I’m another’s, not your love. (p. 20)

---

6 The *pantun* is a Malay poetic form.
The first two lines describe the method used to create a piece of cloth from cotton, followed by the message of the *pantun* in the last two lines. From this, we can infer that the cloth, which was made from cotton, was worn as everyday clothing, and here the use of the word *kain*, refers to the sarong. Apart from that, useful indications are gathered from Malay manuscripts, Malay folklore, and Malay legends. This provides a lot of information as evidence to support this research. These writings not only reveal the functionality of the sarong, but also the interrelation between clothes and Malay culture. However, sometimes the words and spellings may differ, because these documents are written in the classical Malay language. For example, in the *Hikayat Abdullah*, which is one of the popular Malay texts about Malay legends collected by Hill (1955), we see that garments served as a metaphor for the symbolic character of women, identifying them from the colours, patterns, designs and material that they choose.

Of what avail a coloured dress
If the pattern’s ill designed?
What use a woman’s fond caress?
If she be not good and kind.
If the pattern’s ill designed
Vain are the costliest silks she wears
If she be not good and kind,
Save and preserve me from her cares. (p. 78)

Moreover, the warm tropical Southeast Asian climate was suited to the wearing of sarongs by both women and men. The other earliest accounts by foreign travellers who visited Malacca referred to Malay men and women dressed in beautiful silk and cotton cloths, made as sarongs and shirts with other accessories (Barbosa, 1866). Similarly, Marryat (1848) noted that the dress style was similar to other countries. Interestingly, during his visit Marryat’s wrote that “the Borneo Malay women are as plain as the men, although at Sincapore [Singapore], Mauritius, and the Sooloos [Sulu], they are well favoured; and they wind their sarong, or robe, so tight round their bodies, that they walk in a very constrained and ungainly fashion” (p. 100). Figure 4.14 shows a drawing of a Malay woman wearing a plain cloth as a sarong.
Figure 4.14: A Malay woman in Borneo wearing a plain cloth as a sarong. From *Borneo and The Indian Archipelago*, (p. 100), by Frank S. Marryat, 1848, London: Longman.
The use of sarongs has been determined as universal Malay clothing “from the greatest sultan of the peninsula down to the poorest inhabitant of a squalid kampong on the banks of a stream, always wears the sarong” (McNair, 1878, p. 144). Figure 4.15 is an example of a Malay woman wearing a sarong as part of traditional dress. Figure 4.16 is a family photo showing members attired in sarongs. Clifford (1897) discussed the link between sarongs and the clothing culture, even if he does not mention clearly the type of fabric used. He described the clothing in the Kelantan, on the East Coast of Malaysia:

In Kelantan, both men and women dress differently from Malays in other States. The men wear neither coats nor trousers, but they bind a sârong and three or four sashes about their waists. The sârong generally comes down to the knee, and, when seated, the knee-caps are often exposed, even in the King's Bâlai,—a practice that would not be tolerated in any other part of the Peninsula. (p. 27)

It was clearly recognized that “the most important article of Malay attire is without doubt the sarong” (Wright, 1908, p. 132). Stoney (1908) went so far as to assert that the most interesting part of Malay culture was their attire. He refers to the sarong because “it is a comfortable garment, with no buttons and no fastenings whatever” (p. 132). Without a doubt, sarongs are unique and comfortable clothing that are easy to wear and do not require other accessories. They are a practical item of clothing when worn everyday, either at home or anywhere with appropriate style. Swettenham (1906) commented:

In the house they wear a sarong and a loose jacket, long or short, but when dressed to be seen they often wear two sarongs, one over the other, and a long jacket of silk or satin, fastened in front by three gold or jewelled brooches. (p. 152)

In contrast to the clothing used by most people, the ruling-class used impressive materials, as they had to show their status and their nobility as the king’s descendants. They demonstrated their wealth by using fabric in silks and satins and of remarkable designs with rich accessories; and they even wore them in the European style. The Malay people were conscious of dressing appropriately for every circumstance. In terms of taste, an older man, would choose a “dark-coloured coat, sarong, and rich in material but of modest colour and design, and heel-less Malay shoes without stockings” (Graham, 1907, p. 23). In wearing a sarong, older men would combine the traditional with modern dress. Malay women used similar sarongs but in different designs and fabrics, as noted by Graham (1907):
The first (Sarong) is fastened round the waist and falls to the ankles; the second (Kembau/Kemban) is hitched round the body under the arms and over the bust and falls over the sarong to a few inches below the hips, being usually adjusted to reveal the lines of the figure as clearly as possible; and the third (Kelumbong) is a loose shawl which is supposed to be used to conceal the head, face, and shoulders, but which is generally so arranged as to leave those parts uncovered. (p. 24)

The functionality of the sarong spread amongst different ethnic groups in Malaysia around the turn of the nineteenth century. Cole (1945) and Winstedt (1957) in their examination revealed that an indigenous group of Malays, known as Sakai, wore clothes made of bark before they became familiar with other forms of clothing. They adapted the batik sarong around the early 19th century when they abandoned the use of bark cloth for cotton. It was even accepted and used by other aboriginal groups like the Jakun who stayed in the forest. Coles (1945) suggested:

Likewise, a part of the cotton cloth in use as skirts or clouts is made by Jakun women using the simple back-strap loom. Weaving was probably introduced into Malaysia from India many centuries ago, but has now spread even to distant hill tribes remote from Hindu influences. Nevertheless most of these people, including the Jakun, still make and use a certain amount of bark cloth. (p. 115)

In Malaysia, sarongs remain the most common casual clothing for men and women of all races and religions, whether at home or in the public domain, as long it is comfortable and looks appropriate. Interestingly, sarongs are also made from different types of fabric, using different techniques, which are created from traditional methods.
Figure 4.15: A Malay woman – wearing a sarong. From *Perak and the Malays: “Sarong” and “Kris”*, (p. iii), by John Frederick Adolphus McNair, 1878, London: Tinsley Brothers.
Figure 4.16: The Malay family. From *Perak and the Malays: “Sarong” and “Kris”*, (p. ii), by John Frederick Adolphus McNair, 1878, London: Tinsley Brothers.
4.6 The making of the batik sarong

In Malaysia, batik sarongs were made from the traditional batik technique, which has been developing since it was introduced to Malaysia. As mentioned when referring to the fieldwork for this study I visited batik sarong makers in Kelantan and Terengganu. The most popular technique that still continues, is the use of the metal stamp (or the batik block). The catalogue by Roojen (1993) states that:

Block-printed fabrics became known under various names: in Kelantan they were called *batik pukul* (*pukul*: to hit, in this case, to stamp), in Terengganu *batik terap* (*terap*: to print or engrave), and, confusingly, in the west coast of the Peninsula they became known as *batik cap*. (p. 150)

The process employed in making the batik sarong in Malaysia is significantly learned from Javanese batik sarong makers, as most of the batik sarongs from island of Java were made with *canting* and metal block stamping. Batik sarong blocks, which have been developing in Kelantan and Terengganu, are made through the batik block process, and similar materials are used in Java and Malaysia. Arney (1987) discussed the main equipment used in the making of batik *cap* or batik sarong blocks:

Batik *cap* requires at least one waist high table covered with banana stem fibers. A wax vat stands behind the table, to the right of the printer. In another area several rows of wooden troughs contain the dyebaths. Finally, large wok-shaped vats (*kuali*) stand over open fire pits, where water is boiled to remove wax. (p. 68)

Figure 4.17 (in photos no 1 to 23) shows the process of making the batik sarong through the metal stamp technique. The wax and resin has to melt first; the use of wax is important because “wax is also used for printing (using the block) and to cover cloth that has been coloured or for cracking wax” (Ismail, 1997, pp. 218-219). The cloth is placed on the table that is normally layered with rice husk and banana stems or sponges. Its function is to absorb the wax printed on the cloth. When making batik, the wax is printed starting from the *tepi kain* (edge), *kepala kain* (center), *apit kain* (borders) and then the *badan kain* (the body of cloth). The block method can only be produced from bright to dark colours, such as red, blue and black. However the *conteng* or painting method, when it is combined with the block, can produce a variety of colours and can have up to five layers of colour (see catalogued no. 32). Batik sarong are usually sold without being sewn; this is often done at home after purchase, as shown in Figure 4.18.

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7 *Conteng* is a term used in the colouring process, and refers to using a brush for colouring the cloth.
Figure 4.17: Making a traditional batik sarong with metal block printing (from photos nos. 1 to 23). Photos purchased from National Museum Kuala Lumpur, 2008.

1. Hot wax.

2. Table with banana stems.
3. Placing the wax for the first layer.

4. The cloth with block printing in wax.
5. Painting with brush.

7. Colouring the cloth red.

8. Rinsing to remove excess colour.
9. Drying the cloth.

10a. The wax is printed to cover the red colour.
10b. The wax is printed, to cover the previous painted colours.

11. Bathing with the salt solution.
12. Bathing with the second colour (dark colour like blue or black).

13. Rinsing with water twice before drying.
14. Putting in the caustic soda and crinkling the cloth and wax.

15. Bathing with salt solution.
16. Bathing with the colour yellow.

17. Rinsing with water.
18. Removing the wax in hot water that is mixed with soda ash.

19. Rinsing with water.
20. Drying in the sun.

21. Pressing the batik sarongs.
22. Folding the batik sarongs.

23. Packing the batik sarongs.
Figure 4.18: Sewing a batik sarong. Photos by Rafeah Legino, 2008.
4.7 Batik sarongs as part of clothing culture

The batik sarongs remain the most common casual clothing whether at home, or worn when attending any traditional ceremony. The sarong’s multifunctionality was just one of the reasons for its widespread appeal across Malaysia. The batik sarong was also a means for people to express their particular fashion sensibility and use variation in how they combined it with other garments. In Malaysia, before independence, foreign authors investigated the differences and similarities of clothing customs in some of the states. Initially, various foreign authors discussed sarongs in general terms. For example, the women looked beautiful when they wore a batik sarong and before the batik sarongs were produced locally in Malaysia, most of the women wore the “soft batik sarong, (the usual petticoat made of fine hand painted linen, and brought from Java or Sulu)” (Hale, 1909, p. 225). According to Sheppard (1972), “Malay women prefer batik sarongs to any kind for everyday use” (p. 121) and this has been so since their introduction into Malaysia because they can be easily adapted as everyday clothing. Therefore, batik sarongs were related to beauty and pride in appearance.

Batik sarongs can be worn by women in different ways. The first feature is represented by the term of berkemban (Graham, 1907), which means, wrapping and tying the sarong at the chest. The Malay women in rural areas usually wear a batik sarong in this way when they are bathing, while washing clothes in streams (see Figure 4.19) or in the bathroom, for floral baths (bathing of the mother after the taboo period and also for the groom and bride before the wedding ceremony). After they have finished washing, they have to change into another sarong. The bathing batik sarong is easily worn during hot afternoons or any time when at home, but is not worn in other contexts.

The use of the batik sarong changed with the introduction of Islam to the Malay world around the 14th century. Malay women started to comply with religious norms and matched sarongs with the baju kurung (Malay traditional dress) and kebaya (Malay traditional blouse-dress). Today in rural areas the batik sarong is also worn as a kelubung, that is to conceal the head, face, and shoulders. Malay women working in the rice-fields also use them to wrap around their heads as protection against the sun (see Figure 4.20).
Figure 4.19: Women wearing a batik sarong as a *kemban*, when bathing in the stream. Photo purchased from Terengganu State Museum, 2008.
Figure 4.20: The batik sarong is worn as protection from the sun while working in the paddy field. Photo purchased from Terengganu State Museum, 2008.
Importantly for this research, it was essential to classify the ways batik sarongs are worn, because this determines the role of the layout design for the sarong. One of the important sections in a composition of the batik sarong design is the kepala kain (the central panel). This panel illustrates the beauty and modesty of the batik sarong wearer. It is related to how they fold and arrange the section of the kepala kain (the central panel). There are two ways for women to wear a batik sarong, with the central panel folded at the front or at the back (Ismail et al., 1981). Firstly, the kepala kain (the central panel) is placed in the middle of the back and is tied with the folds to the front and gathered together either at the left or right side of the batik sarong (see Figure 4.21). This is to enhance the proportions of the different fabrics when it is worn with the baju kurung (Malay traditional dress). Secondly, the position of the kepala kain (the central panel) is folded at the front (see Figure 4.22 and Figure 4.23), when worn with the kebaya (Malay traditional blouse-dress) or baju kurung kedah (the Malay traditional short dress from the state of Kedah).

In addition to this, in order to make sure all the folds of the batik sarong were neat and comfortable, the tali kendit (string or traditional belt) was used to tie the waist – nowadays the modern zip and button are used. These batik sarongs are worn at home and also for festive occasions such as weddings, dinners, and visiting friends or relatives. The choice of fabric will differ according to the occasion. For example, a decade ago, I remember when my grandmother passed away, during the funeral ceremonies, the women and other family members generally had to wear a dark batik sarong matched with the white baju kurung (Malay traditional dress). The deceased was draped with a batik sarong as a shroud, which had belonged to my grandmother.

Malay women wear batik sarongs for praying. They usually use sarongs with a white background decorated with a combination of geometric and floral motifs. While batik sarongs are popular for Malays, other groups who live in Malaysia are also influenced by Malay clothing, for example the women of the Peranakan community wear batik sarongs with the kebaya (Malay traditional blouse). Figure 4.24 shows the women of the Peranakan of Nyonya (the Chinese women of Peranakan) wearing a batik sarong with embroidered kebaya (Malay traditional blouse).

The batik sarong is not only comfortably worn by women but, on the east coast of the Peninsula Malaysia, the men at Kelantan and Terengganu wear a batik sarong to work or
while at home. For example, Figure 4.25 shows a fisherman wearing a batik sarong. The way of wearing a batik sarong for men is different from that for women; for men the central panel is usually placed in the middle of the back. The batik sarong has to fold at the front from left and right (similar to a box-pleat), fastened round the waist and falling to the ankles. This is a gender difference in Malay dressing when a batik sarong or other type of sarong is worn. The use of a batik or other sarong is common not only for clothing but also as part of traditional Malay ceremonies (Alhady, 1962; Sheppard, 1965, 1972).
Figure 4.21: Batik sarong worn with the *baju kurung* (Malay traditional dress). Photo by Hazwani Muthalib, 2008.
Figure 4.22: Batik sarong worn with the *baju kurung kedah.*
Photo purchased from Terengganu State Museum, 2008.
Figure 4.23: Batik sarong worn with the *baju kebaya*.  
Photo purchased from Terengganu State Museum, 2008.
Figure 4.24: A Nyonya woman wearing a batik sarong. Photo purchased from National Archive, Kuala Lumpur, 2008.
Figure 4.25: Men wearing batik sarongs as everyday clothing. Photos purchased from Terengganu State Museum, 2008.
4.8 Summary

To sum up, from the review of the various determinations on the meaning of batik I have shown that the term is ‘universal’. The word ‘batik’ is associated with a process and both Malaysia and Indonesia use the same word to describe this. In this chapter I have discussed the origin and history of batik in relation to Malaysia. Important to this history is the significance of the trade that occurred from around the island of Java to Malaysia. Traditional batik techniques for making batik sarongs and other products are still practiced in Kelantan and Terengganu today. The batik making as an industry developed gradually, and usually started as a family business that produced batik sarongs for the local market. In relatively recent years the government has realized the importance of traditional batik making, and has accepted a degree of responsibility to support and conserve this aspect of the country’s textile heritage and culture.

This chapter, further, has discussed batik from the point of view of it being a method used for decorating plain cloth. The batik sarong is one made using the batik technique. The use of the sarong has been synonymous in Malaysia with clothing. In Malaysia, the batik sarong is usually worn as everyday clothing at home by women and men; and it is also worn in association with ceremonial occasions and other special occasions. There are certain ‘rules’ or customs associated with the wearing of a batik sarong; and men and women wear it in different ways. Of crucial significance for both genders is the position of the kepala kain (the main central panel); this is also related to the status of the wearer. The beauty and the modesty of the batik sarong are especially evident when worn correctly by those who are experienced in its use. This will be further discussed in relation to the design of the batik sarong in the next chapter.
Chapter 5: Batik sarong design

5.1 Introduction
The batik sarongs produced in Malaysia represent a unique variety of designs with respect to motif arrangement and colour. To some extent the character of the design motifs has undergone several changes that are unique to batik in Malaysia. This transformation became apparent to me from my observations and tracings when categorising a large cross-section of samples in the accompanying catalogue. The designs displayed have significantly different characters.

This chapter begins by considering the aesthetics of batik design and the elements that contribute to the beauty of batik sarong compositions. The significance and the role of motifs will be discussed. Batik sarong motifs can be classified into several types of design that are inspired by or associated with nature (flora and fauna), principally as represented in Malaysia; these motifs incorporate geometric and other combinations. The placement of the variety of motifs is integral to an examination of the layout of sarong design. Features such as motif, layout and colour that have been maintained in the traditional designs, as well as the change in motif design, will also be examined. In both Malaysia and Indonesia the beauty of batik sarongs can be seen in their composition, which is designed to fulfil their function as lower body garments.

5.2 The idea of the aesthetic in batik sarong design
Stecker (2005) said that the discipline of aesthetics was “born in the eighteenth century as the study of the beautiful and the sublime in nature, art and other human artefacts” (p. 1). It might well be argued that the ‘discipline’ dates back much earlier than this: at least to the ancient Greeks as seen, for example, in the writings of Plato and Aristotle. Baldick (2008) refers to aesthetics as a branch of “philosophical investigation into the nature of beauty and the perception of beauty, especially in the arts; the theory of art or of artistic taste” (p. 5). More broadly, the notion of beauty and the appreciation of it is a complicated and vast field of study and debate that has led to a wide range of views. Further, as Pratt (1961) said, the “aesthetic has no clearly defined boundaries or directions” (p. 71). In a similar vein, Fiore et al. (1996) state that it is “difficult to give a succinct definition of aesthetics because of its inherent multi-dimensionality” (p. 30).
In Malaysia, the term ‘aesthetic’ is similar to the Bahasa Malaysia word estetik or estetika. There are also other Malay words that have a similar meaning in describing the attractiveness of textiles and other relevant forms of visual art. The words cantik (beautiful), lawa (attractive), indah (precious), and halus (fine) are some terms that refer to beauty. The ‘formal’ notion or field of aesthetics in Malaysia was influenced to a degree by foreign ideas that merged together with the local culture.

In the literature on Malay visual arts, Jamal (1994) mentioned that “a work of art is rich in cultural elements and this is clearly seen in its form, style, line, movement, design and colour” (p. xv). But, of course, Malay visual arts are also rich in beauty in addition to – or in conjunction with – their ‘formal’ elements, and Jamal clarified that the term “aesthetic is related to the sensitive observation of a subject or an environment from the perspective of art or beauty, and not from the utilitarian” (p. 1). Similarly, Yatim (2006) has suggested that ‘from a Malay perspective, art may be understood as something that is fine, elegant, pleasant to the eye and delightful’ (p. 104). Other values that are placed on the artwork in Malaysia include “the characteristic of humility present in Malay culture [which] has had a strong influence on the creative process in Malay visual art in terms of form, taste, craftsmanship, presentation, adornment and so forth” (Jamal, 1994, p. 3). Ismail (1994) carried out a valuable study of traditional Malay handicraft design that included pottery, weaving, textiles, tekat (embroidery) and batik. She stated that decoration is one of the main elements in aesthetic design, such as “motifs and patterns on the surface of the handicraft” and “decorations are also determined by the shape and style of the product” (Ismail, 1994, pp. 6-7).

Pattern is created “from the repetition of an element or motif” and “pattern can also be a vital part of physical structure” (Proctor, 1969, p. 8). It is not unreasonable to argue that the application of motifs that form patterns can be an important – indeed, integral – feature in the visual appreciation of aesthetics. For example, in fabric design – either weaving or printing – various arrangements of motifs are useful in decorating the layout design. With textiles and clothing in which the design motif creates a pattern, the resultant aesthetic aspects can influence an individual’s choice of – and reaction to – the clothing or fabric (Eckman, Damhorst & Kadolph, 1990; Damhorst & Reed, 1986). And, as Wahsalfelah (2005) has said, coming up with an attractive design involves “the integration of skill and creativity in the production of traditional textile forms as an expressive measure of
aesthetic standard” (p. 96). There is a range of fabrics for making Malay sarongs that use the traditional batik techniques. It has been noted that batik sarong motifs are derived from a mixture of plants or fauna motifs and geometric shapes. Hence, the aesthetic values in a batik sarong are related to the choice of motif or pattern design. The development of style for motif design has been influenced, firstly, by the cultural and religious setting in Malaysian communities and, secondly, through the external culture that has been transmitted through intermarriage, trade, migration and colonial factors. The traditional batik decoration method continues to this day and is accepted by Malays, thus perpetuating Malay values of beauty.

Another significant element to have influenced Malay aesthetics in batik sarongs has been the Islamic code of not using overtly figurative illustration. This encourages the use of geometric features and certain colour combinations (Mohamaed, 1990). Apart from the elements of motifs and patterns, the use of various colours is important in forming sarong designs. Colour has significance because it “plays an important role in culture, whether from an aesthetic or a symbolic point of view” (Jamal, 1994, p. 23). Batik sarong designs, with their balance of layout, variety of motifs, and the combination of colours, all contribute to harmonious patterns. Sarongs are created for their appropriate functional use. According to Schneider (2006), cloth has aesthetic characteristics that carry social symbolic communication through their colours, designs, shapes and textures.

The element of colour is also related to Malay culture, as Malay people have their own preferences in terms of colours, especially in relation to fashion. According to Jamal (1994), in general, Malay people favour four main colours, namely white, yellow, red, and black. In Malay culture, red is the colour of warriors and expresses bravery, white represent the highest class, yellow belongs to the ruler, and black plays an important role in mourning. Women wear sarongs featuring a lot of black and they are also used as shrouds for the deceased. Moreover, colours can be related to religion and beliefs. Islam favours the colour green, so this colour appears prominently in the works of Muslim people. Colour is a source of beauty in any form of art, and in batik-making colour is essential as it serves to support the motifs and define the layout of the material. Aziz (1995) quotes verses taken from the *Hikayat Penglipur Lara Seri Rama Melayu Perak* (The Story of
Penglipur Lara Seri Rama of Malay in Perak) that describe the various colours of clothing according to the weather and the situation:

Early morning dew-coloured,
By midday the purple colour of yam,
In the evening the colour of oil. (p. 2024)

The creative use of colour is typical in Malay batik designs and enhances the composition. Arney (1990) suggests, “Malays seemed to enjoy playing with colours; indeed, they combined colours that no Javanese would even imagine” (p. 88). The use of layered colours also affects the price of batik sarongs, with batik having several layers of colours being more expensive than batik with a single colour. The choice of colours is mainly influenced by customers’ desires, personal taste, as well as current trends.

Various customs in Malaysia incorporate batik sarongs to signify important life transitions. There are several materials that have to be prepared for these ceremonies. In the case of childbirth, this includes a requirement to provide seven batik sarongs of different colours. The different coloured batik sarongs must be new and clean, which might indicate that the baby will be born safely and be blessed from God. For example, in preparing for childbirth and delivery, “lenggang perut (rocking of the abdomen) is mostly used by Malays in the southern states of Malaya, while the term kirim perut with the same meaning and significance is widely used by the Malays of the northern states of the Peninsula” (Alhady, 1962, p. 13). I was born in the southern state of Johor around a Javanese community that still practice this tradition. In 2002, in the seventh month of my first pregnancy, my mother booked the midwife to perform the lenggang perut (rocking of the abdomen) ceremony that is also called tingkepan or mitoni (Javanese terms that have the same meaning). I was experienced in how the batik sarong was used during the rite, which includes wearing a batik sarong as a kemban (the batik sarong that is worn and tied above the chest area) for the flowering bath and after the shower I had to change to a new and clean batik sarong. Next, I had to place seven sarongs, which were not sewn underneath me as a mat to lie on to receive the traditional massage. The midwife shook the abdomen with the batik sarong when she finished the massage, then removed all the sarongs sequentially. The last one of the seven sarongs is used as a gift for the midwife when the ceremony concluded. My mother also arranged for the midwife to lead the tradition of Malay Javanese adat berpantang (the period of confinement for 100 days) after the birth of my children. The
Batik sarong is also used to form a ceremonial cot (cradle) for the baby. This cradle ceremony (*naik buai*) is still practiced among the Malay community today. During this ceremony, the baby will be placed in the cradle. In Figure 5.1, the cradle is typically made from three pieces of batik sarong (an ordinary family will only use three sarongs) tied together. They have different colours and patterns, and are decorated with flowers. Long scarves are tied at the side of the cradle which is pulled slowly during the ceremony. At the same time, the *marhaban* (singing of religious songs) is performed by a group of men or women as a blessing for the baby and family. Therefore, the artistry of the batik sarong design will continue to flourish through its use in several Malay tradition ceremonies that are still practiced in Malaysia.
Figure 5.1: Batik sarongs tied together to make a cradle for a new baby. Photos by Shahidah Che Wan Mohamed, 2011.
5.3 Motifs

Motif constitutes a unit that serves to form a pattern, while the element of repetition helps to form the design. Philips and Bunce (1993) have said:

A pattern can be defined as a design composed of one or more motifs, multiplied and arranged in an orderly sequence, and a single motif as a unit with which the designer composes a pattern by repeating it at regular intervals over a surface. (p. 6)

In being repeated in a design, motifs attract the viewer’s attention. They appear in various forms of art such as ceramics, textiles, and woodcarving. Proctor (1969) described motif to mean “a theme, or dominant recurring visual element, form or subject” (p. 9). Motif is a main element in forming balance and artistic design.

Motifs for fabric design have a decorative role, which serves to produce patterns contributing to the object or artefact’s aesthetic characteristics. Extensive studies have compared the Javanese and Malaysian batik sarong motif design (see for example, Roojen, 1993). The introduction of Javanese batik spurred local batik makers not only to imitate and reproduce their motifs, but also to use their structure and decorative patterns as the source of reference; for example, “as a result, the batiks of Pekalongan, Gresik and Lasem were the main source of inspiration for early Malay producers” (Arney, 1987, p. 48). The availability of Javanese batik in Malaysia, especially on the East Coast, prompted producers to use the flowering tree motif in their compositions: “one of the first designs applied in this manner in Kelantan was called pohon bunga (flowering tree), which was a composition of flowers, leaves, buds, etc., connected to curved stems” (Roojen, 1993, p. 150). In the Malay handicraft design explored by Ismail (1997) it was seen that in batik sarong design ‘motifs are composed in two styles – organic (plants, natural element, birds, animals) and geometric (pucuk rebung/triangle) and Dong-son geometry’ (p. 229). Following the work of Ismail (1997) and Hussin (2006), researched the type of natural motifs used in batik and songket.

According to Mohamaed (1990), the use of plant or floral motifs in batik sarongs are related to those used in Malay woodcarving. He argued that this influence is due to the technique of printed batik, which used wood blocks to print colour on the fabric. This method in Kelantan is called batik pukul, while in Terengganu it is referred to as batik terap. The batik makers usually requested the wood carvers to carve motifs that they (the
wood carvers) deemed suitable for use in their design compositions. He also remarked on several changes that occurred in motifs after Independence. He noted an increase in geometric or floral motifs, which are similar with arabesque designs. Swallow (1987) asserts that Javanese batik sarong design motifs often contain cultural symbols that have been stylized over time and this can also be seen in developments in Malaysian sarong design. To gain a better understanding, I attended a Malay Sunda (a Malay ethnic group that live in Indonesia) and Malay Malaysian pre-wedding ceremony called bersiram or mandi bunga (bathing with flowers) (see Figure 5.2). This ceremony is still practiced as a tradition among my family members (Malay Javanese) and other Malays in other regions of Malaysia. It was interesting to note the ceremonial uses of batik sarongs by the bride, family and guests.

Figure 5.2: A bride wearing the batik sarong during the mandi bunga (bathing with flowers) ceremony. Photo by Rafeah Legino, 2008.
This ceremony represents the parents’ love, as this is the last moment for them to share with their daughter before the bride separates to become part of the groom’s family. The bride wears a batik sarong as a kemban (the sarong is wrapped around from the upper body section). Her batik sarong had a parang motif and a combination of various geometric designs, which were originally reserved for royalty. This design is now available for the wealthy. It has been modified and imitated, and in Malay it is known as Raja sehari, which roughly translates to mean royal for a day. Only the well-off are able to pay for the artisan’s laborious handiwork, which is hand painted with canting and not printed blocks. In Malaysia the motif design would be uncommon firstly because of the expense and secondly Malays only buy locally produced fabrics due to import tax on Indonesian batik. Malay brides and guests of both sexes normally use the floral and geometric motif combinations that feature brighter palettes. Sunda family members and guests attending the mandi bunga (bathing with flowers) wear long or short kebaya with sarongs. The motifs are a combination of geometric and figurative depictions of fauna, while the batik designs for the men’s shirts always use a combination of motifs.

Traditionally, in decorating sarongs, motifs accentuate function and proportions. Selvanagam (1990) discussed the uniqueness and classification of motifs through the sections of kain sarong songket (the sarong that is made using gold weaving). The analysis was divided into the four panels of design layout of a songket: the badan (main body), the kepala (the main central panel), the punca (warp-end borders), and the tepi kaki or tepi kain (side or weft-end borders). Through a combination of various flora, fauna and geometric motifs patterns are developed. Sometimes just a single motif is repeated. By grouping and labelling motifs, Selvanagam established that motifs were interrelated with the surroundings of the weavers:

They live in kampongs (villages) near the sea, rivers, and hills, and are surrounded by trees, fruits, flowers, chickens, ducks, birds, bats, grasshoppers, butterflies, and other elements of nature. (p. 69)

The classification and types of motifs used in making the kain sarong songket have been influenced by nature. Further, Islam as the official religion of Malaysia – which is also practised by some non-ethnic Malays, such as some Indians and Chinese – has also contributed to design variations in the kain sarong songket in Malaysia. Further, Nawawi (1989) asserted that in addition to nature being used as an inspiration for motifs in the kain
sarong songket, other motifs are derived from traditional Malay desserts, potong wajik and bunga tepung talam, whose shape from cutting the cakes is imitated and “these Malay cakes were the sultan’s favourites” (p. 61). This motif also depicts the status of the owner. Middle class people would normally only hire this garment for a special occasion, such as a wedding, as they are very expensive. The shapes formed by slicing Malay desserts are used as motifs in batik sarongs. Potong wajik – the desert made from Malay glutinous rice – is a common motif used in songket – the more expensive sarongs made from silk and gold thread. This potong wajik motif originally employed for songket designs was then duplicated in batik printed sarongs thus giving a more affordable version of the pattern on cheaper fabric.

To assess more about the style from the samples of the batik sarong, guidelines for observing design motifs in any textiles were formulated. For instance, Kwon (1979) established that there were five elements of classification: “types of motifs, combination of motifs, configuration of motifs, organizations of motifs, and the visual importance of motifs in relations to symbolism” (pp. 18-19) and she applied this method in her study of motif design in Korean silk. This method is also of use in the analysis of batik motifs. One of the major findings in the analysis of Malay traditional batik sarong samples is that they can be divided into three categories, namely plants (flowers, leaves, and others), fauna (birds, butterflies, and small insects) – as naturalistic configurations, and geometric motifs. Most of the motifs depict either to flora or fauna that have undergone simplification, stylisation and abstraction from the original forms. If the motif is too stylised or abstracted there can be a difficulty in identifying the source of the original motif. The geometric motifs also have different characteristics: either the motif is formed from pure geometric shapes, or a figurative motif has been transformed using geometric representation. Indeed, Washburn and Crowe (2004) explained about the development from an image to a stylized motif:

Imagery is often characterized as being of two kinds – that which represents something in a relatively realistic fashion, and that which is nonrepresentational, consisting of geometric patterns or other kinds of abstract marks. (p. ix)

An analysis of the samples that are the subject of the present study reveals a variety of combinations of motifs that are employed to produce Malaysian batik sarong designs. Mostly natural motifs are combined with geometric designs. These combinations are used
in the *badan kain* (body), the *kepala kain* (central panel), the *apit kain* (vertical lines) and the *tepi kain* (edge). The application of flora and geometric motifs is one of the differences between batik sarongs from the Javanese Archipelago and those from Malaysia. Arney (1987) stated that “the tendency of Malaysians to refer to any floral pattern as batik could be explained by the overwhelming predominance of floral motifs in local batik” (p. 61). Certainly, in the early stages of the 19th century, Javanese batik sarongs mainly featured motifs and patterns inspired by flora and fauna and these in turn influenced Malaysian batik makers. Over time, given that batik makers tended to be Malay Muslims who were sensitive to the tenets of Islam about not representing shapes associated with nature in their designs (for example, birds, butterflies and plants), they increasingly focused on geometric designs which Arney (1987) has referred to as floral motifs.

The formation of the pattern depends entirely on the arrangement and repetition of the motifs. The element of repetition shows continuity and contributes to the beauty and balance of the pattern. Repetition is an important aspect of embellishment in all Malay traditional arts, such as textile, ceramics, woodcarving, weaving and embroidery. The beauty of a decorative pattern depends on the efficacy of its composition and the choice of motifs, whether they are inspired by geometry, flora or fauna, as featured in batik sarongs design.

### 5.3.1 Plant motifs

The motif that is derived from plants is constituted from various parts of plants. The beauty and features of plants are selected from specific elements, such as flowers, leaves, shoots, tendrils, fruits and stems. Flowers with their different shapes and colours are favoured motifs. The flowers that have grown in the vicinity of where batik craftsmen have lived and worked have, over the generations, acquired symbolism reflecting their day-to-day functions as well as their use in ritual. As Abidin (1990) argued:

> These are the traditional ethno-botanic plants grown essentially for food, medicine, cosmetics, dyes, utility and ritual requirements, each having its own selective use. (p. 79)

Table 5.1 provides the motifs (from forty four classifications of floral motifs) that were obtained from the one hundred samples of batik sarongs that I traced and labelled for this research project. Both flowering and climbing plants often feature in compositions of
Malaysian batik sarongs. Symbolic meaning can be derived from various motifs that are favoured by Malay batik makers. A good example is the betel leaf (*piper betel*) as shown in Figure 5.3, which is well known due to its many functions, ranging from its medicinal properties to its role in traditional Malay wedding ceremonies. Besides being eaten, it is also used in traditional marriage proposal ceremonies where bouquets and decorations are included in the presents offered to the parents of the bride as an official opening to the ceremony. As Table 5.2 shows, there are other parts of plants, including the leaves, shoots and tendrils, which have inspired motifs for a rich array of batik patterns.
Table 5.1: The various types of climbing and flowering plant motifs used in batik.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Flowers</th>
<th>Malay common name</th>
<th>English common name</th>
<th>Catalogue numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Climbing flowers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bunga kaduk</td>
<td>Bunga kaduk</td>
<td>Piper sarmentosum</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bunga kangkung</td>
<td>Bunga kangkung</td>
<td>Water spinach/Ipomoea quatic</td>
<td>3, 26, 48, 53, 62, 66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bunga labu</td>
<td>Bunga labu</td>
<td>Pumpkin</td>
<td>18, 39, 40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bunga peria katak</td>
<td>Bunga peria katak</td>
<td>Bitter ground flower/Momordica charantia</td>
<td>33, 35, 40, 41, 44, 46, 69, 70, 93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bunga petola</td>
<td>Bunga petola</td>
<td>Luffa/ Luffa acutangula</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bunga seri pagi</td>
<td>Bunga seri pagi</td>
<td>Morning glory</td>
<td>3, 74, 76, 85, 86, 87, 89, 94, 97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Flowering plants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bunga air mata pengantin</td>
<td>Bunga air mata pengantin</td>
<td>Coralvine</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bunga alamanda</td>
<td>Bunga alamanda</td>
<td>Golden trumpet/ Allamanda cathartica</td>
<td>54, 57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bunga anggerik desa</td>
<td>Bunga anggerik desa</td>
<td>Orchid</td>
<td>57, 60, 61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bunga asam susur</td>
<td>Bunga asam susur</td>
<td>Rosselle</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bunga cempaka</td>
<td>Bunga cempaka</td>
<td>Magnolia champaca</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bunga cina</td>
<td>Bunga cina</td>
<td>Cape jasmine/Gardenia</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bunga cucur atap</td>
<td>Bunga cucur atap</td>
<td>Baeckea frutescens</td>
<td>34, 47, 48, 52, 55, 67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bunga ekor kucing</td>
<td>Bunga ekor kucing</td>
<td>Red hot cat’s tail/Acalypha hispida</td>
<td>31, 50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bunga hati berdara</td>
<td>Bunga hati berdara</td>
<td>Bleeding heart/Clerodendrum thomsoniae</td>
<td>9, 55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bunga jenjarom</td>
<td>Bunga jenjarom</td>
<td>Ixora</td>
<td>46, 47, 55, 57, 66, 67, 75, 83, 86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bunga kekwa</td>
<td>Bunga kekwa</td>
<td>Chrysanthemum</td>
<td>20, 28, 21, 22,52, 87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bunga keladi agas</td>
<td>Bunga keladi agas</td>
<td>Oval-leaved pondweed/Monochoria vaginalis</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bunga kemboja</td>
<td>Bunga kemboja</td>
<td>Frangipani</td>
<td>31, 48, 52, 59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bunga kemunting Cina</td>
<td>Bunga kemunting Cina</td>
<td>Ctharanthus eus</td>
<td>14, 34, 37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bunga lili</td>
<td>Bunga lili</td>
<td>Lily/Lilium</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bunga matahari</td>
<td>Bunga matahari</td>
<td>Sunflower</td>
<td>22, 40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bunga melati</td>
<td>Bunga melati</td>
<td>Coral swirl/white angel/Wrightia antidysenterica</td>
<td>39, 40, 43, 44, 62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bunga melur</td>
<td>Bunga melur</td>
<td>Jasmine/Jasminum sambac</td>
<td>7, 18, 19, 33, 43, 65, 66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bunga pecah lapan</td>
<td>Bunga pecah lapan</td>
<td>Flower with eight petals</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bunga pulut-pulut</td>
<td>Bunga pulut-pulut</td>
<td>Congo jute/ Urena lobata</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bunga raya</td>
<td>Bunga raya</td>
<td>Hibiscus/Rosa-sinensis</td>
<td>4, 23, 55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bunga ros</td>
<td>Bunga ros</td>
<td>Rose</td>
<td>6, 14, 16, 17, 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bunga selasih</td>
<td>Bunga selasih</td>
<td>Sweet basil/Ocimum basilicum</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bunga senduduk</td>
<td>Bunga senduduk</td>
<td>Melastoma malabathricu</td>
<td>26, 43, 46, 50, 51, 70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bunga sepit udang</td>
<td>Bunga sepit udang</td>
<td>Heliconia rostrata</td>
<td>82, 86, 96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bunga serunai laut</td>
<td>Bunga serunai laut</td>
<td>Wedelia biflora</td>
<td>15, 34, 37, 51, 64, 95, 97, 98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bunga setawar halia</td>
<td>Bunga setawar halia</td>
<td>Costus speciosus</td>
<td>8, 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bunga tanjung</td>
<td>Bunga tanjung</td>
<td>Mimusops elengi</td>
<td>14, 15, 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bunga teluki</td>
<td>Bunga teluki</td>
<td>Carnation/Dianthus caryophyllus</td>
<td>75, 86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bunga teratai</td>
<td>Bunga teratai</td>
<td>Lotus</td>
<td>13, 15, 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bunga turi</td>
<td>Bunga turi</td>
<td>Humming bird flower</td>
<td>9, 50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bunga ulam raja</td>
<td>Bunga ulam raja</td>
<td>Cosmos caudatus</td>
<td>42, 44, 70, 74, 74,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kudup bunga</td>
<td>Kudup bunga</td>
<td>Flower buds</td>
<td>7, 54, 58, 63, 68, 80, 86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 5.3: Malaysian batik sarong with the *daun sirih* (betel leaf) motif. Photo and drawing by Rafeah Legino, 2008.
Table 5.2: Plant, leaf, shoot and tendril motifs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plants and leaves</th>
<th>Malaysian common name</th>
<th>English common name</th>
<th>Catalogue numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Young leaf</td>
<td>Daun muda</td>
<td>2, 49, 61, 68, 71, 72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betel leaf</td>
<td>Daun sirih</td>
<td>45, 68, 69, 71, 76</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aloe vera</td>
<td>Lidah buaya</td>
<td>36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fern</td>
<td>Paku pakis</td>
<td>31, 32, 33, 38, 47, 52, 63, 100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bamboo stalks with leaves</td>
<td>Pokok buluh merimbun</td>
<td>42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bamboo shoot</td>
<td>Pucuk rebung</td>
<td>1-7, 11, 13-18, 49, 73</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tendril</td>
<td>Sulur menjalar</td>
<td>32, 33, 37, 60, 63, 69, 70, 74, 76, 80</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climbing plants</td>
<td>Tumbuhan menjalar</td>
<td>3, 73, 98</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Malaysia in its early history was at the centre of the spice trade. Thus it stands to reason that spices are constantly employed as batik motifs due to their economic and historical significance. As shown in Table 5.3 below, two types of spices were demonstrated in the samples. This is supported by Arney (1987), when she argued that local spices and fruits can also be the inspiration for motifs, especially the aniseed (see Figure 5.4) and the clove. The motifs derived from the clove are used either as main motifs or as filler motifs. This is particularly due to the fact that the clove possesses a unique shape compared to other types of plant motifs. Its simple lines also contribute to its popularity among Malay society.

Table 5.3: Spice motifs in batik sarongs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spices</th>
<th>Malaysian common name</th>
<th>English common name</th>
<th>Catalogue numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clove</td>
<td>Bunga cengkhi</td>
<td>16, 17, 18, 40, 71, 72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Star anise</td>
<td>Bunga lawang</td>
<td>1, 31, 47, 58, 64, 66, 67</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 5.4: One of the Malaysian spice motifs the *bunga lawang* (star anise), used as in the *badan kain* (the body) of the sarong.
Photo and drawing by Rafeah Legino, 2008.
Malaysian culinary enthusiasm is not only depicted by spice motifs, but also in various varieties of tropical fruit that are incorporated in sarong layout composition. The local fruit motifs can be seen in Table 5.4 (below). The results, as shown in this study, indicate that mangosteens have more motif variations compared to other fruit. The mangosteen motif (see Figure 5.5) is usually modified in such a way that the stem becomes a flower, while the pomegranate and the Malay gooseberry are usually depicted as a bunch.

Table 5.4: Several fruit motifs found in batik sarongs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fruits</th>
<th>Malaysian common name</th>
<th>English common name</th>
<th>Catalogue numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buah cermai</td>
<td>Malay gooseberry</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buah delima</td>
<td>Punica granatum</td>
<td></td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buah limau</td>
<td>Orange</td>
<td></td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bunga tampuk manggis</td>
<td>Mangosteen calyx</td>
<td></td>
<td>2, 15, 16, 34, 40, 48, 67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 5.5: The *badan kain* (the body) of the batik sarong is completely decorated with a combination of fruit motifs *tampuk manggis* and *bunga kemunting Cina*. Photo and drawing by Rafeah Legino, 2008.
Plant elements clearly constitute the main source of inspiration in the creation of Malaysian batik sarong motifs. This is due to the fact that not only are plants easily obtained from the local environment, but their shapes are easily adapted. The batik makers prefer to choose plants that grow in their environment. However, artisans usually imitate images from nature but sometimes will incorporate motifs from other culture’s symbols, for example there are indigenous motifs from Sarawak that depict insects (see catalogue samples 99 and 100). The batik makers modify the image according to their creativity and the function of the motif, normally stylising the designs.

5.3.2 Fauna motifs
The use of fauna motifs is more widespread in Javanese batik sarongs than in Malaysian batik sarong. The fauna motifs found in batik sarongs are generally small in size and are used as both main and filler motifs. This was confirmed by Fraser-Lu (1988) who added that “butterflies are a popular motif, as are water creatures such as mussels, fish, prawns and the claws of the crab” (p. 33) and appear in in various batik sarong compositions. The scenery that is composed in batik designs habitually show the relationship between flowers and the flying insects, as many flowers require special insects for their pollination.

In contrast, it has been noted that batik sarongs that show fauna motifs can be problematic for Malay Muslims (Mohamaed, 1990). Various designs with fauna motifs “constitute continual exceptions to the general rule of foliated patterns while still satisfying the naturalistic Malay aesthetic” (Arney, 1987, p. 58). Table 5.5 shows the names of several fauna motifs that I traced from the samples. The significance of this undertaking is that it shows that stylized birds (see Figure 5.6) and butterflies are predominantly popular, and are usually incorporated into a landscape composition.
Table 5.5: Fauna motifs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fauna</th>
<th>Malaysian common name</th>
<th>English common name</th>
<th>Catalogue numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Burung</td>
<td>Bird</td>
<td></td>
<td>78, 83, 85, 87, 89, 94, 95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burung cenderawasih</td>
<td>Phoenix</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burung merak</td>
<td>Peacock</td>
<td></td>
<td>9, 78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ikan emas</td>
<td>Goldfish</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Itik</td>
<td>Duck</td>
<td></td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mata ikan</td>
<td>Fish eyes</td>
<td></td>
<td>32, 58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rama-rama</td>
<td>Butterfly</td>
<td></td>
<td>22, 75, 85, 86, 87, 97, 98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semut beriring</td>
<td>Ants walking in a line</td>
<td></td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siput</td>
<td>Shell</td>
<td></td>
<td>23, 32, 43, 51, 81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 5.6: The *burung cenderawasih* (phoenix) flying around a garden. Photo and drawing by Rafeah Legino, 2008.
5.3.3 Geometric, cosmic, and cuisine motifs

Islamic geometric design principles are one of the significant features to be added to Malaysia’s batik sarong tradition.

It seems that from the beginning only geometrical patterns were used for headdresses, which is in keeping with the Islamic prescription of the representation of living things. (Roojen, 1993, p. 153)

The formation of geometric motifs combine various basic shapes: “there are the squares and rectangles, the circles and semi-circles, the triangles and diamonds, the pentagons and hexagons, the octagons, the variously shaped crosses and the stars of five, six, eight, ten, or even more points” (Faruqi, 1986, p. 122). Thus, geometric motifs are closely related to the knowledge of mathematics, because mathematical understanding is needed for their creation in order to ensure accuracy. Geometric motifs are an essential part of Islamic art. According to Critchlow (1976):

In order to understand the mathematical basis of Islamic patterns one must consider most carefully those primary moves of geometry which are all too frequently passed over lightly, or simply taken for granted. (p. 7)

In this context, the placement of motifs represents an essential part of a pattern. In Malay traditional batik sarong design, geometric motifs are used to form beautiful intriguing patterns. The geometric motifs as shown in Table 5.6 are commonly used as a main motif or as a filler motif in every section of a batik sarong. In Figure 5.7, the motif illustrated in this batik sarong is a diamond shape, which is similar to the potong wajik, a slice of a traditional dessert. The motif is derived from the gold thread woven fabric, the sarong songket, a highly expensive fabric and is featured in the badan kain, the larger panel. The transference of the songket motif to a batik printed representation is an example of motif innovation. Thus songket motifs are affordable for every class. Motifs favour abstraction in accordance with Islamic guidance to avoid literal representation of living creatures.
Table 5.6: The geometric motifs in batik sarongs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geometric</th>
<th>Malaysian common name</th>
<th>English common name</th>
<th>Catalogue numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bentuk bujur</td>
<td>Oval shape</td>
<td>1, 61</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bentuk bulat</td>
<td>Small circle</td>
<td>1, 32, 34</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bentuk ombak beralun</td>
<td>Wavy waves/scallop</td>
<td>1, 12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bentuk siku keluang</td>
<td>Wing of bats/Chevron</td>
<td>2, 34, 60, 61, 62, 72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bentuk tiga segi</td>
<td>Triangle</td>
<td>35, 62, 64, 69</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corak tapak catur</td>
<td>Chessboard</td>
<td>12, 13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garisan melintang</td>
<td>Diagonal line</td>
<td>59</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilin berganda</td>
<td>Double spiral</td>
<td>15, 16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5.7: Small rectangle shapes that come together to form diamond shapes. Photo and drawing by Rafeah Legino, 2008.
In addition to geometric motifs, food shapes also play a significant role in batik sarong design in Malaysia. This was evident in this project’s examination of the samples’ motifs, the results shown in Table 5.7 indicate Malay traditional cuisine is a source of inspiration for motif creation. Some continuously used types of motif are those that depict rice, the Malaysian staple food, and Malay desserts. The bentuk potong wajik (diamond-shaped slices of the Malay sweet glutinous rice dessert) were found on some samples of the batik sarongs (see Figure 5.8). Motifs that have different numbered combinations of rice grains decorate as filler motifs and their function is to balance the pattern in every segment of the layout.

Table 5.7: The Malay dessert and food motifs used in batik sarongs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food</th>
<th>English common name</th>
<th>Catalogue numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bentuk potong wajik</td>
<td>Sweet glutinous rice slices diamond</td>
<td>1, 2, 12, 21, 22, 66, 67, 68, 70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beras dua setompok</td>
<td>Two rice grains</td>
<td>14, 42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beras tiga setompok</td>
<td>Three rice grains</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Padi bertabur</td>
<td>Strewn rice</td>
<td>48, 80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sebutir beras</td>
<td>A grain of rice</td>
<td>2, 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiga segi potong ketupat</td>
<td>Shaped rice cake slices rhombus shapes</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 5.8: The *badan kain* (the body) filled with the *potong wajik* (sweet glutinous rice slices – Malay dessert) motifs. Photo and drawing by Rafeah Legino, 2008.
Table 5.8: The cosmic motifs taken from the batik sarong samples.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Malaysian common name</th>
<th>English common name</th>
<th>Catalogue numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bintang</td>
<td>Star</td>
<td>2, 14, 15, 31, 32, 34, 36, 38, 40, 41, 62, 65, 69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Titisan air</td>
<td>Water droplets</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cosmic elements are also used as filler motifs as shown in Table 5.8. The star is used as a filler motif and combined with other categories of motifs. In Figure 5.9, the composition for the kepala kain (head/central panel) represents the scenery of the hill areas. The scene is formed with the overlapping of bamboo shoots and the middle is scattered with stars. The cosmic motifs element evident in batik sarongs is evident in different fabrics and other Malaysian crafts. A systematic study by Yatim (2000) investigated the various designs of cosmic elements in Malay traditional woodcarving.

Unsur kosmos atau cakrawala dipersambahkan melalui gambaran matahari, bulan, bintang, awan berarak, gunung-ganang, bukit bukau dan lain-lain.

Elements of the cosmos or the universe are presented by representation of the sun, moon, stars, clouds, mountains, hills and others. (p. 60)

The samples of batik sarongs that were studied for this research project reveal other common filler motifs such as water droplets, which are symbolic of the life force. These classifications of motifs, as compiled in the Tables 5.8, are significantly popular with Malaysian batik makers. It was essential for this project to use motif classification as a means of identifying distinctively Malaysian batik sarong design characteristics.
Figure 5.9: The star motif placed in the centre of the *kepala kain* (central panel). Photo and drawing by Rafeah Legino, 2008.
5.4 Sarong layout design

In Malaysia, a sarong is also made from different types of fabric. The composition of motifs in sarongs utilises decorative features that take into consideration how the sarong will look when it is worn. The very general description of the shape of a sarong is: “the sarong is a piece of cloth about four yards long and two and a half or three feet wide, the two ends are sewn together, it is invariably of checked patterns–red and black are the most prominent colors” (Vaughan, 1858, p. 150). Sarong compositions can be used by both genders; McNair (1878) suggested that this is because the shape is practical. Certainly, the sarong has long held an important role in Malay clothing culture. Harrison (1920) suggested that the beauty of the sarong was recognized through the “kepala or head of the sarong” (p. 202).

The main compositional element in sarongs was mentioned in traditional Malay riddles as recorded by Dussek (1918):

*Berkaki tangan tidak; kepala-nya ada.*
Jawapan: Kain. (p.4)

They don’t have legs and hands; but they do have a head.
Answer: sarong.

*Kain pelikat kepala dua,*
*Mari di-jahit benang mastuli.*
*Sudah pakat kami berdua,*
*Marah orang jangan peduli.* (p. 19)

A checked sarong has two heads,
Let’s sew with mastuli threads,
We both made the decision,
If someone is angry we don’t mind.

Of course other, various types of fabric are used for sarongs, Buhler et al. (1980) presented a schematic representation of *patola*, a fabric that is usually used as a sari in India but is often sewn for making garments in Indonesia and used as a sarong in Malaysia. The composition of the borders and main panels possess some of the characteristics of sarong design. Figure 5.10 shows the schematic representation of *patola* with details and

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1 *Patolu* (singular) and *patola* (plural) are the terms normally used in Gujarat for silk weaving with designs in double-*ikat* that is, for fabrics where the wrap and the weft threads are coloured in sections by tie-dyeing before weaving, and are then woven to form clear designs (Buhler, 1980, p. 7).
description. Its suitability as a garment for tropical climates could account for its ongoing usage today. Part of its functionality as a draping and loose flowing garment has also contributed to how its design layout would best adorn the folds and fall of the cloth.

Figure 5.10: An example of layout of a schematic representation of an Indian *patola*. From *Indian Tie-Dyed Fabrics* (p. 9) by Alfred Buhler, Eberhard Fischer, and Marie-Louise Nabholz, 1980, Ahmedabad, India: Calico Museum of Textiles. (Image removed due to copyright restrictions).
Different sarongs using a variety of fabrics have come about through the exchange of techniques and motif compositions amongst the various ethnicities in Malaysia. I viewed several examples of sarongs made from different fabrics. There are similarities in the sarong layout that can be found in various types of textiles such as the kain songket (the sarong made from hand-woven silk or cotton with gold or silver threads) in Figure 5.11; kain telepuk (a fine cotton or silk fabric imprinted usually with floral motifs using gold leaves or gold dust) in Figure 5.12; and kain batik pelangi (the sarong made from the tie-dye technique) in Figure 5.13 (Aziz, 1990; Ismail, 1997). For instance, Selvanayagam’s (1990) study concentrates on the luxurious Malay sarong, songket, which is created by a gold thread weaving technique. This study is a useful historical documentation of songket weaving techniques and design structure, and offers a full description of the motifs and patterns. The fascinating discussion of the layout of the songket sarong refers to the “a resplendent, decorative panel, called the ‘kepala’ (‘head’, signifying its importance), run down the entire width of the sarong” (p. 4).
Figure 5.11: A layout of a sarong *songket*. Drawing by Rafeah Legino and photo from the Islamic Art Museum, Kuala Lumpur.
Figure 5.12: A layout of a sarong using the *telepuk* technique.
Figure 5.13: A layout of a sarong using the *teritik* technique. Drawing by Rafeah Legino and photo from National Museum, Kuala Lumpur, 2008 (No. M.Tekstil-053).
5.5 Traditional Malay batik sarong composition

In recent years there has been extensive research into the textiles in the Malay Archipelago, which includes the batik sarongs from Java and Malaysia. In fact, there are various studies about Indonesian batik sarongs, especially in terms of their design aspects, including layout, motifs, patterns and colours that distinguish them (Kerlogue, 2005; Roojen, 1993). However, it could be said that there has been less research on Malay design formats (see Aziz, 2006; Dawa, 1999; Ismail, 1997; Arney, 1987). The present study, which relies on the work of earlier studies, has, through its comprehensive examination of batik sarong design in Malaysia, set out to document and catalogue an important aspect of this art form and representation of cultural expression.

The batik sarong from the island of Java is made in two types with different terms for its design layout, patterning and measurement (Veldhuisen, 1993). The *kain batik sarong* is a cloth “approximately 215 centimetres long by 106 centimetres wide” and the *kain panjang* (long cloth) “is more than twice as long as it is wide (approximately 250 centimetres long by 106 centimetres wide)” (Fraser-Lu, 1988a, pp. 20-21). Table 5.9 shows the approximate measurements for both types of sarong. The widths of the *kain batik sarong* (batik sarong) and the *kain panjang* (long cloth) are similar, but the lengths of the sarongs are different.

Table 5.9: Measurement showing the typical length and width of Javanese sarongs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measurement</th>
<th>Kain batik sarong (batik sarong)</th>
<th>Kain panjang (long cloth)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Panjang kain (length)</td>
<td>215cm/2.15m/2.3yd</td>
<td>250cm/2.5m/2.7yd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebar kain (width)</td>
<td>106cm/1.06m/42inch</td>
<td>106cm/1.06m/42inch</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Burke (1983), Fraser-Lu (1988a) and Veldhuisen (1993) discussed the differences between the two garments in Java. Figure 5.14 shows three diagrams of the two types of sarongs and the layout differences in the composition between *kain batik sarong* (batik sarong) and *kain panjang* (long cloth). The *kain panjang* (long cloth) layout uses patterns to fill the *badan* or the larger areas of cloth. The wearer can change the position of the *badan* pattern and choose which *badan* pattern will be shown when it is worn. This changing of how one garment is worn is referred to as “morning-evening cloths” or “morning afternoon cloths” (Burke, 1983, p. 10). Figure 5.15 illustrates a batik sarong showing Velhuisen’s analysis of the design’s interrelated Dutch influences from the period 1840-1940. The composition examines the basic structure of a sarong. A batik sarong should have the *kepala* (head) of
the sarong placed in the middle of the *badan* (body). In this drawing there are two parts that have been labelled (2), which are the *papan* (vertical bands) between the head and the body. There are two rows standing rectangular of *papan* (vertical bands), placed to the right and left of the *kepala* (head). Along the upper and lower edges of the batik sarong are two *pinggir* (horizontal bands). This layout is typical of Javanese batik sarongs.

I viewed several samples of batik sarongs from Malaysia and the island of Java. It is important to note that the layout of the Malaysian batik sarong is similar to the Javanese batik sarong, however the sections are labelled differently as is shown in Table 5.10. They share many patterning designs but their motifs usually differ greatly. According to Aziz (1990) the measurements of the sarong allow for the fabric to be folded and draped and adjusted to fit the individual wearer. She mentioned that the batik sarong is made from a piece of white cotton measuring “about 2 yards (1.8m) in length by 42-44 inch’s (1.07m - 1.12 m) in width, folded in two and shaped into a sarong by sewing the two ends together” (p. 101). The size of the batik sarong in Malaysia is also similar to the Javanese batik sarong as listed in Table 5.10.

Table 5.10: Measurements showing the length and width of Malaysian and Javanese batik sarongs, based on the samples of batik sarongs that were collected for this study.
Figure 5.14: Samples of Javanese batik sarongs and a *kain panjang*. Red tracings by Rafeah Legino, 2012, sourced from drawings in *Indonesian Batik Processes, Patterns, and Places*, (pp. 21-22), by Slyvia Fraser-Lu, 1988a, Singapore: Oxford University Press. (Image removed due to copyright restrictions).
Figure 5.15: Diagram of an Indonesian batik sarong traced by Rafeah Legino: 1: kepala (head); 2: badan (body); 3: triangular bamboo shoot motif; 4: papan (vertical band); 5: pinggir (edge). Sourced from *Batik Belanda 1840-1940 Dutch Influence in Batik Java History and Stories*, (p. 18) by Harmen C. Veldhuisen, 1993, Jakarta: Gaya Favorit Press. (Images removed due to copyright restrictions).
The layout design of the sarong that is widely used in Malaysia and Indonesia is clarified by Fraser-Lu (1988b):

Sarongs are commonly plain or patterned with stripes and plaids. Inspired by Indian patola cloths, some may be divided into distinct design areas. Traditional *kain sarong* or *kain panjang* of Malaysia and Indonesia have borders along the selvages of the cloth. There may be a central panel, called the *kepala* or head, which differs in pattern (and possibly colour) from the main field, or *badan*. The *kepala* often consists of a vertical border, or *papan* with two rows of facing triangular or *tumpal* patterns. (p. 60)

The *kepala kain* is the central panel of the batik sarong, and in Indonesia it is called *tumpal* and *pucuk rebung* in Malaysia. The literal meaning of these words is bamboo shoots and refers to the interlocking diamond shaped construction of the central panel (Roojen, 1993, p. 150). According to Aziz (2006), in the case of Malay clothing culture, her work took a specific Malay focus with respect to the labelling vocabulary for the sections of the sarong as seen in Table 5.11.

Table 5.11: Translation table of the batik sarong’s layout sections.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Translation of sections</th>
<th>Malay traditional batik sarong</th>
<th>Javanese traditional batik sarong</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Head/centre/main field</td>
<td><em>Kepala kain/ pucuk rebung</em></td>
<td><em>Kepala/ tumpal</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body</td>
<td><em>Badan kain</em></td>
<td><em>Badan</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vertical border</td>
<td><em>Pengapit kepala kain</em></td>
<td><em>Papan</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper and lower edges</td>
<td><em>Tepi kain</em></td>
<td><em>Pinggir</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In both Malaysia and Indonesia the unique beauty of the batik sarong can be seen in its layout. All the diversely shaped motifs are arranged carefully on the surface of the batik sarong in a specific composition that reveals the beauty of its design. In chapter 4, the examination of the meaning of the sarong and the making of traditional batik sarongs was been discussed. Numerous researchers (including Adam, 1935; Steinmann, 1958; Arensberg, 1978; Spee, 1982; Elliott, 1984; Heringa & Veldhuisen, 1996; Kerlogue, 2004, 2005; and Djoemena, 1986, 1999) have analysed ways that traditional Javanese batik sarongs are worn as everyday clothing. Djoemena (1999) stressed that “batik is produced in several regions in Indonesia. Each variant has its own characteristics deriving from a close relationship with religious belief, the social system, geographical location, foreign
contact, and local history” (p. 37), and it is these individual characteristics that give each representation of batik its own cultural uniqueness. As has been seen, the batik sarong from Java spread to Malaysia. Arney (1987) said:

Since most batiks available on the peninsula were then imported from the trading centres on the coast, batik produced in those areas were most familiar to the Malays. As a result, the batiks of Pekalongan, Gresik, and Lasem were the main source of inspiration for the early Malay producers. (p. 48)

Whilst there is continuity from the original batik sarong design, it has been shown that in Malaysia the design developed and evolved into its own style. The *kain batik* sarong (the Malay traditional batik sarong) and the *kain sembahyang* (the batik sarong usually used by women for prayer) were examined in my research and cataloguing specifically for their layout. As shown in Figure 5.16 the layout represents the composition that is always displayed in the design for Malay traditional batik sarongs. I viewed various samples and classified the layout of batik sarongs that show the influence of those from Lasem (refer Figure 5.17) and from Pekalongan (refer Figure 5.18). It should be noted that the layout of the batik sarongs inspired by those from Java were “often called *batik Jawa Terengganu*” (Roojen, 1993, p. 157). These designs were recognized by some of the batik artisans in Terengganu, when I visited their workshops.
Figure 5.16: Traditional Malay batik sarong layout with simplified triangular bamboo shoots. Photo and drawing by Rafeah Legino, 2008.
Figure 5.17: Batik sarong layout with Lasem influences.
Photo and drawing by Rafeah Legino, 2008.
Figure 5.18: Batik sarong layout with Pekalongan influences.
Photo and drawing by Rafeah Legino, 2008.
5.5.1 The kepala kain (head or the central panel)

An interesting combination of motif elements is displayed in the kepala kain, the central panel of the batik sarong’s layout. The ornate central design panel looks attractive simply because it is balanced by the whole composition of the sarong. The layout analysis that I undertook revealed that there are three main traditional styles featured in the kepala kain as produced in Malaysia. One style, pucuk rebung, (see detailed drawing in Figure 5.19) features a bamboo shoot motif (see volume 2: the variation in design from catalogue nos. 1 to 6, 8 to 10, 12 to 15, 17 to 55 and 57). Another traditional style is the corak bunga menyerong, or diagonal patterns of flowers (see catalogue nos. 6 and 7); the third style incorporates a floral bouquet motif (see the innovative changes of design in catalogue nos. 58 to 71, 74 to 76, 77 to 83, and 85 to 100). Pucuk rebung is the Malay word for the triangular bamboo shoot motifs that are featured in the sarong’s central panel. These are arranged in such a way as to form diamonds and the triangles are arranged to point at each other horizontally. This symmetry of the diamond and triangles is called a tumpal pattern or mirror repeat pattern. There have been many design innovations of the tumpal that have been identified with the samples of the batik sarongs.

Based on the design analysis of the hundred samples I viewed when conducting my research, it became evident that the pucuk rebung has a continuous tradition in decorating the kepala kain (the central panel) regardless of what technique was employed by the batik makers. Whether they use tie-dye, wood block stamping, metal-block stamping or silkscreen, the motif designs of the pucuk rebung (bamboo shoots) motifs are usually displayed as a focal attraction in the kepala kain. It should be noted that its representation has became more ornate over time. The bamboo shoots represent growth, flexibility and strength through the life cycle. This is also associated with the Malay metaphor – rebung tidak jauh dari rumpun (not far from the clump of bamboo shoots), suggesting that the habits of children will not be different from their parents.
Figure 5.19: Detailed drawing of the *pucuk rebung* (bamboo shoot) motif. Photo and drawing by Rafeah Legino, 2008.
When wooden blocks were used as stamps there were limitations on the level of intricacy of the motifs. New techniques and materials in the production of metal stamps and wax allowed more complex patterning to evolve. The continuing design motifs show a significant change, along with the techniques used, in the making of the batik sarongs in Malaysia. Initially, from around 1911 when Malaysia’s batik industry began, a basic geometric shape was used to represent bamboo (refer to chapter four). The metal blocks came into use around the 1930s when the motif of the tendril became popular. The tendrils (or sulur), which seem to be creeping up to the sky, are common in Malay woodcarving motifs. The various types of flowers are placed in the centre of the pucuk rebung motifs. Some later samples from around the 1990s show a smaller triangular pucuk rebung between larger triangles. The larger triangles are pairs, which feature two different motifs and are alternatively placed along the two smaller triangles, which also alternate their own two different flower motifs. The central darker diamond that sits amidst the mirroring triangle motifs contains four and six petals flower. The flowers look like small stars on a night sky, while the triangular pucuk rebung shapes, suggest a mountainous topography. The reflection or the mirror repetition usually occurs in the kepala kain (the central panel) that form the tumpal patterns. The diagonal pattern of flowers in the kepala kain is not commonly used compared to the pucuk rebung patterns (see catalogue nos. 72 and 73 in Volume II). There are two samples of batik sarongs that I viewed from the textile collections in the National Museum Kuala Lumpur. The use of the bunga cengkih (clove flower/Syzygium aromaticum) is repeated along with the star shape and then bordered with a double scallop line. The flowers are arranged crosswise and then repeated.

Flowering plant motifs represent landscapes and are placed to add an eye-catching focus in the kepala kain or the central panel (see catalogue nos. 9 and 10 – wood block stamping, catalogue nos. 12 to 23 – metal block stamping, and catalogue nos. 78 to 100 – silk screen printing in Volume II). The floral motif is usually a flowering plant with luxurious foliage or a bouquet of flowers. Amongst the types of flowers that were viewed through my tracing documentation were the bunga ros (rose), bunga sepit udang (lobster-claw/Heliconia pedula), bunga kekwa (chrysanthemum), bunga lili (lily/Lilium), bunga kiambang (lotus/Nelumbo nucifera), bunga matahari (sunflower), bunga raya (hibiscus/Rosa-sinensis), and tropical foliage such as monstera leaf and anthurium leaf. All of these flowers are located in the middle with birds or butterflies, which are placed or ‘fly’ at the top of the composition.
This kind of motifs design is still chosen by Peranakan women, particularly the Nyonya – most of whom are Chinese – as well as other Malaysian women. The style of the motif arrangement shows some influences from their regional culture; these results support from previous work by Achajdi and Damais (2005) that asserted that the use of “butterflies and phoenixes are a clear representation of Chinese influence in the art of batik” (p. 13). This view is supported by Welch’s (2008) study of several nature motifs in Chinese art where it is asserted that “bird motifs were almost certainly included to indicate rank or social standing” (p. 67) and “butterflies are often stylized in Chinese art and are a symbol of summer, beauty, romance and dreams” (p. 91). There are also the compositions of the kepala kain that illustrate views of gardens and lakes, also balanced with birds, butterflies, and cranes (see catalogue nos. 98 to 100 in Volume II).

5.5.2 The badan kain (the body or the larger left and right panels)

The badan kain (the main fields for the left and right sections) are the two largest panels with a variety of motifs and patterns. The position is divided by the kepala kain (the central panel) and the apit kain (the framing border), located at the middle of sarong. In this study, the samples that have been traced in Volume II show some continuation of the traditional style and innovative motifs design for the badan kain (the body). The traditional motifs for the badan kain (the body) are also similar to – or refer to – the early motif designs of Malaysian and Indonesian batik sarongs. Various types of flowers, foliage, birds, butterflies, fruit and geometric shapes are incorporated to decorate the badan kain panels. These motifs were continually used but were gradually modified over time. One such typically Malay and mix design example is the bouquet of flower and foliage motifs from the kepala kain (central panel) that are also repeated to the badan kain. The floral motifs (the types of flora are discussed in section 5.3.1) that decorated the badan kain (the body) are mostly designed from Malaysian tropical flowers. A Malay aesthetic is reflected in the fondness of the local batik producers for drawing inspiration from their natural surroundings.

The environmental and quotidian sources of motifs are easily recognised from the batik sarong samples of the badan kain (the body) that I collected and traced. The changes include combinations of geometric and floral motifs, the stylisation of fauna motifs (which are usually formed by combining the floral with the geometric), and non-representational and abstract motifs. The evolution of the motif variety can be clearly seen through the
samples that I selected in Volume II. An example of such familiarity and homage to local flora is the image of water spinach (*Ipomoea aquatica*), which grows in the watery or moist soil in rice paddies. The scattering of the rice grains is used as a filler motif (refer to the sample of catalogue no. 44 in Volume II). There are motifs in the *badan kain* that imitated the other types of sarongs. The use of the *potong wajik* motif (the slice of Malay traditional dessert) is an example of motifs from the *kain sarong songket* (the sarong made from woven gold thread).

Another factor influencing motif selection is the Islamic Malay notion of *adab* (manners/rules), or what is deemed to be appropriate for figurative representation. The *badan kain* is the largest panel, so consideration must be given to how best to decorate this section of the sarong (see samples from catalogue nos. 25 to 39). The fauna motifs were drawn so that leaf shapes resemble birds’ wings, the *burung merak* (peacocks), and the *burung cenderawasih* (bird-of-paradise/ Paradisaeidae).

Proctor (1969) researched the placement and repetition of motifs in pattern construction in textiles. His principles for analysing patterns and motifs are useful in deconstructing the elements in the *badan kain*. The balance of a pattern can be created by repetition of different combinations of motifs such as squares, bricks, half-drops, diamonds, ogees, hexagons and triangles. In Figure 5.20, the batik maker superimposed the fern (*Pteridophyta*) leaves, which are placed on top of the star and eight petals flower shape, as well as adding the frangipani (*Plumeria*) flower and star anise (*Illicium verum*). The combination of various floral motifs is also used in this panel, which is arranged into an ogee pattern.

The *badan kain* in Figure 5.21 has an arrangement of diamond motifs, which combines the geometric (triangle shapes that form the diamond shapes) and floral motifs of five-petal flowers with stylised leaves. The filler motif uses simplified small flower petals and the *beras bertabur* (scattered rice motif); rice is scattered for traditional ceremonies such as weddings in Malaysia. The significance of this combination of motif is shown in both visual and symbolic harmony, thus this design is appropriate for a sarong that would usually be worn by women for prayer.
Figure 5.20: Combining motifs; fern leaves, stars, the eight petal flower shapes, the frangipani and the star anise. Photo and drawing by Rafeah Legino, 2008.
Figure 5.21: The combination of floral and geometric motifs. Photo and drawing by Rafeah Legino, 2008.
5.5.3 The *apit kain* (the framing border) and the *tepi kain* (the upper and lower edges)
In the layout of batik sarongs, there are motifs arranged in vertical directions, recognized as the *apit kain* (the framing border). They are placed to separate the *kepala kain* (the central panel) and the *badan kain* (the larger left and right panels). In contrast to the *apit kain*’s vertical motif application, the motifs in the *tepi kain* (the upper and lower edges) are positioned horizontally on the upper and lower hems of the sarong. Many motifs on the *apit kain* (the framing border) and the *tepi kain* (the upper and lower edges) contain similar slightly stylised floral motifs (refer to Figure 5.22). Through the samples that I viewed, the most dominant motif that was placed in these parts is usually derived from flowering creepers. According to Jamal (1994), the creeper *sulur bakung* or *sulur bayung* (croket) is a commonly applied motif for decorating batik and other crafts. In the framing border (*apit kain*) and also the upper and lower edges – *tepi kain* of the sarong layout – a climbing flower motif is frequently used. He also describes the visual effect of creeper and tendril motifs: “the motif relays movement of energy, receiving and returning – not only between one another, but also encompassing visual energy filling smaller spaces with visual vibration” (p. 133). Floral motifs with their depiction of growth also establish the illusion of length, width, height and depth in batik sarong design.
Figure 5.22: The morning glory motif at *apit kain* (the framing border) and the *tepi kain* (the upper and lower edges). Photo and drawing by Rafeah Legino, 2008.
5.6 Influences and innovation in motif design

Javanese batik sarongs brought to Malaysia possess their own specific design layout, motifs, colours, uses and meanings. Later the idea of renewing and preserving the traditional character shaping Malay batik sarong design motifs was encouraged by government bodies in order “to expand the product range and styles of designs” (Arney, 1987, p. 37). Although Malaysian batik sarongs were influenced from traditional Javanese designs, my research into the samples that I viewed indicated that whilst the style was modified and certain motifs simplified, the main panels of sarong layout such as the kepala kain (the central panel), the badan kain (the main field for left and right), the apit kain (the framing border) and the tepi kain (the upper and lower edges) were retained in order to maintain the compositional balance. In turn, the prolific array of Javanese batik sarong designs in Malaysia was a significant influence on its own sarong tradition.

Religious and foreign floral symbols have been incorporated into Malaysian batik sarong motifs over time. Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam have influenced some batik sarong motifs that have been identified in the samples catalogued in this research. An example of a design motif that was influenced by both Hinduism and Buddhism can clearly be seen in the kawung motif. The kawung motif is formed with geometric shapes and is commonly found in Javanese batik sarongs – and can also be seen on surface decorations of Buddhist and Hindu temples in Indonesia. In Malaysia batik makers replaced the kawung motif with the star anise motif to keep the shape of the motif but to neutralize the non-Islamic symbolism contained in the original kawung motif (see samples in catalogue nos. 7, 31, 64, and 66). Other cultural influences can be identified in Malaysian batik sarong motifs. Elliott (1984) also stated that the phoenix motif had Chinese origins while motifs of European flowers such as roses and lilies came from interaction with the Dutch. This can be seen in the works of batik sarongs that use the bird motif by representing only the wings in a stylised manner, being shaped from leaves or flowers (see catalogue no. 13).

The use of motifs that were influenced by Buddhist and Hindu motifs underwent a modification process in Malaysia to conform to the guidelines of Islam. According to Arney (1990), this occurred “during the eighteenth century, [when] influential Muslim traders on the North Coast of Java encouraged batik production especially for export to Sumatera (Sumatra) and the Malay Peninsula” (p. 88). In Malaysia, with its predominantly Malay Muslim population, the batik sarong design that features the Islamic design is easily
accepted. It is important to note that the Islamic influence is not only observed from the source of the motifs used, but is also essential in the various stages of the creation of the motifs. The motif designs shown in the catalogue (see samples catalogue nos. 58 and 67) underwent a transformation process through denaturalisation, simplification, and sometimes abstraction (Faruqi, 1986). In catalogue no. 84 we see a simple stylised depiction of men, camels and ships reinforcing the significance of trade and transportation to Malaysia.

Additionally, the arabesque features as a new motif formed from floral or geometric motifs, or the combination of both sources of motif. This is another example of innovation in Malaysian batik sarong design. The arrangement of motifs follows a modular structure in order to present an attractive and balanced pattern. This study shows that the Islamic influence has not only greatly contributed to design motif development, but also that the Malay batik-makers are clearly influenced by several sources. Batik design has been further enriched by the traditional motifs that were commonly used as decoration in Malaysian handicrafts such as brass, silver, woodcarving and other textiles. These motifs were transmitted into batik motifs, giving batik design a distinctive Malaysian character. Of course, Malaysian batik sarongs also show the innovative influence of tropical local plants – flower buds and flowers, fruit, leaves and vines – found in the surrounding areas of where the batik-makers worked and lived, and which were combined with the use of geometrical shapes. These, together with designs from outside influences, have contributed to form a harmonious and unique, yet dynamic, ensemble. There can be no doubt that the samples of motifs and patterns in this study show that they are distinguished as Malay designs. This underscores the assertion of this study that batik sarongs from Malaysia are clearly distinct from those of the Javanese archipelago, and the difference can be predominantly found in the use of motifs as well as in the layout of the sarong. That is, Malaysian batik sarongs have a unique and distinct quality that is the result of a ‘blending’ of various sources of motif design innovation and development.

5.7 Summary
The development of Malay batik sarong culture has seen innovative changes in motifs and designs since the introduction of batik, which has been estimated to date back to the early 1800s. Before then, sarongs were worn as plain cloths. By contrast, Malay communities in Malaysia today have a love of, and choose to wear, sarongs that are embellished with rich,
colourful batik patterning. Initially, Javanese batik sarongs were brought to Malaysia; these evidenced Javanese specific designs, with their beauty, meaning, cultural and religious influences contained in their patterns. These neighbouring islands have a history of exchange in the form of trade, migration and intermarriage, so it is not surprising that there was a cross pollination of designs and motifs in batik through this close contact. However, over time, Malays developed their own styling and put their own cultural stamp on their batik. Aesthetics were influenced by Islamic design principles and codes of representation that discouraged figurative illustration of fauna motifs. Designs were created that featured floral, geometric or symbolised motifs. Javanese motifs gradually began to be transformed into Malay abstractions. The role of aesthetics in textiles is determined from design elements, which come from their layout, colour, motifs and patterning that links them to their functional and symbolic uses. A particular cultural context reflecting Malay aesthetics and identity is evidenced in its batik. Colour can represent an important element of an image composition in any art form; in the long run, the customer's taste is the most important factor in the choice of colours used in batik sarongs – so batik makers became more experimental in terms of their technique and usage of colours to produce a greater range of design choices.

Several types of motifs are discussed in this study. These are divided into two categories: traditional and innovative motifs. The traditional motifs are usually made from symbols that have been altered within the Malaysian context. The motif designs are identified as traditional because the motifs are similar to early Malay design features. For example, the use of pucuk rebung (bamboo shoot) motifs is one of the old traditional motifs still used in sarongs. Traditional motifs include combinations of floral, fauna and geometric motifs, which convey symbolic meaning. This research project has entailed a ‘forensic’ examination and tracing of batik samples – from a large range of fabrics – in order to identify new design motifs in the context of classical motif sources. Whilst, traditionally, motifs have their own meaning, it must be noted that not all contemporary motifs – for example, Malaysian tropical flowers, marine creatures, or some indigenous motifs – are designed with specific meaning in mind. At the same time, the continuity of the main features in motifs creation is still an important design element. Most of the motifs in Malaysia show some changes that are the result of an interaction with new or emerging cultural directions.
In batik sarong design, the placement of motifs was arranged according to the garment’s layout composition. The beauty of the sarong comes from its layout, the arrangement of its motifs, and the balancing of the panels of patterns in the overall design of the fabric. This, in turn, relates to how the sarong is worn. Specific motifs are displayed in each segment that emphasises the balance and harmony of the pattern. Malay batik sarongs follow a design tradition that is important to preserve; an essential feature of this tradition is the influence of Islamic design, which, among other things, has enhanced motif variety. It should not be forgotten that a primary concern of batik makers is to decorate their sarongs. In Malaysia, a major source of inspiration for batik motif design has been Malay regional heritage, which, in the batik sarong, can be seen as a manifestation of national identity. The decorative aesthetic created by the repetition of often-symbolic motifs has been carefully examined in this research project. The environmental and cultural elements that are artistically expressed in batik represent not only decorative, but also functional, purposes that are embedded in the daily clothing culture and local identity of Malaysians.
Chapter 6: Conclusions

6.1 Conclusion
This study is an investigation of batik sarong design in Malaysia with special regard to elements of tradition and change. The project has involved an examination of batik sarong culture and its evolution and development in this country. Emphasis has been placed on the importance of both preserving and developing this tradition as an integral aspect of Malaysian cultural heritage. The inquiry into this heritage has focused on the characteristic designs (motifs, patterns, layouts, and colours) that determine and are represented in Malaysian traditional batik sarongs. This approach has helped to establish how cultural contexts have been enriched through the development of batik sarong design in Malaysia.

The research activities were structured to meet the objectives of the project and began with seeking access to data and samples of batik sarongs, examining the history of batik sarongs, tracing the spread and development of the batik sarong in Malaysia, and analysing and categorising the findings and samples of Malaysian traditional batik sarongs using appropriate classifications of style. This was done in the context of identifying essential elements or characteristics of design that have been drawn and categorised by the researcher.

The samples that were documented in this research project provide evidence of how batik developed and spread to Malaysia. These specimens were all produced in the period from 1950 to 2008. They document and demonstrate a thorough analysis of the innovations in batik technique. The samples provided evidence of how batik makers learnt and implemented new techniques, which affected their designs in sarong compositions. In the study I have supplied original sequential photographic illustrations of batik techniques with the intention of documenting the process of this laborious and disciplined traditional craft. Another important research undertaking was the meticulous tracing and classification of motifs including their symbolic origins and cross-cultural influences within the Malaysian context.

In part it is the very suitability of the batik sarong as an item of clothing that makes this study significant. Its use throughout the Malay Archipelago, including Malaysia, is
widespread. Further, the traditional use of the batik sarong over a long period of time has kept alive its importance and place in the region’s clothing culture. The study has shown that the batik sarong is designed for comfort with respect to tropical climates. Indeed, it is its very suitability for such climates that has ensured that the sarong is worn for normal daily activities in addition to its traditional and symbolic functions.

The study has shown that the batik sarong as an important item of clothing spread gradually across Malaysia as a result of Javanese batik sarongs gaining increasing popularity; people in Malaysia came to appreciate not only its aesthetic qualities but also the comfort that it afforded the wearer. Malaysia’s geographic proximity to Java, as well as the sea-faring enterprises that brought the two countries close together, was fertile ground for the adoption and eventual adaptation of the Javanese batik sarong. It was an easy cultural exchange that, although first seen in Malay society, over time spread throughout the entire country. But it most certainly was amongst Malays that the batik sarong became an integral part of their clothing culture.

This study involved three major undertakings. Firstly, it involved collecting – using comprehensive and rigorously acknowledged techniques – one hundred relevant samples of batik sarongs from around the country. Secondly, it involved photographing the batik design of these sarongs. Thirdly, it involved a meticulous tracing of specific batik patterns, which provided the basis for this study’s discussion, comparison, and cataloguing of these. The entire process and, in particular, the catalogue that has been produced as part of this study, will ideally, inform future curatorial and conservation practise in Malaysia and provide a reference for future studies in this field.

The samples of batik sarongs that were collected, traced and catalogued illustrate several aspects. They enable us to see how regional features were incorporated into the design when the sarong was adopted in Malaysia; these distinguish the Malaysian batik sarong from its Javanese counterpart, from which it emanated. In the Malaysian sarong we can see unique, regionally inspired design motifs representing nature (for example, plants or flowers having particular features representing beauty, the aromatic, and some that are related to medicinal, culinary, and cosmetic functions). These sarongs are associated with the cultural traditions of every ethnic group in Malaysia. In addition, we see the use of a variety of fabrics, which is the result of Malaysia being in a strategic location as an
important trade route, thus exposing it to various influences – including particular fabrics – from other countries and cultures. This, it has been seen, began around the time of the Malay empire that was based in Malacca from the early fifteenth century.

Integral to this study has been an historic perspective that has shown how Malaysia, because of its geographic position, came under the influence not only of Java, but also Indians, Chinese, Arabians, and Persians who travelled to trade various goods, including a variety of textiles. Importantly this study of the Malaysian batik sarong acknowledges that the inevitable interactions that these travellers had in Malaysia – in the first instance with the Malays – involved ‘the influences of world religions [that] have forged links between some cultures within the region and defined differences between others’ (Kerlogue, 2004, p. 9). Trade, it has been seen, influenced Malay indigenous cultures; however, later colonisation by the Europeans, and particularly the British, also had a significant impact. European colonisation led to an increase in migration, including a relocation of Indian labourers and consequently an increase in Chinese business people settling in the country. One aspect of cultural identity in Malaysia was recognised through people’s dress but, over time, this cross-cultural contact led to a fusion of styles and designs that developed into the unique Malay aesthetic.

In considering Malaysia’s textile collections, the question arises about how best to manage and safeguard this vital cultural resource. Malaysia is a country that is essentially ‘characterised by a great cultural and ethnic diversity’ (Jamal, 2007, p. 9) that is represented through the co-existence of different cultural practices. One of the challenges of this study was in identifying the results of the combinations of design and motif that have developed. This study shows that the position of batik in Malaysia has been conveyed as a continuation of cultural values. Two institutions in Malaysia, the Malay for Indigenous People’s Trust Council (MARA) and the Malaysian Handicraft Development Cooperation (KRAFTANGAN) undertake research, education, training, promotion and financial support concerning batik as an essential handicraft. Both institutions aim to ensure the ongoing development and recognition of batik in Malaysia and internationally. Government funding and support to the industry, as well as local demand for traditional batik cloth, have ensured the continuation of batik sarong production. Further, as Arney (1987) has argued, ‘the significance of Malaysian batik lies partially in its development in
the modern world. It emerged at a time when established traditional skills were facing extinction’ (p. 108).

The increase in batik sarong production for the local market occurred after Independence in 1957 at a time when questions of national identity were being widely debated and discussed. Fourteen years later, in response to the 1971 race riots, the issue of national identity was again at the forefront of Malaysian consciousness. The government developed the *Dasar Kebudayaan Kebangsaan* (National Cultural Policy), to specify what elements of design contributed to a unified and officially accepted version of what was considered to be Malaysian. The national cultural policy formed guidelines for batik producers and others. The policy created three main guidelines for the arts, which were to, firstly recognise Malay cultural elements, secondly recognise other cultural influences into Malaysian culture, and thirdly to respect Islamic principles. Thus the formation of ‘the national culture is a mélange of the cultures of the past with the assimilated elements of the present day culture’ (Al-Ahmadi, 1996, p. 96). This will be the guide for future reviews of the national cultural policy.

One of the more significant findings to emerge from this study is that Malay craftsmen gradually incorporated Malay design features into the making of batik sarongs. The continuous use of the batik technique has grown together with explorations and innovations in the batik medium. Over time, the development of traditional batik techniques involved the use of blocks (that were first carved in the late 1800s), and later the use of soldered metal blocks. There has been an upholding of tradition by adhering to motifs that became popular in the 1920s. These designs reflect Malaysia’s mixed cultural heritage.

The Malaysian innovations in batik sarong culture have specific features that are identified in the sarong’s motifs, patterns, layouts, and colours. Identifying these features has been the focus of the present study. In particular, this is a study of Malaysian batik sarong culture that has retained traditional techniques that involve hand-produced application of metal stamps. The batik sarong made from wax-metal stamps can usually produce one to five layers of colour. It has been seen that the use of bright colours is a distinguishing feature of the Malaysian batik sarong – indeed, it is a feature that consumers demand. Increased production was achieved by increasing the labour force of craftspeople, thus
making this essential commodity more readily and more broadly available – and ensuring its widespread use throughout the country. The infrastructure developed by the British, which included the rail network among others, increased trade and further promoted the popularity of the sarong.

The continuation of the batik sarong’s popularity in Malaysia can be attributed to government support and, quintessentially, to Malaysians identifying sarongs as representative of their sense of cultural belonging. This can be seen in the wearing of sarongs not only for official ceremonies, but also as everyday clothing. This form of attire expresses social and political status, economic stability, and ethnic and national identity. Some people also wear batik sarongs to express their regional culture, which is seen in the various compositions and motifs used. At the same time, the cross-fertilisation of culture that is found in Malaysia is also represented in traditional batik design development. The central place that the Malaysian batik sarong has, even today, as an essential item of clothing and as an art form is testimony to its cultural significance; its use by ethnic and non-ethnic Malays alike is evidence of its significance in the lives of all people.

Another significant achievement of my research activities has been the creation of the catalogue of batik samples that feature rare and undocumented specimens from private collections. The presentation of the catalogue is unique because motifs have been clearly illustrated both photographically and importantly with tracing technology to reduce the motifs to a simplified linear form. The tracing process provided enhanced visual representation of how motifs remained constant in traditional design and how others adapted and evolved while other newer motifs were incorporated.

The tracing, analysis, and cataloguing of the Malaysian batik sarong’s design features – based on the one hundred collected samples – is this study’s major contribution to the field. The attractiveness of designs in batik sarong culture – and in textile arts in general – is shaped from motivic elements that are formed into harmonious patterns to produce something that is aesthetically appealing. Although the technique was learned from Javanese batik, Malaysia developed its own sarong design tradition: documenting this from an historical perspective has been a central aspect of this study.
The catalogue was created with the specific purpose to document motif design development in batik sarongs and provide clear visual evidence of the craft’s evolution within Malaysia. It also has preserved rare samples and illustrates rich diversity of design and colour which is available to inspire art and textile experts of this rich and living craft culture.

Specific Malaysian characteristics in batik sarong design can be identified through their patterns, layouts, and colours. The Malaysian batik sarong, for example, uses a colour scheme that is significantly different from its Javanese counterpart. Further, it has been seen that the evolution and combination of motifs shows a variety of inspiration: from flora, fauna, geometry and other images. The motifs are arranged into segments, named kepala kain (the main central segment), badan kain (the main field for the left and right sections), apit kain (the framing border) and tepi kain (the upper and lower edges). In Malaysia these segments are recognised as the main compositional layout for batik sarongs. One difference in the layout composition between Javanese and Malaysian sarongs is that the Javanese ones often have additional rows of apit kain (the framing border), and sometimes tepi kain (the upper and lower edges). Further, it is not uncommon for Malaysian sarong composition to use only a single row on each side of the central panel; similarly, Malaysian sarongs might only have a single upper and lower band of patterning in the tepi kain (the upper and lower edges).

It has been shown that the aesthetic and rich palette of the Malaysian sarong can be attributed to the country’s multicultural diversity. The design traits that can be considered distinctly Malaysian can be attributed to cultural factors, colonisation, and Islamic design principles that determine what motifs can be used and when. In conducting this research project I observed that the use of bouquets of flowers with butterflies or birds are still used as a traditional feature of batik sarong design.

Malaysian batik sarong culture has developed its own norms that are distinctive from the traditions in Java. It has been stated throughout my research that Malaysian batik traditions were very heavily influenced by Javanese batik, but over time Malaysian batik developed its own design characteristics. Both countries are predominantly Muslim, but Javanese batik sarong design still bares influences of its earlier religious traditions. Muslim Indonesians are still likely to wear sarongs that have symbolic references to Hinduism and
Buddhism using such motifs as the phoenix and the peacock motifs as mentioned in chapter five. However, most Malay Muslims do not wear batik sarongs that have elements of representations of fauna during religious occasions. This factor has contributed to the changes of the design motifs used in Malaysia. Therefore, it has been seen that the distinctive Malaysian batik sarong is not only a result of influences from Java and the tenets of Islam. The development of design characteristics, styles and influences can be viewed in the catalogue that is submitted as Volume II of this research project.

Finally, it needs to be stressed that tracing, analysing and cataloguing the one hundred samples of batik sarongs has revealed a richness of design motifs that can be attributed to cross-cultural exchanges over centuries. The exchange of craft techniques and knowledge has led to a vast array of design development. Most of the designs are based on three main sources (flora, fauna and geometry), but are also adapted from other handicraft patterns. Together, they have contributed significantly to Malaysia’s clothing culture. Even the transference of Javanese techniques and motifs to Malay batik reflects Java’s own inter-ethnic diversity. The Peranakan communities in Java, Singapore and Malaysia comprise Chinese, Indians and Arabs, all of whom favour a similar dress style. At the same time, ethnic differences or preferences can often be discernible as, for example, in a Chinese tendency to feature butterflies and phoenixes in their batik sarongs. Further, over time, a European aesthetic has not infrequently been incorporated into Asian design elements. This research project has directed further light on what has become distinctly Malaysian in terms of batik sarong design. The various elements that have been defined in this study have demonstrated the impact of various design traits that today can be considered distinctly Malaysian.
6.2 Recommendations for further research

A notable event in the development of textile art in South East Asia was the listing of Indonesian batik as a ‘traditional handcrafted textile rich in intangible cultural values, passed down for generations in Java and elsewhere’ (UNESCO, 2009, p. 1). This declaration demonstrates the pride that is represented in batik’s place in the material culture of the region. With the importance given to traditional batik as a cultural icon, the question arises of how its techniques can best be preserved for the future. The rich heritage of batik design presents a challenge for its conservation and cataloguing. This research project has identified some ideas that need further consideration and investigation.

In this research I have reviewed studies of Japanese kimonos, Indian saris, Kashmiri shawls, Javanese batik sarongs, and also the local weaving of the Malaysian songket sarong. These reviews have revealed the interaction of design and cultural influences. Applying other academics’ research approaches and models to my own study of Malaysia’s batik culture created both challenges and opportunities. I have explored the history and cultural developments that resulted in batik sarongs being recognised by Malays and other races in Malaysia as having an important place with respect to the country’s traditional heritage. I believe that, over the time, the symbolic meaning of the traditional designs will change gradually. This highlights the need to engage in continuous, ongoing research that updates new developments in batik sarong creations. It also draws attention to the need for rigorous conservation processes to be implemented and maintained. This will entail continuing to document and catalogue developments with respect to the distinctive Malaysian batik sarong that is represented by this study. It is hoped that the study and, in particular, Volume II, which is a rich catalogue and discussion of the ornate designs found in Malaysian batik sarongs, will be a useful text for other researchers in the field and, at the same time, influence relevant cultural institutions within the country to rigorously re-visit their current collections with a view to updating them and acquiring and cataloguing new, significant pieces.

This investigation has endeavoured to systematically analyse traditional batik sarong design features from one hundred Malaysian samples. Tracing motifs with Illustrator was the main tool for deconstructing design features. This process could greatly assist conservation departments in updating their digital online collections, thus providing an easier way to classify fabric samples. The approach, indeed, is useful for any artefacts that
have decoration. In the future I hope that this analysis process will support other studies of visual arts and craft traditions and thus contribute to maintaining the diverse culture traditions in the Malay Archipelago.

The states of Kelantan and Terengganu (refer to appendix III) are areas of Malaysia that still produce batik sarongs with a strong sense of pride. The ongoing production of batik sarongs is helping to keep alive traditional batik techniques and, at the same time, supplying not only the local but also the international markets. This production should be accompanied by ongoing research into the batik sarong in both states. One such approach might profitably include fieldwork research, visiting every batik maker, as was done with the present study. In gathering samples on a regular basis, researchers will be able to track and document changes that occur collectively or in each state individually. Such fieldwork research might be undertaken collaboratively between arts institutions in Malaysia (involving academic staff as well as students), and arts and crafts organisations. Ideally, it would also result in the establishment of multi-sample ‘banks’ of batik sarong designs that could be collected for the purposes of further research and cultural preservation.

The unique features of Malaysian batik sarong design can be explored in many different ways. One particularly interesting study – given that the batik sarong is a cloth that has a balanced layout design displaying appropriate motif arrangements – could be an investigation of designs in relation to mathematical ideas with respect to notions of pattern and symmetry. Such a study could assist in better understanding and appreciating geometric structure when analysing and describing patterns. From an aesthetic perspective the study might enable researchers to postulate a theory on the link between art and mathematics as represented in sarong design with its use of repeated and combined motifs. Further, this element of repetition with respect to the use of lines, shapes and textures might also be represented mathematically not only in relation to specific samples but, even more generally, across samples. At a practical level this would have implications for future design and production, for it must be remembered that the batik sarongs produced in Malaysia mostly use metal-block stamps (batik sarong cap) which involve mixing various motifs and applying them using bright colours. The layout of the batik sarong consists of four segments which all have different motif arrangements. Each motif has its own metal block stamp in creating a segment. Studying how metal blocks stamps are combined for making a panel of batik design would enable us to better understand the most efficacious
ways of using metal block stamps in batik production. This might point the way not only for the tradition continuing, but also for a revival of interest by young people in exploring further new design possibilities. The introduction of new computer technologies with their graphic design capabilities make this an exciting prospect for the continuation and development of a traditional Malaysian craft and, in the process, will also assist in exploring more efficient means of analysing and documenting such endeavours.

Given that countries throughout the world have their own fabric or material artefacts, an interesting study would be a comparative one, not only of the fabrics and their decoration and use, but also curatorial practices for the preservation of historical collections. It would thus be interesting to compare issues surrounding Malaysian batik sarong production today with those associated with corresponding materials in other cultures, including, for example, the Indian sari and the Japanese kimono. One focus of such a study might be on how to keep alive traditional approaches to design, production and dress in order to pass this knowledge onto younger generations. A related, comparative study, might focus on issues relating to the curating of such works so that, from an historical perspective, they are preserved for the benefit of future generations.

This raises the issue of training personnel as curators and underscores the need for Malaysia to continue to develop opportunities for interested people to undertake appropriate courses of study to equip them to take on this important role. Funding for such a venture might be sought from government, cultural institutions, universities and the private sector. Associated with this is the importance of acknowledging the broader field of arts management and the need for the establishment of appropriate infrastructure to make this – along with curatorial positions – a realistic career path. Ideally, as Malaysia increasingly recognises the importance of this field, training courses with a range of entry levels could be implemented. Here, of course, the universities and relevant cultural institutions and organisations will have an important role to play.

Finally, given the central place of the batik sarong in Malaysian life, it is important that this not be neglected in school curricula. Schools have a responsibility not only to teach the techniques of batik design and production in art classes but, more broadly, to ensure that all students have an appreciation of the symbolic role and significance of the batik sarong in their culture. Another relevant aspect of contemporary batik sarong design that could be
further researched is whether the traditional cultural symbolism still retains meaning in a
time of rapid modernisation and technological change. It would be interesting to research
whether motifs selection today is driven by consumer demand that is only attracted to the
surface appearance of motifs or whether there is recognition of the deeper cultural meaning
contained in the symbols.
References


Appendix I: List of location (museums, galleries and archives)

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<th>No.</th>
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<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Appointments</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| 1.  | Carol Cains  
Curator, Asian Art  
National Gallery of Victoria  
180 St Kilda Road Melbourne  
Vic 3004 Australia  
Telephone: +61 3 8620 2288  
Fax: +61 3 8620 2555  
Email: carol.cains@ngv.vic.gov.au | - To view the textile collection.  
- To collect the data and samples. | - Friday : 13/6/2008 after 11.00am. | - Confirm |
| 2.  | Robyn Maxwell  
Senior Curator  
National Gallery of Australia  
GPO Box 1150  
Canberra ACT 2601 Australia  
Email: robyn.maxwell@nga.gov.au | - To view the textile collection especially batik sarong from Malay world such as from Indonesia. | - E-mail /phone | |
| 3.  | Asian Civilisation Museum  
1 Empress Place  
Singapore 179555  
Tel: 65-63322982, 65-63327798  
Fax: 65-68850732  
Email: msh_apm_vgy@phb.gov.sg | - To view the textile collection especially batik sarong from Malay world such from Indonesia which related with *Peranakan* culture. | - E-mail /phone | |
| 4.  | Museum Tekstil Jakarta  
Jl Aipda Ks Tuban 4  
Monjeng Jakarta,  
Java 11421 Indonesia  
Tel: 62-21-560-6613 | - Available | |
| 5.  | Mr. Kamaruddin bin Zakaria  
Deputy Director  
The office of Malay World Gallery,  
Department of Museums Malaysia,  
Jalan Dataran, 5066 Kuala Lumpur  
Malaysia Tel: +603 2284 3157  
Fax: +603 2284 3187 | - Available | |
| 6.  | Mr. Abdul Aziz Abdul Rashid  
Acting Head,Museum of Asian Art,  
Kuala Lumpur Malaysia  
Tel: +603 79673936/+603 7967 3805  
Fax: +603 79675985  
Email: azizrm@um.edu.my | - Available | |
| 7.  | Syed Mohamad Albukhary  
Director  
Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia  
Jalan Lembah Perdana 50480 Kuala Lumpur  
Tel: +603 22740200  
Fax: +603 22740529 | - To collect the data, pictures and information from the archive collections. | - E-mail /phone | |
| 8.  | To Hj Shahrudin Mohd Nor  
Bahagian Penyelidikan dan Pembangunan Kompleks Kraf Kuala Lumpur  
Sekayan 63, Jalan Conlay,  
56450 Kuala Lumpur Malaysia  
Tel: 03-21627459  
Fax: 03-21612622 | - Available | |
| 9.  | ARKIV NEGARA MALAYSIA  
Jalan Dato,  
50608 Kuala Lumpur Malaysia  
Tel : 03-6201 0688  
Fax : 03-6201 5070 | - Available | |
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<td>10.</td>
<td>Puan Zuhairi Bt. Mohd Zain</td>
<td>Jalan Hospital 15000 Kota Bharu Kelantan Malaysia Tel.: +609 7473366</td>
<td>- To view and collect the batik sarong pictures from permanent collection in Museum Kelantan and Terengganu. - To identify the characteristic, style, colour and design between both samples.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Terengganu State Museum</td>
<td>Bukit Losong 20566 Kuala Terengganu Terengganu Malaysia Tel.: +609 622 1444</td>
<td>- Phone</td>
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<td>12.</td>
<td>Batik-makers (Kelantan &amp; Terengganu)</td>
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<td>- To collect the sample of batik sarong from traditional batik-makers from Kelantan and Terengganu.</td>
<td>- Phone</td>
<td>- Available</td>
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<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Pengarah Jabatan Muzium Sarawak</td>
<td>Jalan Tun Abang Haji Openg 94566 Kuching Sarawak Malaysia</td>
<td><a href="mailto:webmaster@museum.sarawak.gov.my">webmaster@museum.sarawak.gov.my</a> Tel.: +6082 244232 Fax: +6082 246680</td>
<td>- To view and collect the batik sarong from Borneo Malay culture.</td>
<td>- Phone</td>
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Miss Legino has discussed her proposed travel and the above consultations with me and I believe they will form a valuable part of her research.

Dr. S. Errey, Senior Supervisor

[Signature]

11/26/08
Appendix II: Letter of permission for research

28 July 2008

To Whom It May Concern:

Ms Rafeah Legino is currently enrolled as a full time international student in the Doctor of Philosophy program in the School of Art, RMIT University.

In consultation with her senior supervisor, Dr Sophia Errey and I, Ms Legino has expressed her intention to return to her homeland in order to collect essential data, access necessary information and to make initial contacts for her approved research project.

She plans to leave Australia on 1 August 2008 and return 29 August 2008 in order to continue her studies at this University.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further information regarding Ms Rafeah Legino.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

Associate Professor Lesley Duxbury
Postgraduate Research Coordinator
Phone: 61 3 9925 2378
Email: Lesley.Duxbury@rmit.edu.au
Dalam usaha menyokong perkembangan dan perkembangan industri batik negara yang merupakan warisan dan identiti negara, Kerajaan telah memutuskan supaya pakaian batik Malaysia dipakai oleh pegawai awam pada hari pertama dan hari ke-15 setiap bulan. Untuk meningkatkan keberkesanan pelaksanaan pemakaian batik Malaysia oleh pegawai awam, kerajaan telah bersetuju supaya hari pemakaian batik oleh pegawai awam dipinda kepada setiap hari Khamis. Pindaan ini juga melibatkan hari pemakaian fesyen pakaian batik Malaysia alternatif pakaian lelaki seperti yang ditetapkan di perenggan 4, Surat Pekeliling Perkhidmatan Bilangan 1 Tahun 2006.

Arahan pemakaian batik pada setiap Khamis ini tidak terpakai kepada pegawai yang dibekalkan dengan pakaian seragam, pegawai yang menghadiri acara-acara rasmi seperti persidangan-persidangan antarabangsa, perjumpaan dengan pelawat-pelawat asing atau pegawai yang menghadiri majlis rasmi yang menetapkan pemakaian jenis pakaian lain.

Surat Pekeliling ini berkuat kuasa mulai tarikh ianya dikeluarkan.

Unit Komunikasi Korporat
JPA
KERJAAN MALAYSIA

SURAT PEKELILING PERKHIDMATAN BILANGAN 1 TAHUN 2008

PEMAKAIAN PAKAIAN BATIK MALAYSIA OLEH PEGAWAI AWAM PADA HARI KHAMIS

TUJUAN

1. Surat Pekeliling Perkhidmatan ini bertujuan menyampaikan keputusan Kerajaan mengenai kewajipan memakai pakaian batik oleh pegawai awam pada setiap hari Khamis.

LATAR BELAKANG

3. Untuk meningkatkan keberkesanan pelaksanaan pemakaian batik Malaysia oleh pegawai awam, Kerajaan telah bersetuju supaya arahan tersebut dipinda sewajarnya.

PINDAAN HARI PEMAKAIAN BATIK MALAYSIA


PENGECUALIAN

5. Arahan pemakaian batik pada setiap hari Khamis ini tidak terpakai kepada pegawai yang dibekalkan dengan pakaian seragam, pegawai yang menghadiri acara-acara rasmi seperti persidangan-persidangan antarabangsa, perjumpaan dengan pelawat-pelawat asing atau pegawai yang menghadiri majlis rasmi yang menetapkan pemakaian jenis pakaian yang lain.

TARIKH KUAT KUASA


PEMAKAIAN

PEMBATALAN


“BERKHIDMAT UNTUK NEGARA”

(TAN SRI ISMAIL ADAM)
Ketua Pengarah Perkhidmatan Awam
Malaysia

JABATAN PERKHIDMATAN AWAM
MALAYSIA
PUTRAJAYA

15 Januari 2008

Semua Ketua Setiausaha Kementerian
Semua Ketua Jabatan Persekutuan
Semua Y.B. Setiausaha Kerajaan Negeri
Semua Pihak Berkuasa Berkanun
Semua Pihak Berkuasa Tempatan
Appendix IV: List of batik sarong makers in Kelantan and Terengganu.

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<td>Manager 2 Jalan Pintu Pong 7830 15000 Alor Setar Kelantan Tel: 09- 7475775</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abd Manam Abd Rahman</td>
<td>Manager 24 Tingkat 1 Bazar Buloh Kubu 15000 Kota Bahru Kelantan Tel: 09- 7473596</td>
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<td>Arifdiani Jadi Batik</td>
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<td>Aziz B Batik</td>
<td>Mr Mohd Khuziri B Hussin - Manager 666, Pintu No 3, Tingkat 2, Pasar Besar Siti Khadijah 15000 Kota Bahru Kelantan Tel: 09- 7434142 HP: 013- 9849700</td>
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<td>Aziz B Ali</td>
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<td>Aziz Jaafar</td>
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<td>Batik Emas Sdn Bhd</td>
<td>Encik Mubarak Amir - Manager 943, Jalan Besar, Rantau Panjang 17200 Rantau Panjang Kelantan Tel: 09- 7950251</td>
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<td>Che Abdullah bin Che Mamat</td>
<td>Mr Che Hassan Nordin B Yunus - Manager Kg Pulau Gorek Palembang 15350 Kota Bahru Kelantan Tel: 09- 7941424</td>
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<tr>
<td>Che Ismail Bakar</td>
<td>Che Ismail Bakar - Manager 1, Bangunan pasar Besar Jalan Hilir Pasar 15000 Kota Bahru Kelantan Tel: 09- 7488887</td>
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<td>Che Said B Yusoff</td>
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<td>Che Zainuddin Osman</td>
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<td>Mohd Nawi Ahmad</td>
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<td>4880-A Jalan Sungai Keladi 15050 Kota Bahru Kelantan</td>
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<td>Mohd Nor Hj Sidek</td>
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<td>11, Jalan Sultan Yahya Petra 18000 Kuala Krai Kelantan</td>
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<td>Villa Kraf, Lot 4677 KM 7.6 Jalan Wakaf Bharu, Palekbang, Kampung Morak 16040 Tumpat Kelantan</td>
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<td>Mr Sulaiman Mohd Salleh - Manager</td>
<td>1, Bangunan Pasar Besar 131, Jalan Hilir Pasar 15000 Kota Bahru Kelantan</td>
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