

# INDONESIAN BATIK

A MASTERPIECE OF ORAL & INTANGIBLE HERITAGE OF HUMANITY (UNESCO 2009)



Exploring Batik as art and the cultural and identity connections it

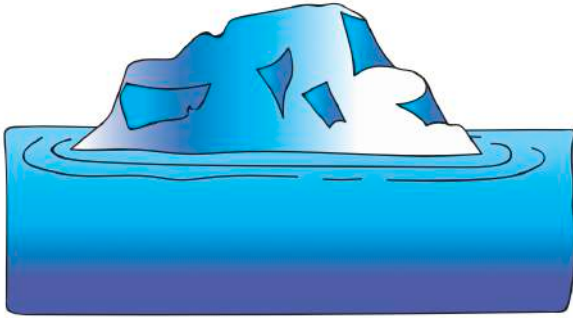


When exploring culture and art it can be useful to think about the idea as an iceberg. When an iceberg is first sighted only the tip of it is seen. The same can be said for culture and the arts. When we view these ideas we often only notice what we can see. But what if we went deeper...?

While only the top of an iceberg is visible, if you swim under the water (in a really good wet suit) the dimensions of what you are looking at starts to become visible. The size and complexity begins to insist on your attention. Learning about culture and the arts can be a little like iceberg exploring. If you look beyond what is visually apparent you get an inkling of the less visible ideas about customs, perspectives, roles, language, traditions and history.

If you were to dive deeper under the water (in an exceptional wetsuit) you would find out about the parts of the iceberg that are deeply hidden but on which the more visible parts of the iceberg rest on. A rich appreciation of culture, identity and how the arts express this requires us to dive really deeply into the big ideas, ideas about rules, values, justice, ethics, power, identity, self perception, kinship, morals and much more.

## A thinking routine for finding hidden ideas

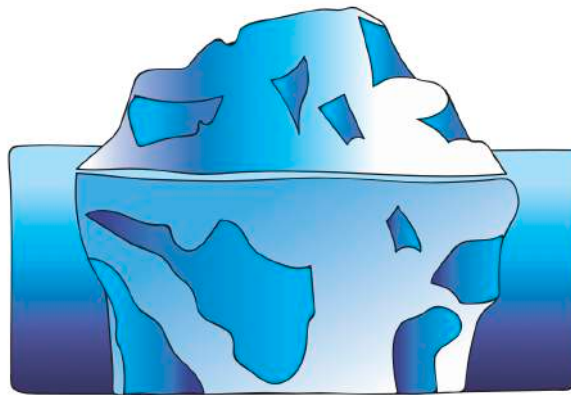


What can I see?

The tip of the iceberg...

What can I see?

Investigating the visible and expressed aspects of culture and art. This includes art forms, mediums, actions, costumes, designs, songs, totems, dress, textiles etc.

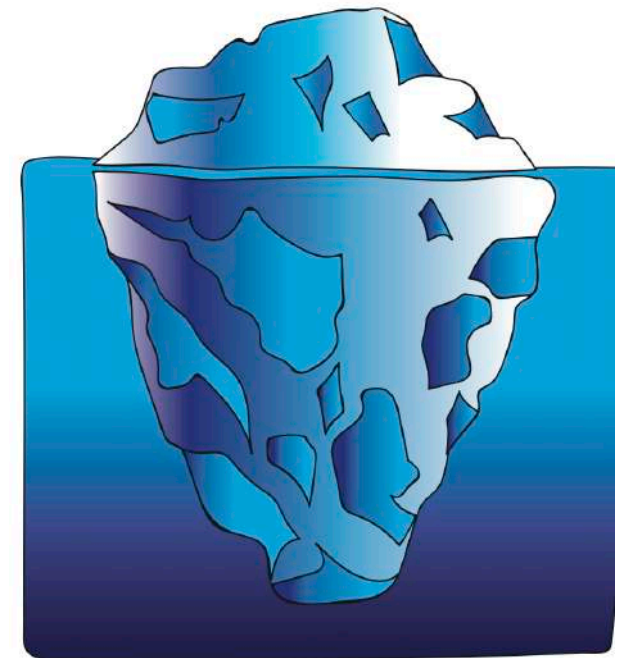


What is it  
Connected to?

The middle of the iceberg...

What is this art form/ expression connected to?

Investigating the customs, roles, codes, heritage, cycles, rites of passage etc. of what a culture is connected to and expressed by a particular art form.



What ideas need to  
be Explored or  
expanded?

The hidden, deepest part of the iceberg...

What are the ideas that anchor a particular culture? What can we appreciate, explore, or expand?

Investigating cultural ideas about justice, power, rules, values, ethics, gender, religion, self-perception, environmental connections, taboos and much, much more.



# PERSPECTIVES ON THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN ART AND CULTURE

## Teacher's notes: What came first art or culture?

Culture does express itself through art forms and content however art itself can be shaping by questioning and challenging current cultural norms.

One of the outcomes of this art/culture mix is the creating of both the community and individual members' identity, values, beliefs and understanding of normative modes.

Culture is never static, it moves, alters and adjusts and this is often reflected in artistic expression from the cultural group.

The things/events/ situations that cause change at a deep cultural level are often massive in impact like wars, colonisation, mass immigration, pandemics, education and now IT. These deep cultural changes are often slow.

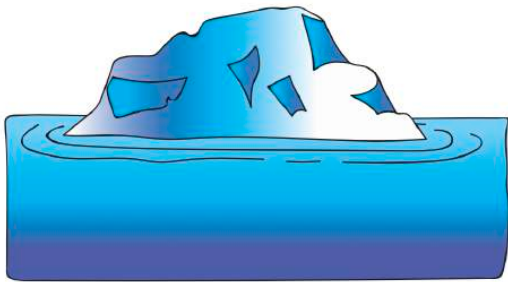
Changes at a more surface or just below the water level are often based in individual lives, and this rate of change is often relatively fast.

It is worth remembering that the culture we are embedded in will seek to act on us, change us and have us conform, however individuals are never passive in the face of such power and will resist that which doesn't have a fit. So while culture seeks to change us, we are in turn changing of cultures. Just as cultural belonging gives us an identity, we will be engaged, at the same time, in our own identity project

We are agents of cultural change as well as members of our cultural group and as such we will seek to express our changing understandings through the medium of art.

# INDONESIAN BATIK

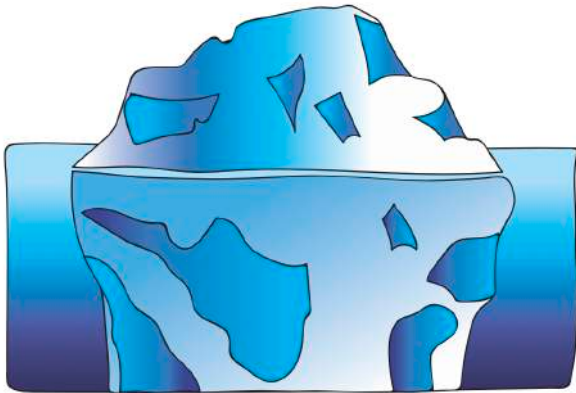
What can I see?





# INDONESIAN BATIK

What is it **connected** to?



In 2009 UNESCO declared that Indonesian Batik was a Masterpiece of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.

*What do you think this means?*

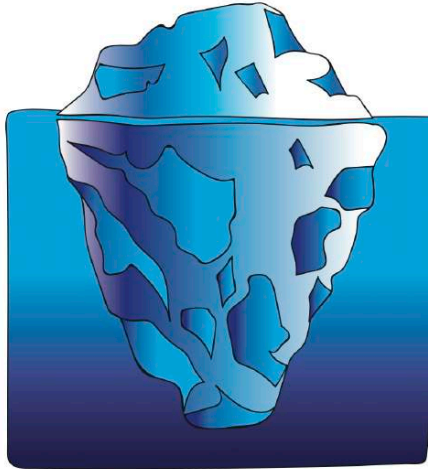
*If you were Indonesian what might this have you feeling?*





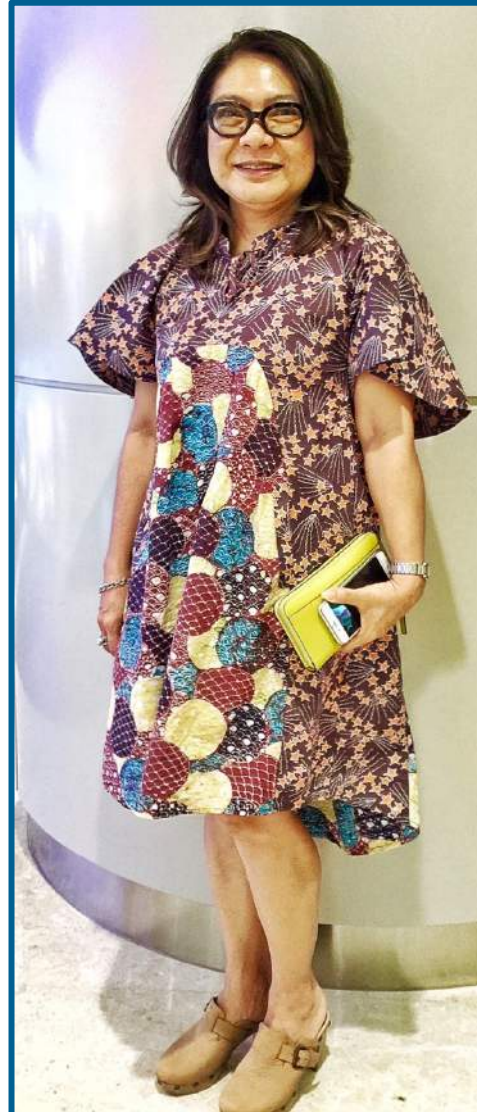
# INDONESIAN BATIK

What ideas need to be **E**xplored or **E**xpanded?



Since the UNESCO announcement many Indonesian people wear batik clothing to work or school on a Friday.

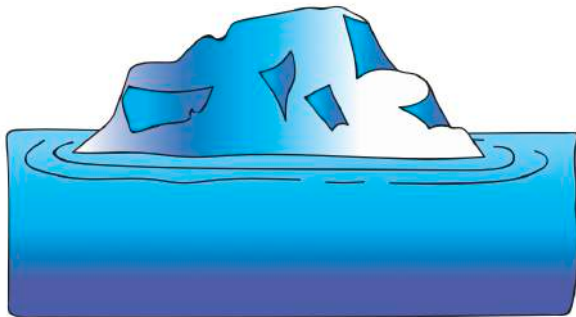
*If you walked around on a Friday and saw many beautiful batik garments being worn what do you think that all Batik wearing might stand for?*





# BATIK MOTIFS

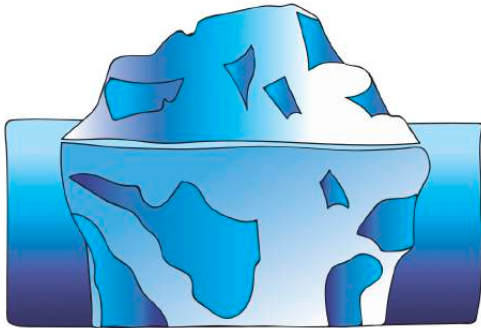
What can I see?





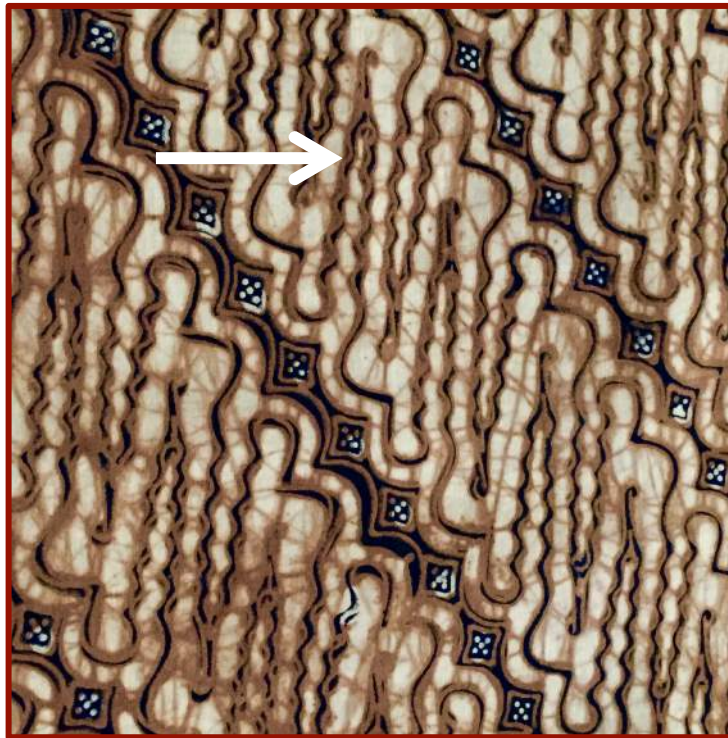
# BATIK MOTIFS

What is it **connected** to?



Motifs (repeated shapes) on batik carry cultural ideas and messages, well beyond the beauty of the design itself.

The motif on both of these batik pieces is called “*parang*”, the sword pattern.



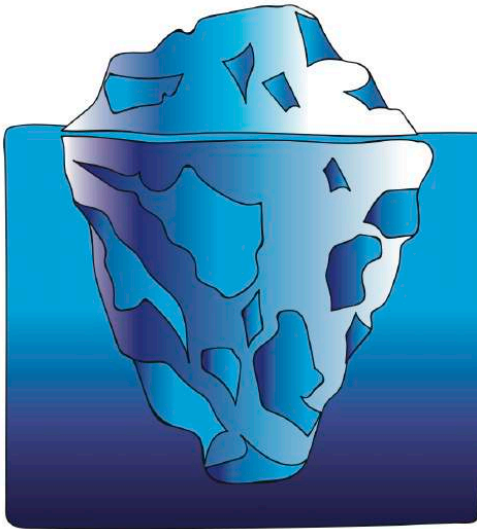
*If you were designing a motif for a piece of batik, what would it be?*

*What message would you want the motif to give others?*



# BATIK MOTIFS

What ideas need to be  
Explored or Expanded?



In earlier times only the ruling Sultan and his family could wear the “*parang*” motif. It was forbidden for anyone else to have this motif.

It was a motif about power and magic, it gave clear messages about who was the ruler.

Royal females wore the smaller “*parang*” design with an added flower motif.

Only royal adult males could wear the larger “*parang*” motif.

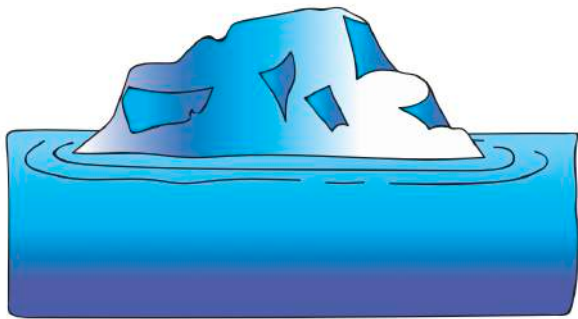


*Did you know a Sultans wife is called a Sultana?*



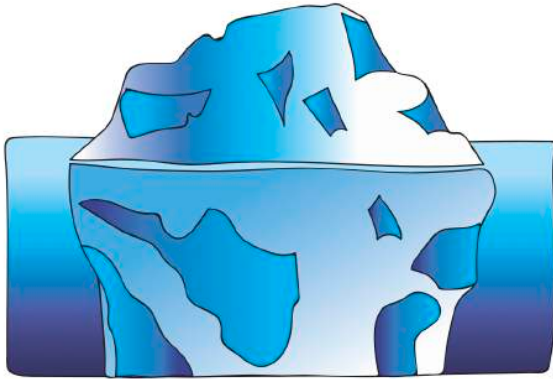
# BATIK *TULIS* (BY HAND)

What can I see?





What is it  
connected to?



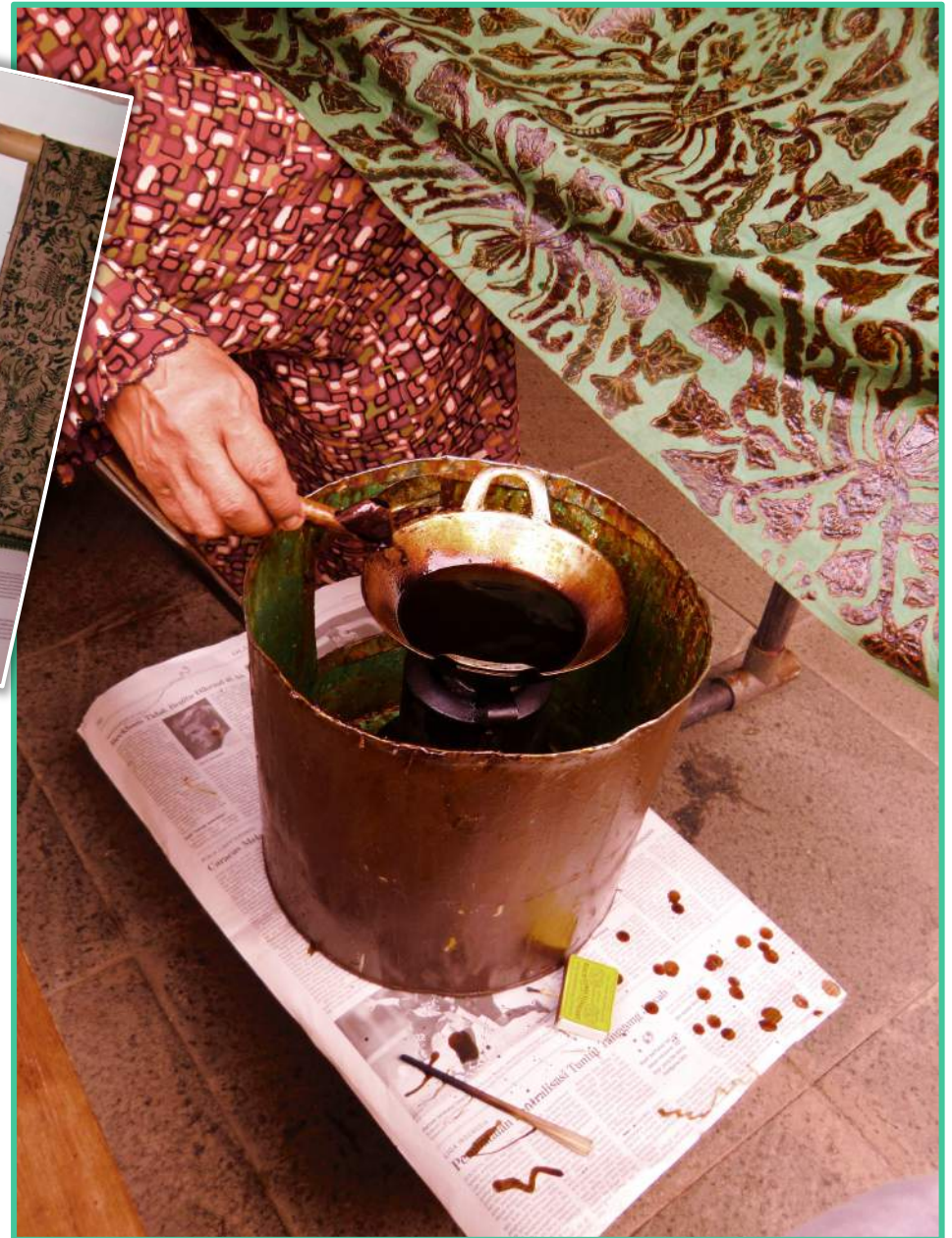
This is batik *tulis*, decorated by working, by hand, designs on the cloth in wax with a *canting* tool. The cloth is later dyed and waxed many times to get fine designs and subtle colours. Dyes were made from plants.

This has always been the work of women and they hold the recipes for the dyeing, and hold the designs.

What sort of designs and colours attract your interest?

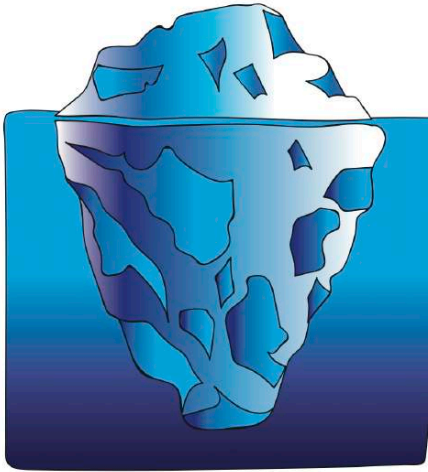
Could you spend 45 days waxing a design and dyeing it to make 1 finished batik cloth?

## BATIK *TULIS*





What ideas need to be  
**E**xplored or **E**xpanded?



The batik design on the right has been used, developed and changed over 12 generations (about 300 years) in the one family.

It is considered dishonourable for any family to take another family's batik design.

When women do the batik *tulis* they often chant, meditate and fast. They do this so they can remain very still as they work these intricate designs.

## BATIK *TULIS*



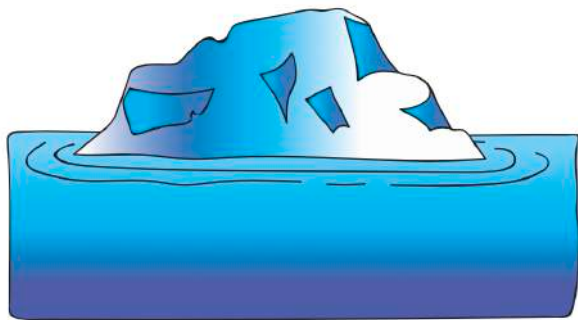
When you do artwork can you work in a "still" way for hours at a time?

Do you like to work alone or in a group for artwork?



# BATIK *CAP* (STAMP)

What can I see?



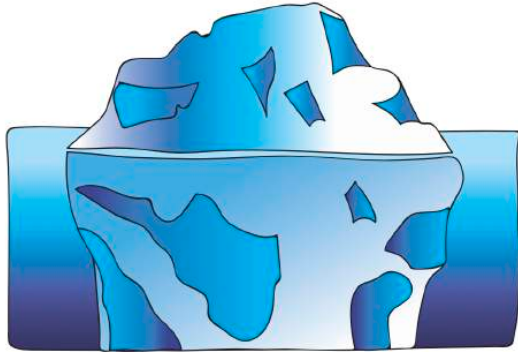
"*Cap*" is pronounced chup





# BATIK CAP

What is it  
**connected** to?



In 1840 the Dutch colonisers of Java designed a copper stamp, a *cap*, to apply wax to the cloth to make designs.

Now 1 man in 1 day could print 20 cloths with designs ready for dyeing.

The Dutch also brought to Java synthetic dyes with bright colours.

Batik *cap* production became the province of men.

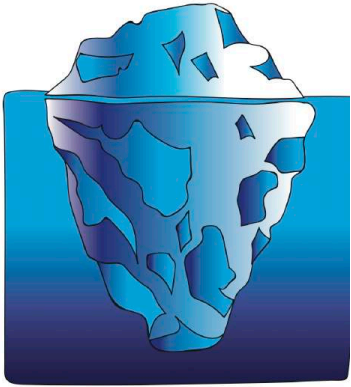


*How would you feel if artwork you were good at and proud of was suddenly made to look easy?*

*What would you think about very bright, noisy colours being put on cloth?*

# BATIK CAP

What ideas need to be  
Explored or Expanded?



The rules around batik making changed. Small factories were set up, and ordinary people could afford these cheaper batik cloths.

Even forbidden designs were now being stamped (*capped*) onto the cheaper batik cloth pieces.

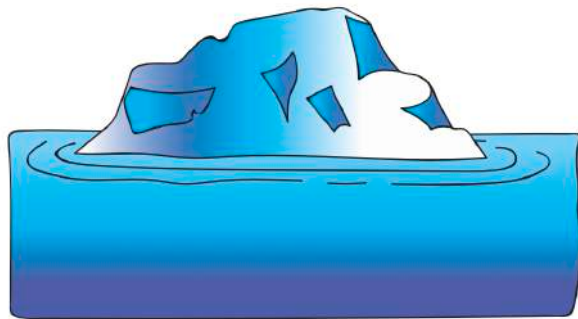
Would you predict this new *cap* method would make trouble with the makers of older style batik *tulis*?





# COMBINING *CAP* & *TULIS* BATIK

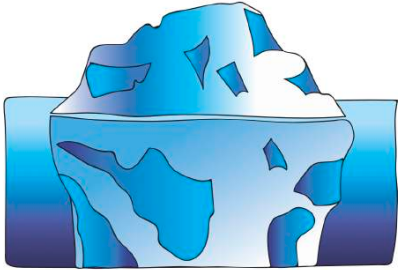
What can I see?





# COMBINING *CAP* & *TULIS* BATIK

What is it **connected** to?



The *tulis* and the *cap* batik artists worked out that their cloths were for different parts of the population so instead of competing they worked happily on their own sort of batik styles.

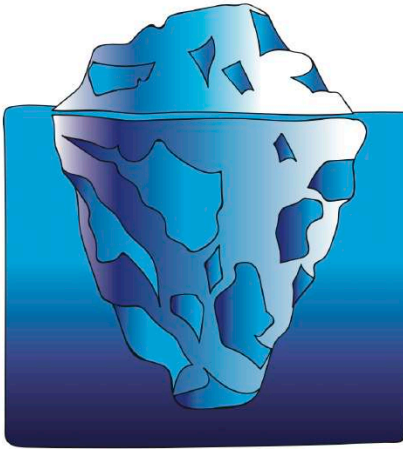
Sometimes the artists did both batik *cap* and batik *tulis* on the same piece of cloth. Sometimes they shared dyes with one another.





# COMBINING CAP & TULIS BATIK

What ideas need to be  
Explored or Expanded?



Sometimes an established culture can get a big shock that tips a lot of traditions inside out, and causes distress and conflict.

Where do you think the cultural shock came from in the long established batik culture in Indonesia?

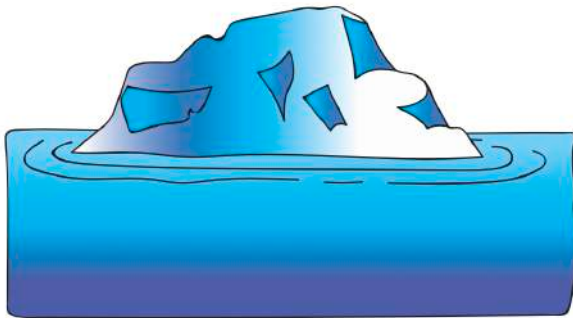
How did the batik makers manage the change?  
Did they find ways to make the change work or did this big change pull the community apart?





# THE ODD ONE OUT

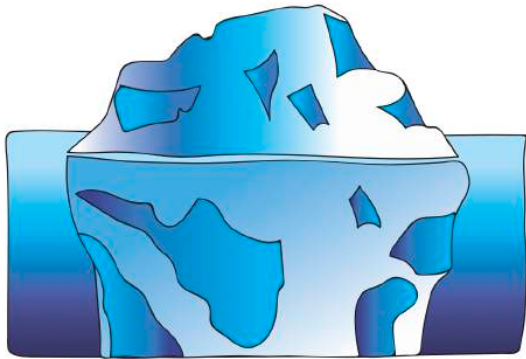
What can I see?





# THE ODD ONE OUT

What is it **connected** to?



This piece of batik is made by using a **cap** (stamp).

However the stamp was not made from copper.

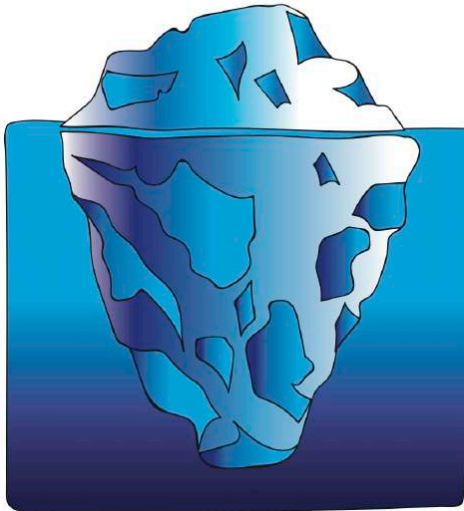
*Any guesses why changes to the stamp might have been made?*





# THE ODD ONE OUT

What ideas  
need to be  
**E**xplored or  
**E**xpanded?



The wealth of the large centres was not shared in remote villages. These villages were extremely poor, however they had seen and heard of batik **cap** work and were proud of their own batik traditions.

They carved their stamps from local hardwood and were very proud of the finished cloth.

*What are your ideas about adapting art tools when your resources are limited?*

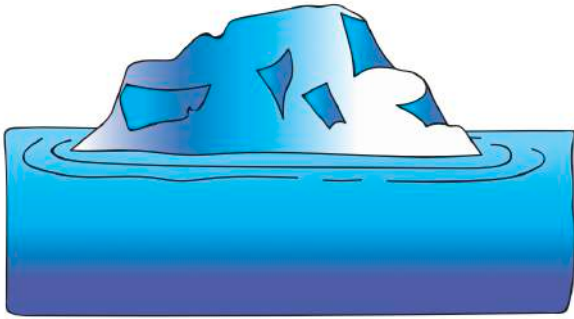
*Have a look at the finished batik, what comments would you make about the wooden **cap** work?*





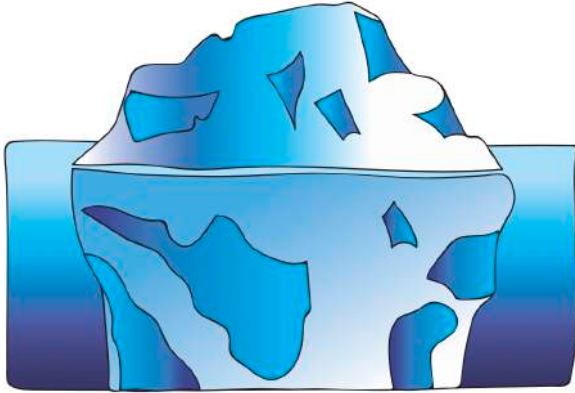
# BATIK AND WAYANG

What can I see?



# BATIK AND WAYANG

What is it **connected** to?



Wayang (shadow) puppetry is the form drama takes in Indonesia. Wayang theatre starts in the evening and goes through till the dawn of the next day.

It is attended by all the villagers and is a noisy, informal getting together of the village community.

A Wayang show is about entertainment, story telling, a coming-together and is also a form of learning.

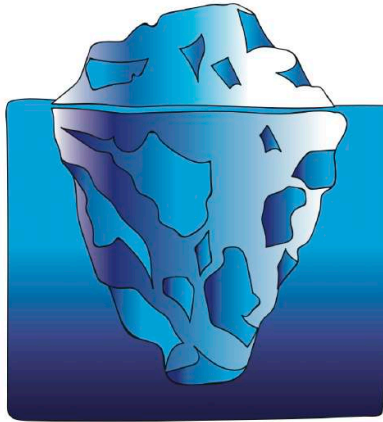


*Have you ever been to a puppet show?  
Were the puppets on rods, pulled by strings or shadow images?*



# BATIK AND WAYANG

What ideas need  
to be **E**xplored  
or **E**xpanded?



Batik that carries images of the Wayang characters is made mostly for the export market and for non-Indonesian people who live on the island of Java.

For Indonesian people the Wayang characters belong to the dramas, and tell the story of Hindu-Buddhist epics that began in the 8<sup>th</sup> century. These stories teach morals and give heroic role models for adults and children to follow.

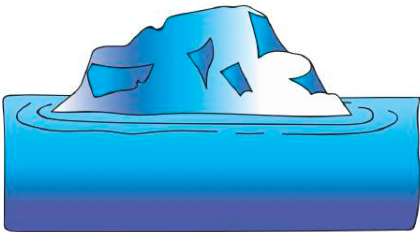
The Wayang theatre shows are also used to spread government messages to the people.



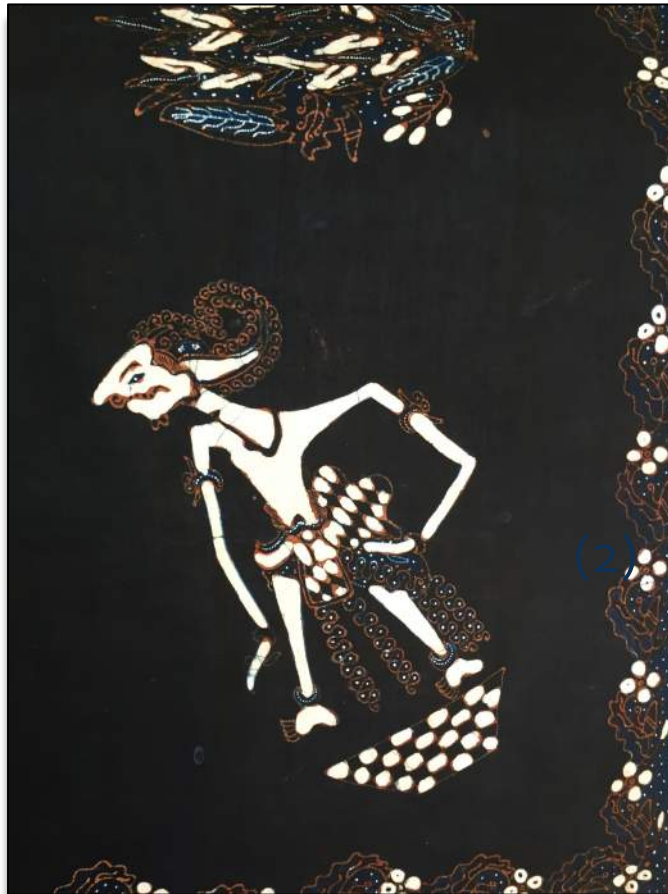
# OUTSIDE INFLUENCES

2

What can I see?



1



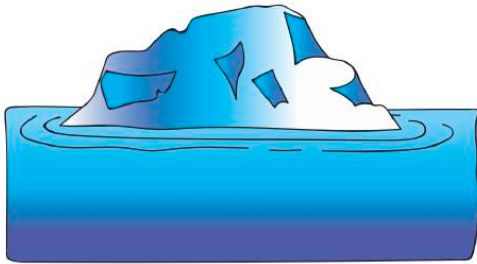
(2)





# OUTSIDE INFLUENCES

What can I see?



3



4

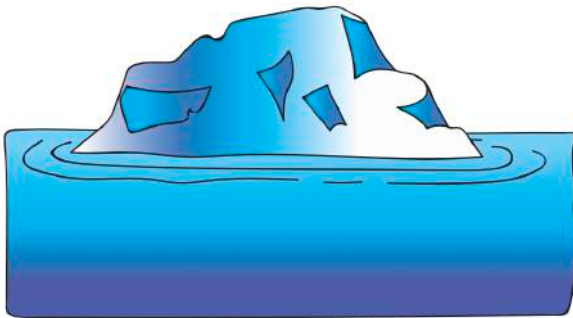




# OUTSIDE INFLUENCES

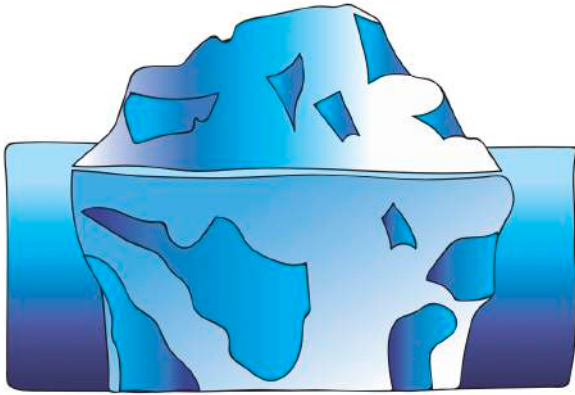
5

What can I see?





# OUTSIDE INFLUENCES



What is it **connected** to?

Because people move around the world, and their ideas travel with them, all cultures and their art become influenced and changed by outside ideas. Batik is no exception.

In the previous pages there are examples of how new ideas have influenced the artistic expression of Indonesian batik.

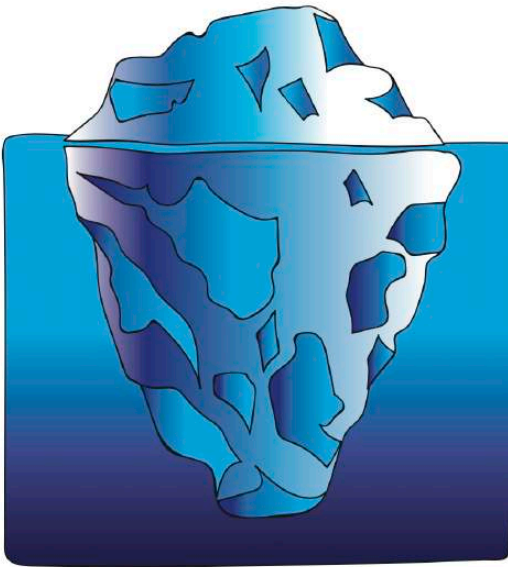
*Can you begin to make a guess as to what cultural groups have influenced these batiks?*





# OUTSIDE INFLUENCES

What ideas  
need to be  
Explored or  
Expanded?



**Aspects Number 1** is Indian batik work; wooden stamps were used to print the designs

**Number 2** reflects the Arabic influence coming into Indonesian batik. Can you see the Arabic *kaligrafi* on the bottom of the cloth?

**Number 3** reflects the Chinese influence on the Indonesian batik community, both as designers and buyers. This batik is an altar cloth for use in Chinese homes and placed on altars to honour ancestral spirits

**Number 4** the Japanese style of art and design was much admired, in this batik the birds on the cloth are copied from those found in Japanese paintings

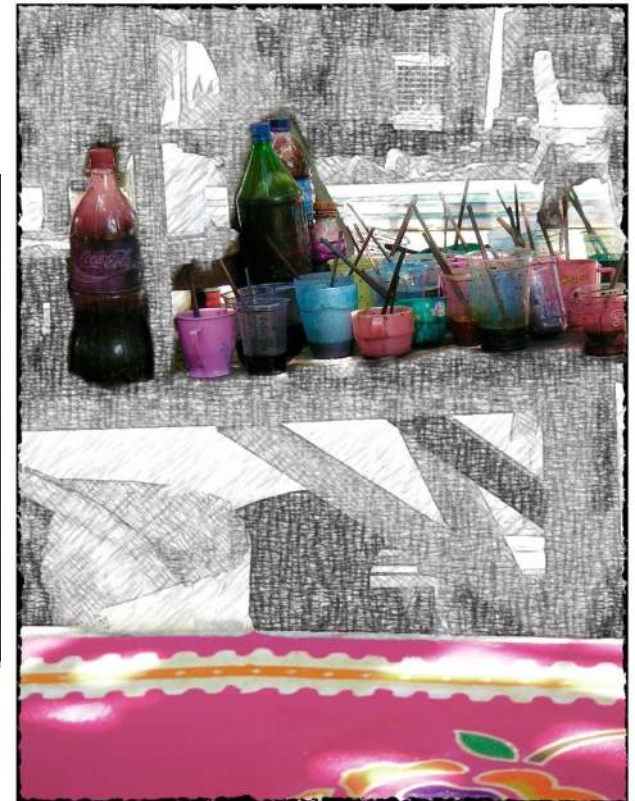
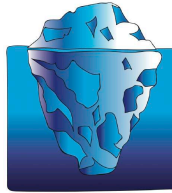
**Number 5** reflects the Dutch women who became involved in the batik industry in Indonesia. The flowers are from a European garden not a tropical garden

*Apart from batik how might these countries have influenced other parts of Indonesian art and culture and identity?*



# BATIK

What ideas need to be **E**xplored or **E**xpanded?



*In making art, does only the finished piece of art count?*

*Are the things that happen around the making of art worthy of note? Can they also be part of art and cultural expression?*

# ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS

The conceptual understandings that guided the photo selection in this book

- The different art forms can be used to share different ideas
- Every human culture creates art
- People communicate ideas, feelings and experiences through the arts.
- Arts are a unique way where technology, philosophy, craft and imagination come together
- The arts are an immensely diverse and complex tool for expression
- Aesthetic pleasure is connected to the development of culture.
- People communicate across cultures, places and times through arts
- Art pieces can provide details about the society's development and history
- We collect information to make sense of the world around us
- Aesthetics and geometry are connected.
- Shapes can be used to represent different ideas about the world
- Language is all around us.
- People make meaning through the use of symbols
- The pictures, images, and symbols in our environment have meaning





# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS AND FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS

BeConWiz has a team of intrepid foreign correspondents who bring their photography and insider cultural knowledges to our flipbooks.

We thank them for their time, skills and generous sharing of materials for BCW resources.



Employees, owners and family members of the BeConWiz team contributed the photographs for this resource.

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