

# THE UNIQUENESS OF SICHUAN BROCADE AND BATIK SOLO ARTWORK

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## Kata kunci

Shu Brocade  
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manufacture technique  
preservation

## Abstrak

This essay discusses two rich traditional cultural heritages: Chinese Shu Brocade and Indonesian Batik Solo. Shu Brocade is a textile product from the Sichuan region of China, while Batik Solo is a cloth characterized by distinctive patterns made in Solo, Indonesia. This writing employs qualitative methods and relies on supporting literature, such as books, journals, and articles. The essay explores the history, characteristics, manufacturing techniques, and cultural values of both Shu Brocade and Batik Solo. First, it examines the origins of Shu Brocade and its significance in Chinese culture. The author explores the unique weaving techniques used to create brocade, highlighting the quality materials and beautiful motifs that make Shu Brocade so special. Additionally, the essay discusses the development of the Shu Brocade industry and the efforts to preserve it. Second, the essay delves into Batik Solo, one of the most renowned types of batik in Indonesia. It traces the long history of Batik Solo, examining the typical motifs that reflect the richness of Indonesian culture, as well as the techniques involved in its production and dyeing processes. Furthermore, this essay emphasizes the importance of preserving and promoting these two cultural heritages. Both Shu Brocade and Batik Solo possess significant aesthetic and historical value, serving as vital expressions of cultural identity for their respective communities. By combining historical knowledge, production techniques, and cultural values, this essay provides a comprehensive understanding of Shu Brocade and Batik Solo.

## 1. Pendahuluan

The artworks of Brocade Sichuan and Batik Solo are two textile marvels that exhibit remarkable uniqueness and indescribable beauty, representing the rich cultural heritages of their respective regions. Brocade Sichuan, originating from the Sichuan province of China, is renowned for its luxurious texture and intricate designs that weave a tapestry of elegance in every stitch and motif. This traditional textile is not just fabric; it embodies centuries of craftsmanship, where artisans blend complex weaving techniques with vibrant colors and patterns, creating pieces that speak to the heart of Chinese culture (Zhou, 2021; Chen et al., 2022). The historical significance of Brocade Sichuan can be traced back to ancient dynasties, where it was used in royal garments and ceremonial attire, symbolizing wealth and status (Li, 2023). Its production involves sophisticated methods, including the use of silk threads and elaborate looms, resulting in stunning visual effects that captivate viewers. Previous studies have highlighted the unique cultural significance and craftsmanship of Brocade Sichuan, revealing its role as a vital component of Chinese cultural heritage. For instance, Zhang (2022) explored the intricate weaving techniques of Sichuan Brocade, emphasizing its historical roots in Chengdu and its evolution over centuries, showcasing how the patterns and colors reflect the region's cultural narratives and social status.

Meanwhile, Batik Solo serves as a cultural emblem of Indonesia, particularly the city of Solo, which is known for its rich artistic legacy. Batik Solo is celebrated for its intricate designs that reflect

Indonesia's diverse cultural heritage and natural beauty (Pramudito & Indrajaya, 2020). Each motif carries symbolic meanings, often rooted in the history, spirituality, and daily life of the local community (Hastuti, 2021). The art of batik-making involves a meticulous process, where hot wax is applied to the fabric before dyeing, allowing artisans to create detailed patterns that tell stories of tradition and identity. The vibrant colors and elaborate designs of Batik Solo not only enhance the fabric but also serve as a canvas for cultural expression. As a traditional craft, Batik Solo has been passed down through generations, ensuring the survival of its unique techniques and motifs, which are vital to Indonesia's cultural identity (Wahyuni, 2022). Gunawan (2021) examined Batik Solo, discussing the intricate designs and complex processes that characterize this traditional Indonesian textile. His study underscores the symbolism embedded within batik motifs, which serve as a means of storytelling and cultural expression among local communities.

This article aims to delve into the uniqueness of both Brocade Sichuan and Batik Solo artworks, exploring their histories and developments alongside their intricate manufacturing techniques. It will examine the distinctive motifs of each textile and the stories that each line and color convey, highlighting their significance within their respective cultures (Sari, 2021). Furthermore, Sari (2021) conducted a comparative analysis of various textile arts, revealing how both Sichuan Brocade and Batik Solo are not only aesthetic creations but also cultural artifacts that preserve and convey the identity of their makers. Moreover, the author will discuss how these two forms of textile art have become cultural identities, symbolizing the heritage and traditions of their communities. The preservation of Brocade Sichuan and Batik Solo is not only about maintaining the skills and techniques used by artisans but also about nurturing the cultural narratives that these textiles embody (Yuan & Wang, 2020). Understanding these artworks fosters appreciation for the skills and creativity of the artisans behind them and reinforces the importance of preserving these precious cultural heritages.

Chengdu, often referred to by many monikers such as the "Land of Abundance," "City of Hibiscus," "City of Gastronomy," and the "Land of Heaven," is also known as the "City of Brocade," highlighting its prominence in the textile industry (Tang, 2023). Chengdu brocade exemplifies China's rich textile tradition, showcasing a harmonious blend of aesthetic beauty and meticulous craftsmanship. The historical roots of brocade can be traced back to Chengdu, where specialized fabric-making techniques were refined, making it a center for production and innovation (Zhang, 2022). Similarly, Batik Solo stands as a testament to Indonesia's traditional weaving art, revered for its intricate designs, complex production processes, and significant contribution to the nation's cultural identity (Gunawan, 2021). By exploring these two cultural traditions in depth, we gain insight into the diversity of global cultures and the vital need to preserve such invaluable heritage. This research aims to broaden our understanding of art and culture, celebrating the creativity and resilience of people worldwide. The author invites all to immerse themselves in the beauty and uniqueness of Brocade Sichuan and Batik Solo artworks, honoring the artisans whose skills and dedication breathe life into these exquisite pieces. By appreciating these textiles, we contribute to the ongoing narrative of cultural preservation and the celebration of human creativity.

## **2. Methods**

This research employs a qualitative-descriptive method, drawing on relevant sources of information such as journals, books, online articles, and other scholarly materials. The data obtained are analyzed to gain a deeper understanding of the history, characteristics, manufacturing techniques, and cultural values associated with Shu Brocade and Batik Solo.

First, this paper explains the origins of Shu Brocade, highlighting its significance in Chinese culture. The author explores the unique weaving techniques used in brocade production, emphasizing the quality materials and intricate motifs that contribute to the exquisite nature of

Shu Brocade. As noted by Wang et al. (2023), the craftsmanship involved in creating Shu Brocade not only showcases artistic skill but also reflects the historical context of the region.

In addition, this study addresses the importance of preserving and promoting these two cultural heritages. Both Shu Brocade and Batik Solo possess significant aesthetic and historical values and serve as vital expressions of cultural identity for their respective communities. Understanding these aspects is crucial for raising awareness of the beauty of this cultural heritage and ensuring its preservation for future generations. Recent studies, such as those by Susanto (2022) and Liu (2023), emphasize the role of cultural heritage in community identity and the need for sustainable practices in the textile industry.

By combining historical knowledge, production techniques, and cultural values, this article aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of Shu Brocade and Batik Solo. The findings underscore the necessity of interdisciplinary approaches to cultural preservation and the promotion of these artistic traditions in the global context (Rahman, 2023). Ultimately, this research seeks to contribute to the broader discourse on cultural heritage conservation and the recognition of traditional crafts in contemporary society.

### **3. Results and Discussion**

#### **3.1. History of Batik Solo**

Batik Solo is a batik cloth originating from Solo or Surakarta, Central Java Province. Like most batik cloth, Batik Solo has distinctive features in the form of patterns and colours that distinguish it from batik cloth from other regions. Batik Solo tourism divides the Islamic Mataram region into two parts, namely the Surakarta Kasunanan Palace and the Yogyakarta Sultanate Palace.

Batik Solo began to develop after the Muslim Mataram region became two, namely the Surakarta Sultanate and the Yogyakarta Sultanate, after the signing of the Giyanti Agreement on February 13, 1755. All goods, including batik, were brought into Yogyakarta during the separation. With this incident, Pakubuwono IV decided to make a special outfit for the new palace one day. The company's name is Gagak Surakarta, which means Surakarta style. With this unique style of clothing, Batik Solo motifs changed. Batik motifs began to develop and emerge. The history of Indonesian batik is closely related to the development of the Majapahit Kingdom and the spread of Islam in Java. Some historical records mention that Batik experienced many stories during the Islamic Mataram Kingdom, which once occupied the city of Solo. Batik Solo began to develop after the Mataram region was divided into two parts, namely the Surakarta Kasunanan Palace and the Yogyakarta Sultanate Palace. All royal belongings, including batik clothes, were taken to Yogyakarta during the separation. As a result of this incident, one day, Paku Buwono IV decided to make his new palace clothes. The clothes were then named Gagak Surakarta, which means Surakarta style.

After making Gagak Surakarta clothes, Surakarta batik patterns began to undergo many changes. Many batik styles began to develop and emerge. Although the Surakarta batik style has created a lot, it has its characteristics. Surakarta batik is identical to brownish white or cream. In addition, Surakarta batik is also synonymous with dark colours such as black and brown. Another aspect of Surakarta batik is that it contains geometric patterns and is small by Mataram batik standards. Surakarta batik is divided into two parts. They are batik motifs from Kasunanan Palace and Mangkunegaran Temple. Famous batik motifs from Kasunanan Palace include Barong parang, dubious parang, sarpa vivalaf, burba goreng, para kestlop, candi Mulia, Waikato and bonded. The batik motifs of the mangkunegaran temple are pakis kimp, sapanti nata, ole-

ole, wahyu tumurun, parang kesit barong, parang sondher, parang klithik glebag, chrysanthemum and liris cemeng. Later, the batik motifs of the two palaces fostered the batik civilization of Solo City. The emergence of Laweyan Batik Village and Kauman Batik Village is proof of this. Until then, Surakarta batik developed and spread to various regions in Java, such as Pekalongan, Banyumas, Ponorogo, Tulung Agung, etc. Nowadays, batik motifs are increasingly diverse and modern. Many batik shops and batik producers began to appear in and around the city of Surakarta. This later became the Batik Solo Carnival. SBC is held to preserve the batik culture in Solo. Batik Solo Carnival is an annual event organized by the Surakarta city government, where batik is used as the primary material for making costumes. With this carnival, Batik Solo can be better known and preserved by the public because we must maintain the existence and preservation of this batik culture.

### 3.2. Solo Batik Motifs

According to the Big Indonesian Dictionary, the motif is a pattern that produces a unique and diverse form. Batik motifs in each region have their uniqueness and speciality. In addition, batik has a hidden meaning in its motif. There are even some batik cloth motifs that the general public cannot use. The development of advanced technology also impacts the use of batik. In the current era, batik is not only used as clothing but can also be a work of art that still exists today. Each batik-producing region has a unique batik motif that characterizes the area. Some famous batik motifs come from the city of Solo. Batik motifs in Solo are characterized by geometric shapes and small sizes that follow the Mataram batik motif. In addition to the motif, the colour of the batik cloth is also characteristic. For example, the colour of batik cloth in Solo tends to be identical to brownish-white, blackish and brown. Some of the batik motifs produced in Solo are as follows.

#### 3.2.1. Parang Kusumo

Batik with the parang kusumo motif is one of the oldest motifs in Solo. Many domestic and foreign entrepreneurs are interested in this motif. If you pay close attention to the motif in this parang kusumo batik, it is unique. Apart from Solo, this batik is also produced in Yogyakarta. Although the batik produced by both tends to be similar, it has significant differences. The parang kusumo batik motif created in Solo tends to be thinner and slimmer.

Meanwhile, batik motifs produced in Yogyakarta tend to be thick and full. Apart from the size of the motif, the direction and colour of the wave motif cloth can also be distinguished. The diagonal direction in Solo's parang kusumo batik starts from the top left to the bottom right. Usually, the colour of the parang kusumo motif batik cloth produced in Solo dominates dark blackish or brownish stains. This colour is a reflection of achieving elegance.

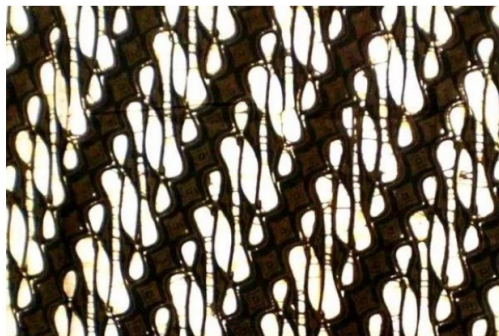


Figure 1. Batik Motif of Parang Kusumo (Bagu, Tanumihardja, & Michelle, 2024)

Conversely, the diagonal direction in the Yogyakarta parang kusumo batik starts from the top right to the bottom left. The colours of the Kusumo parang batik cloth produced in Yogyakarta tend to use bright colours such as bright white and ivory white. This colour is a reflection to show a solid and elegant image. Unlike solo parang kusumo batik, which is given a companion motif, Yogyakarta parang kusumo batik tends to maintain the original motif without being given a companion motif.

### 3.2.2. Sidomukti

This Sido Mukti batik has an interesting philosophy. The name Sido Mukti comes from the words *sido* and *mukti*. The word *sido* means to be or become, and the word *mukti* means power, happiness, and not lacking anything. This motif symbolizes hope and prayer, which is depicted in the ornament. In ancient times, this batik was only used by palace brides, but with the times, this batik can be used by brides in the general public. The hope of using *sidomulyo* batik in marriage is that the bride and groom will continue to have a promising future, always be happy, and get blessings from God. This batik motif is a development with a white background that already existed in the Mataram Kartasura era, which was changed to a uke background by Paku Buwono IV. In the past, this batik used natural dyes derived from the noni tree, known as "yoga". The colour produced by this tree is reddish brown. But in the current era, this batik already uses chemical dyes that are more efficient. This batik has the colour concept of papal lima cancer. This concept symbolizes lust, so people who use this become more bold and enthusiastic about doing good and commendable deeds.

Batik with the Sido Mukti motif has many patterns, including the trusted throne motif. This motif is the motif used by brides. The meaning of this motif symbolizes the power of hope that the bride and groom can live like an authoritative king and honour society. At the same time, the trusted motif in this batik is an additional ornament in the city of Solo that tells about the sincerity of love. There is a Sido Mukti batik motif that symbolizes freedom. This motif is referred to as the butterfly motif. This motif represents freedom and perfection, which teaches that one must pass through heavy obstacles before enjoying success. This is based on the butterfly metamorphosis process, which takes quite a while until it becomes a beautiful butterfly.

### 3.2.3. Sekar Jagad (ꦱꦺꦏꦫꦗꦒꦢ꧀)

Sekar Jagad batik is one of the batik of the Surakarta palace. This batik also has a strong influence and rules from the Surakarta royal palace. The name of this batik comes from the word *Sekar*, a flower, and *Jagad*, the world. This motif's beauty is characterized by various flowers scattered across the globe. The meaning of this batik is the hope to become a good human being with good and noble character. This motif is composed of a combination of other palace batik motifs, such as *parang*, *kawung*, *truntum* and *grompol* motifs, which have strong meanings. This motif generally depicts beauty and beauty so that people who use this motif will be mesmerized. Unlike the palace batik, which has an orderly and neat shape, the batik motif of *sekar jagad* tends to be irregular and map-shaped. This is due to the many islands, flora and fauna in Indonesia. This batik can be used at weddings and other events. Experts, intelligent people, and courtiers usually use this batik because it depicts a form of goodness.

### 3.2.4. Sawat

Batik Sawat is a shape inspired by the sawat or wings. In ancient times, many Batik Solo motifs were considered sacred and were only worn by the king and his family. The meaning of this motif is often associated with the Garuda bird, the vehicle of Lord Vishnu, which is a symbol of royalty or power. Until now, bridal couples have often used Batik Solo for traditional Javanese

wedding ceremonies. Batik Sawat consists of the image of two wings of the Garuda bird, also called sawat. In the swat motif, one is a large wing, and the other is smaller. The position of these wings is harmoniously reversed for decoration. Anyone who wears batik with a saw at motif is always believed to get protection in his life. The philosophy of batik motifs is followed by meanings that contain elements of goodness.

### 3.3. Batik Solo Making Methods

Batik is an essential aspect of Indonesian culture, with various methods of production that reflect its rich heritage. Among the traditional techniques, *batik tulis* (written batik) stands out as one of the earliest forms, characterized by its intricate designs applied by hand using a canting tool. This method is notably prevalent in Java, featuring distinctive styles like the Mega Mendung from West Java and Kawung from Yogyakarta. The process begins with drawing a desired pattern on the fabric, followed by the application of hot wax to outline the design. Once the wax hardens, the fabric is dyed, and the wax is removed, revealing the original artwork (Rahman, 2023). In contrast, *batik cap* (stamped batik) employs copper stamps to apply wax patterns onto the fabric. This modern technique allows for a quicker production process, especially for smaller pieces, as the stamps are dipped in liquid wax and pressed onto the cloth. Studies show that this method can produce consistent patterns and is beneficial for mass production, making batik more accessible to a wider audience (Rini et al., 2019; Sudardi, 2018).

A more advanced method is *kombinasi batik*, which merges the techniques of written and stamped batik. In this process, patterns are initially stamped on the cloth, and then finer details are added using a canting, resulting in a design that showcases the benefits of both methods (Wahida & Handayani, 2019). Lastly, *batik print* represents a contemporary evolution, utilizing machine printing to produce designs rapidly and efficiently. This method allows for detailed and uniform motifs but limits the dyeing process to one side of the fabric. While batik print offers a cost-effective and swift alternative to traditional techniques, it lacks the artistic nuances of hand-crafted batik, making each method unique in its own right (Li & Ma, 2011; Lisha, 2023; Liu, 2023; Sugiarto et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2023; Yuan, 2015). Recent studies emphasize the importance of preserving traditional batik-making methods alongside modern innovations to ensure the sustainability of this cultural heritage (Snodgrass, 2022; Yu, 2023).

### 3.4. History of Sichuan Brocade

Sichuan brocade, also known as Shu brocade, has a long history and is related to developing culture and trade in the Sichuan region. Sichuan brocade began to be made during the Qin dynasty (221-207 BC) and flourished during the Han dynasty (206 BC - 220 AD). Sichuan's rich natural resources, such as silk and silk fabrics, and its strategic position as a trade centre led to the development of the textile industry. Sichuan brocade making was highly developed during the Tang dynasty (618-907 AD). Brocade fabrics in the Tang dynasty were highly prized and favoured among the nobility and royalty. Shu brocade was admired for its fine weave, beautiful colours, and intricate patterns.

During the Ming dynasty (1368-1644 AD), the Shu brocade industry declined due to political and social changes. However, over time, preservation and improvement continued to maintain the heritage of Shu brocade. Of course, in this case, the government and local communities have an essential role in maintaining the cultural heritage of Shu brocade by conducting training, promotion, and creative industry development. In ancient times, Sichuan brocades were often worn by aristocrats and royalty because they were considered a symbol of social status, luxury, and majesty. It is also because making Sichuan brocade requires a long time, expertise, high accuracy, and expensive raw materials. The rather complicated process is also

one of the factors why only the elite wears it. Over time, the Sichuan brocade was not only used by the aristocracy or nobility. This is because technology has made it easier to make Sichuan brocade, and Sichuan brocade is one of the efforts to preserve culture.



**Figure 2. Ming and Qing Dynasties 1368-1912 (Zou, 2023)**

### **3.5. Manufacturing Method of Sichuan Brocade**

The manufacturing of Sichuan Brocade involves two distinct methods: traditional hand-weaving and modern machine-based techniques. The process begins with pattern preparation, where the traditional method utilizes paper or cloth as guides, while the modern approach employs computers and digital designs (Li & Ma, 2011; Wang et al., 2023). Next is yarn preparation, which traditionally involves high-quality materials such as silk for the main thread and additional yarn used in weaving (Wang & Chuangprakhon, 2023). In the modern method, the weaving machine is programmed to create the desired pattern, with the main and additional threads attached accordingly. The weaving process itself differs significantly between the two methods; traditionally, the main yarn is woven using unique techniques to form the basic fabric pattern before more complex motifs are added with supplementary threads (Yuan, 2015). In contrast, modern weaving machines automatically perform the primary weaving and motif application as programmed. Finally, after the weaving is complete, the fabric undergoes a preservation and finishing process (Rahman, 2023). The art of Brocade Sichuan is not only employed in garments like qipao or cheongsam but also serves as artistic decoration, reflecting the precision, expertise, and time invested in its creation. While the traditional hand-weaving method produces more intricate and artistic fabrics, the modern machine-based approach enhances production efficiency, although it may compromise some of the artistic value and uniqueness inherent to Sichuan brocade (Wahida & Handayani, 2019).

### **3.6. Brocade Sichuan Motifs**

The motifs on Brocade Sichuan have evolved over time, with each dynasty exhibiting its own distinctive characteristics. Initially, Brocade Sichuan motifs featured simple designs; however, over the years, they have become more intricate and varied, resulting in a higher artistic value associated with this textile art form (Yu, Z. 2023; Wang, J., Zhang, Y., & Li, H. 2023).

During the Tang dynasty (618-907 AD), the motifs commonly depicted images of flowers, birds, and mythological creatures, characterized by bright and contrasting colors. Floral motifs in brocade carry multiple meanings, with each type of flower symbolizing different positive attributes such as beauty, happiness, loyalty, and prosperity. For example, peonies are associated with beauty, love, affection, and good fortune (Rizali, N., & Sudardi, B. 2019). Similarly, the mythical creatures represented in brocade motifs each have their own significance. The phoenix is considered a symbol of

luck and immortality, reflecting the Chinese belief in the phoenix as an immortal bird. The qilin symbolizes good luck and peace, while the dragon represents power, courage, and prosperity (Li, Q. & Ma, D. L. 2011). These motifs are often worn during special occasions, such as celebrations and ceremonies (Snodgrass, M. E. 2022).

In the Song dynasty (960-1279 AD), brocade motifs shifted to incorporate natural themes, including mountains, rivers, and various landscapes. These motifs were created using delicate techniques and featured softer color palettes. The natural-themed motifs in brocade fabrics represent harmony and a peaceful relationship between humans and nature, reflecting the values of the time (Lisha, X. 2023; Liu, X. 2023; Sugiarto, E., Triyanto, F. M., & Nashiroh, P. K. 2021).

### **3.7. Similarities Between Brocade Sichuan and Batik Solo**

Although Brocade Sichuan and Batik Solo originate from different cultural backgrounds, they share numerous similarities. Both are cultural heritages resulting from the creativity of local artisans, showcasing traditional techniques that require a high level of precision and craftsmanship. Each textile features distinctive motifs that carry meaningful representations of positive values, reflecting the cultural significance embedded within their designs. Additionally, both Brocade Sichuan and Batik Solo exhibit a rich palette of visually appealing colors, which serve as distinctive features that illustrate local wisdom and artistic expression. To maintain the artistic value inherent in both textiles, care methods are also quite similar, emphasizing the importance of preserving these cultural treasures (Wang, J., Zhang, Y., & Li, H. 2023; Susanto, R. 2022).

### **3.8. How to Care for Brocade and Batik Fabrics**

Caring for brocade and batik fabrics requires specific methods to maintain their beauty and longevity. First, it is essential to wash batik by hand rather than in a machine, as this helps prevent the motifs from fading quickly and allows for better control of the washing temperature, ultimately making the batik more durable. However, many batik fabrics made with printing methods are more resilient to machine washing. Similarly, brocade fabrics should not be machine washed, as the agitation can damage the delicate fibres. When washing batik cloth, it is advisable to use a mild detergent to preserve the colors and motifs, ensuring the fabric remains soft; some batik artisans even recommend specific detergents for this purpose. Brocade fabrics also benefit from the use of mild detergents to maintain the smoothness of their intricate designs. Finally, when ironing batik or brocade cloth, especially those made using traditional methods, it is highly recommended to use a lining cloth to prevent direct contact between the iron and the fabric, which can lead to burns or damage.

## **4. Conclusion**

Brocade Sichuan fabric and Batik Solo, while emerging from distinct cultural backgrounds, showcase their own unique characteristics and advantages. Despite these differences, both textiles share profound similarities in their historical and cultural significance, serving as representations of local communities and embodying what is often referred to as local wisdom. Each motif found in Brocade Sichuan and Batik Solo carries deep meanings and tells stories that reflect the values, beliefs, and traditions of their respective cultures. For instance, the intricate designs of Brocade Sichuan often symbolize auspiciousness and prosperity, while Batik Solo motifs may represent natural elements, spiritual beliefs, or historical narratives, showcasing the rich tapestry of cultural heritage within Indonesia. Moreover, the production techniques of both fabrics demonstrate a high level of craftsmanship and artistic expression, reflecting the skills passed down through generations. Additionally, the growing appreciation for both Brocade Sichuan and Batik Solo has facilitated a new form of cultural acculturation, where artists and designers increasingly blend elements from both

textile traditions. This merging not only enriches the artistic landscape but also fosters a deeper understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity. As a result, the interplay between brocade art and batik motifs highlights the importance of preserving these cultural heritages while also encouraging innovation and collaboration within the textile industry. This dynamic relationship illustrates how cultural exchange can lead to the creation of new artistic expressions, further enhancing the value and relevance of both Brocade Sichuan and Batik Solo in today's globalized world.

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