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# Original or Imitation?

## Batik in Java and Glarus (Switzerland) in the Nineteenth Century

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*About the Author / Marie-Louise Nabholz-Kartaschoff received her doctorate in ethnology from Basel University. From 1968 until 2003, she led the Department of Asian Textiles of the Museum der Kulturen in Basel. She was responsible for the custodial care of its eminent collections and did fieldwork in Mallorca, South China, Thailand, India, and Indonesia. She curated exhibitions and authored many publications on various textile topics. At present, she continues working as an author, independent exhibition curator, speaker, and consultant for Asian textiles and recently published a book on Persian textiles.*

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**Abstract** | Wax batik technique is known worldwide. It is on the island of Java, however, that it has come to its fullest bloom from the sixteenth century onwards. No other region can compete with Java in terms of technical refinement and creative design. Hand-drawn (*batik tulis*) and stamped batik (*batik cap*) are important crafts even today, and their products are used and worn on the whole island. Thus, it is not surprising that textile factories in England, the Netherlands, and Switzerland aimed to conquer these profitable markets with their efficiently manufactured batik imitations.

In connection with preparations of a comprehensive exhibition on batik, the author first made investigations on the subject in the late 1960s. In the Swiss canton of Glarus, production of batik imitations was still alive on a small scale at that time. In view of an international conference on the Glarus textile industry, she took up her research in 2015 and found most interesting sources and pattern samples in archives of factories that were formerly involved in this market.<sup>1</sup> In this article, she is comparing production, patterns, and usage of genuine batik in Java and batik imitations from Glarus.

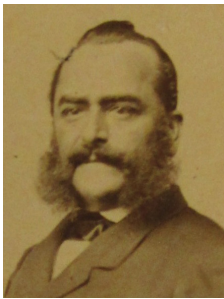


FIG. 1  
Conrad Blumer-Tschudi  
(1817–1882), around 1860.  
Glerner Wirtschaftsarchiv  
(GWA).

One of the first Westerners who studied the practicalities of manufacturing mass-produced printed cottons for export to Java was Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles, Lieutenant-Governor of the island from 1811 to 1816. He was also a pioneer in seriously researching Java's geography, religion, architecture, arts, and crafts, and in his *History of Java* (1817) he meticulously described the local production and use of batik cloths as a key to understanding Javanese culture. Furthermore, he brought back a collection of twenty-two Javanese samples for English textile manufacturers to use as models for producing printed cottons for export.<sup>2</sup> Apparently the Dutch colonial government similarly sent original Javanese batik back to manufacturers in Holland following the reoccupation of the East Indies after 1816. The first batik imitations were manufactured in a factory founded by Jean Baptiste-Theodore Prévinaire near Brussels; the company moved to Haarlem around 1835. The best-known Dutch manufacturer in the field of wax batik imitation for the Southeast Asian, and later for the African, export markets was Van Vlissingen in Helmond.<sup>3</sup>

### An Incredible Journey from Switzerland to Java

The starting point of the Swiss involvement in this business was the adventurous travel of Conrad Blumer (1817–1882), a young son from a family of textile factory owners in the canton of Glarus (fig. 1). In April 1840, just a mere two weeks after his wedding, he left his native village, Schwanden, for a long and dangerous journey that led him to India, Singapore, and finally to Java (fig. 2). His intention was to conquer and open up completely new Asian markets for his family's textile printing and trading company *Blumer & Jenny*. The factory had already supplied Scandinavian, Mediterranean, and Balkan countries, as well as Russia, Turkey, and the Americas with their patterned cotton fabrics. These products were running under brand names such as "Indiennes" (referring to colorful printed cloths imported to Europe from India since the end of the sixteenth century), "palm shawls" (fringed wool shawls with Kashmir palmettes), "Turkey-red articles" (textiles with patterns printed and dyed with madder),

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Nabholz-Kartaschoff  
1970–1971 and 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Wronska-Friend 2017, p. 49;

Van Hout 2001, p. 14.

<sup>3</sup> Elands 2017, pp. 53, 60.

and “Yasmas” or “Turkish caps” (turban cloths and women’s veils for export to Turkey and Greece).<sup>4</sup>

Conrad Blumer travelled by stagecoach to Marseille, then by ship to Alexandria and up the river Nile. After four days on camel to Suez he embarked on the boat journey to Bombay, then to Madras and Calcutta. He endured a shipwreck at the entrance to the port of Calcutta, about which he wrote his family: “I cannot thank the heavens enough to have saved my life, a lot of people on board were not so fortunate.”<sup>5</sup> Fortunately, he could at least save his pattern books. His contacts with established British trading companies in India and Singapore were not promising, and he hardly received any orders. Turkey-red articles seemed to be the only competitive products, as they were much more vivid and better in quality than the British ones.<sup>6</sup>

From Calcutta it took him almost another two months of perilous sea voyage to finally reach Batavia—the capital of Java, the seat of the Dutch colonial government, and the most important trading center. His return journey was equally arduous, and he wrote home: “...this long journey in such a rough season, without a calm moment devoid of fear, accompanied by bad food, has seriously attacked my health.”<sup>7</sup> But in August 1841 he safely returned home and from then on worked in his family’s business. Blumer had written a great number of letters during his voyage, most of which are lost. But fortunately, he copied about eighty of them in his own hand in a kind of diary, which is now the property of one of his descendants. He had a long and successful career. From 1872 until 1878 he represented the business as company director in Ancona, Italy and acted as the Swiss consul there.<sup>8</sup>

After all, his journey was successful and eventually led to ready markets in Malaya and Indonesia for batik imitations from Glarus. Conrad Blumer had a sound grasp of business, indeed he

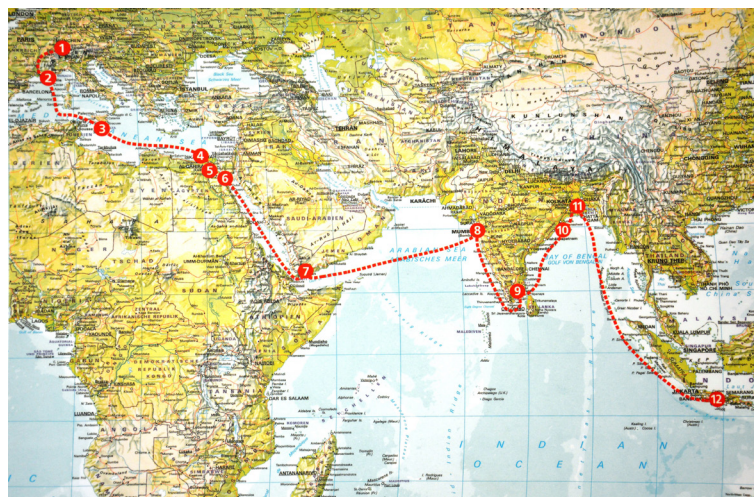


FIG. 2  
Itinerary of Conrad Blumer's travel to Java, April to November 1840, from Schwanden, canton of Glarus (1) to Marseille (2), Alexandria (4), Suez (6), Bombay (8), Madras (9), Calcutta (11), and finally to Batavia (12), today's capital of the island of Java. Glarner Wirtschaftsarchiv (GWA).

said of himself: “Business is the most important to me... I'm feeling the market's pulse.”<sup>9</sup> Thus, marketing research was his main focus, and he reported about trading companies, market opportunities, appropriate patterns, possible prices, and ways to avoid Dutch protective customs policy. He intimately studied textiles already imported from the Netherlands, Great Britain, Belgium, France, and Germany, especially batik imitations and Turkey-red cloths.<sup>10</sup>

Java's political situation, its superior culture, and the great significance of its batik art were not—and could not be—at the heart of his concerns. He hardly ever interacted with Javanese life, and only once he admitted to being impressed by the surroundings outside Batavia and mentioned in a letter: “This is a beautiful country (*Dieses ist ein wunderschönes Land*).”

## Java in the Nineteenth Century

The Netherlands started their conquest of Java in the early seventeenth century. In 1602 they founded the Dutch East India Company (voc), which over the following decades evolved as the most important international trading corporation, due in particular to the successful spice trade with eastern Indonesia and Sumatra. Cooperating with the local Javanese nobility,

<sup>4</sup> Winteler-Marty 1945, p. 159; Blumer 1957, pp. 29–30.

<sup>5</sup> *Ich kann dem Himmel nicht genug danken, mein Leben gerettet zu haben, was einer Menge Leute auf dem Schiff*

*nicht gelungen ist.* Stüssi 1989, p. 18.

<sup>6</sup> Rohr 2012, p. 6.

<sup>7</sup> *...diese lange Reise bei dieser rauhen Jahreszeit, wo man keinen ruhigen und*

*furchtlosen Augenblick hat, begleitet mit schlechter Nahrung, haben meine Gesundheit sehr angegriffen.* Stüssi 1989, p. 18.

<sup>8</sup> Jorio 2003, p. 505.

<sup>9</sup> *Unser Geschäft ist mir alles.*

*[...] Ich fühle dem Markt den Puls.* Stüssi 1989, p. 17.

<sup>10</sup> Wronska-Friend 2017, pp. 49, 54.



FIG. 3  
Residence of the Governor  
General in the fort at Batavia,  
Java, 1682. Weduwe van  
Jacob van Meurs (publisher).  
Wikimedia Commons File  
AMH-4769-KB.



the VOC gained control over the trade throughout the islands in the course of the seventeenth century. Step by step, the most important ports of the whole archipelago went into the hands of the Dutch. Batavia (modern-day Jakarta) became the center of the colonial imperium and developed to a huge extent. Many new institutions and buildings evolved, among others the Kasteel, a heavily armed fortress with the residence of the Dutch governor and the location of the VOC (fig. 3). The town was inhabited by traders and government officials and by many different population groups, notably the Chinese. The

VOC went into decline in the eighteenth century, and in 1799 the company declared bankruptcy and was dissolved. After five years of British administration during the Napoleonic wars—the period of Raffles' governorship—the Dutch government took definitive control of the colonial territories in 1816, and all VOC possessions were nationalized as the Dutch Indies. By treaties, the sultans governing the two Central Javanese principalities of Surakarta and Yogyakarta were declared vassals of the government in Batavia.

At that time, ordinary people dressed in plain or printed cloth. Conrad Blumer remarked: "Java may indeed provide a significant opportunity for consumption of colored cotton fabrics. In fact, one can say that all natives wear such fabrics."<sup>11</sup> This is how Josef Jakob Xaver Pfyffer zu Neueck, another young Swiss from the canton of Lucerne, described the lower classes that had never been noticed by Blumer: "A poor Javanese man usually wears nothing but a coarse sarong around his body, or he even goes around naked, with just a kind of minute loincloth." (fig. 4).<sup>12</sup> In courtly circles, however, men dressed up in local batik hip cloths and black jackets of European

FIG. 4 (left)  
Javanese farmer, around  
1820. Lithograph by  
Johannes Schiess in Pfyffer  
zu Neueck 1829, pl. II (reprint  
Marschall 2002).



FIG. 5 (right)  
Kanjeng Gusti Pangéran  
Hadipati Mangkubumi,  
Governor and eldest brother  
of the sultan, in full official  
attire, with *semen* and *sawat*  
motifs on his hip cloth, Java,  
around 1890. Coll. Rudolf  
Smend.



<sup>11</sup> Java bietet wirklich einen sehr bedeutenden Verbrauch für farbige Baumwollwaren dar, denn hier kleiden sich damit, man darf sagen, alle Eingeborenen. Stüssi 1989, p. 27.

<sup>12</sup> Der arme Javaner hat gewöhnlich blos einen groben Sarong um den Leib, oder geht ganz nackt, bis auf eine Art Suspensoire. Pfyffer zu Neueck 1829, p. 45.

Josef Jakob Xaver Pfyffer zu Neueck wrote this book during his long homeward journey, after nine years of colonial service in Java. He commissioned Johannes

Schiess, a designer and water colorist from St. Gallen to illustrate his work with hand-colored lithographs.





cut (fig. 5). Pfyffer zu Neueck commented on this traditional garb, which hardly changed until the later twentieth century: "The dress of noble Javanese is extremely sumptuous, often decorated and garnished with all kinds of ornaments, so that Europeans who have just arrived might take them for theatre princes. [...] A noble person wears a jacket made of velvet or silk woven with gold or silver yarns, enriched with gold or silver braids and richly embroidered."<sup>13</sup> Aristocratic women and children also appeared in noble garb, dressed up in batik cloths with specific patterns reserved for relatives of princely families (fig. 6).

Among the multicultural population on the North Coast—known as Pasisir—a different picture emerged, due to its Arab, Indo-Chinese, European, and Indo-European inhabitants. Women wore colored tubular sarongs with dominant triangular or floral patterns in the middle section together with long

blouses made up from light cotton fabrics or lace (fig. 7). Specific colors and patterns marked the age and social status of their wearers.

### The Javanese Batik Technique and the Glarus Batik Imitations

The golden age of Java's arts and crafts started in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In fact, the term "batik" is mentioned for the first time in a seventeenth-century Dutch report.<sup>14</sup> However, references to textiles, dyes, and patterns in documents preserved on stone and copper plate from the ninth to the fifteenth centuries suggest that certain details, which are ancestral for batik, already appeared much earlier. One example used from the late twelfth century onwards is the word *tulis* (writing, drawing, outlining), which today still specifies freehand batik technique (*batik tulis*), as opposed to stamped batik (*batik cap*).

FIG. 6  
Children at the Yogyakarta court, with *parang rusak* and *kawung* patterns on their hip cloths, Java, around 1925. Coll. Rudolf Smend.

FIG. 7  
Woman with typical *pasisir* sarong, Java, North Coast, around 1870. Coll. Rudolf Smend.

<sup>13</sup> Die Kleidung der vornehmen Javaner ist sehr kostbar, und oft so ausgeschmückt und mit Verzierungen aller

Art besetzt, dass ein erst angekommener Europäer dieselben für Theater-Fürsten ansehen würde. ... Der

Vornehme trägt eine Jacke von Sammet, Gold-, Silber- oder Seidenstoff, mit Gold- oder Silbertressen besetzt

und reich gestickt. Pfyffer zu Neueck 1829, p. 44.

<sup>14</sup> Wisseman Christie 1993.



FIG. 8 (top)  
Applying wax with a *canting*,  
Java, around 1890. Coll.  
Rudolf Smend.



FIG. 9 (opposite)  
Four of fifteen steps in a batik  
book: a) contours and some  
areas covered with wax for  
the first indigo dyeing (VII),  
b) part of the wax scratched  
off after the indigo dip (X),  
c) blue areas covered with  
wax before the second dye  
bath with brown (XIII),  
d) the completed batik (XV).  
Yogyakarta, Java, early 20th  
century. Yale University Art  
Gallery acc. no 1937.5446.  
Photography by Christopher  
Gardner

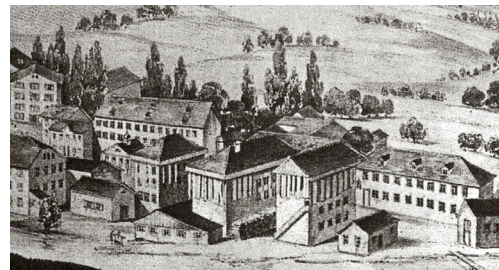
FIG. 10 (bottom)  
Textile printing factory *Blumer  
& Jenny*, Glarus, Schwanden,  
around 1840. Glarner  
Wirtschaftsarchiv (gwa).

What exactly is batik? The root of this term is the word *tik*, which stands for “dot,” or “drop”; the verb *ambatik* means “to draw,” “to paint,” and in a narrower sense “to dot,” “to stipple,” or “to dash lines.” In the batik process, melted beeswax is used to cover certain parts of the cloth in order to reserve (protect) them during the dyeing process. It is applied with the *canting*, a small copper wax container with a wooden handle and one or several small outlet tubes for drawing dots, lines, and contours or filling out certain areas. During this process, the cloth is hung at an angle from a rack (fig. 8). The wax has to be applied on the front and back of the fabric, so that the finished cloth is equally patterned on both sides. After the first dyeing, the wax is scratched off from certain areas, some others are covered for the next dip with another color (fig. 9). The dye vats have to be cold to prevent melting of the wax. It is sometimes inevitable that the wax layer breaks at certain places during all this handling—this results in fine wax veins, which are characteristic for the batik technique.

In the early nineteenth century, European textile printing factories started to manufacture mass-produced batik imitations, first and foremost in Holland, but also in England and in Mulhouse, France. Swiss textile printers wanted to join this lucrative market, and the center of production became the Glarus textile factories, where a real boom started

in 1842. It started with *Blumer & Jenny* in Schwanden (fig. 10), undoubtedly an immediate result of Conrad Blumer's journey. Only a few years later, other companies joined the venture, among them *Bartholomé Jenny & Cie* in Ennenda and *Egidius Trümper and J. & J.R. Streiff* in Glarus town.

The small canton of Glarus is situated south of Lakes Zurich and Walen. An aqueous river, the Linth, flows between steep mountains and rocky cliffs. Driving along the narrow valley today, one still discovers factory premises everywhere, with high chimneys and strange tower-like buildings that served to suspend cloths in the fresh air after printing and dyeing. Partly to avoid rural migration, Glarus changed from an agricultural region into a real industrial estate with a particularly high number of textile production enterprises. The very first textile printing mill producing blue-and-white reserve prints and Turkey-red articles was founded in 1740 by Major Johann Heinrich Streiff.<sup>15</sup>



<sup>15</sup> Blumer 1957, p. 48.





ga



gb



gc



gd



FIG. 11 (top)  
Wooden printing block with copper pins and slats, textile printing factory *Blumer & Jenny*, Glarus, Schwanden, c. 1860. Glarner Wirtschaftsarchiv (gwa). Photography by Jasmin Simeon.

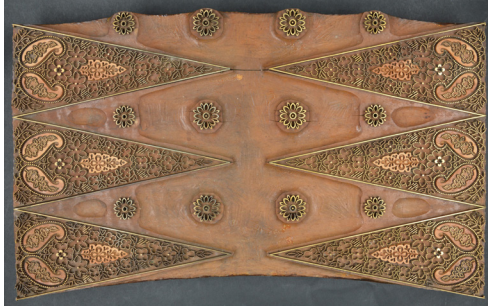


FIG. 12 (center)  
Wooden and copper printing rollers, so-called "witches." Museum des Landes Glarus, permanent exhibition "Textile Printing," Glarus, Näfels, Freulerpalast. Photo courtesy of the author.



FIG. 13 (bottom)  
Samples with attempts to imitate wax streaks on selvages, textile printing factory *Blumer & Jenny*, Glarus, Schwanden, c. 1860. Glarner Wirtschaftsarchiv (gwa). Photo courtesy of the author.



Thanks to admirable technical and creative proficiency, as well as a fruitful collaboration of designers, carvers of printing blocks, and dyers, original batik fabrics from Java could be imitated with more efficient, semi-industrial techniques for export to Southeast Asia.<sup>16</sup> A tour through a Glarus textile

printing mill in the late 1860s outlines the many workshops with designers; block carvers; the "Colorie" or color laboratory with kettles, retorts, steam devices and sacks with dyeing plants and mineral and aniline dyes; and with "...efficient chemists who perceive all inventions in this field with a keen eye."<sup>17</sup> In the printing halls, the author precisely describes block printing by hand, printing machines, special rooms for steam treatments, dips with cow dung (necessary for certain colors such as Turkey-red or for ensuring a flow effect), and laundries for the finish dyed cloths.<sup>18</sup> Identical patterns on the front and back of the fabrics, just as on Javanese originals, could be achieved thanks to pairs of symmetrical blocks and extremely precise printing. In the 1860s, the heavy printing blocks with inserted copper pins and thin slats (fig. 11) were gradually replaced by wooden ones, later by copper plates (perrotines), and finally by printing rollers, so-called "Hexen" (witches), which enormously accelerated the production process (fig. 12). Detrimental to rotational printing is the fact that the repeat in the length of the cloths is always determined by one turning of the roller while there must be no repeat in width.<sup>19</sup>

A tremendous challenge was the imitation of the typical wax veins mentioned above. To achieve such fine streaks with printing blocks turned out to be extremely difficult, especially on the selvages (fig. 13). From the 1860s onwards, the textile printing firm *Egidius Trümpy* developed a technique along the lines of Dutch mills with a mixture of wax and colophony, a yellowish to dark brown resin derived from pine trees.<sup>20</sup> This reserve paste was applied by means of printing rollers (fig. 14). The method continued to be used by *Hohlenstein AG* in Glarus for export cloths for Java (fig. 15), as well as later and up to the early 1970s for West Africa

<sup>16</sup> For further references, see Blumer 1957; Davatz 1993/94; Jenny 1898–1903; Jenny 1936; Jenny 2008; Kaufmann 2014; Kindlimann 1979; Nabholz-Kartaschoff 2017; Rast-Eicher 2009; Von Arx et al. 2005; and Winteler-Marty 1945.

<sup>17</sup> ...tüchtige[n] Chemikern, die alle Erfindungen auf diesem Gebiete mit scharfem Auge erfassen.

<sup>18</sup> Senn-Barbieux 1870–1871, pp. 137–42.

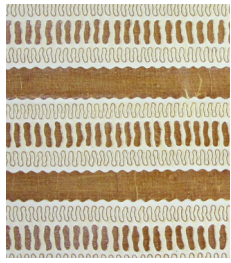
<sup>19</sup> Haake and Winotosastro 1993, p. 449.

<sup>20</sup> According to Elands 2017,

p. 53, it was Jean Baptiste-Theodore Prévinaire who first developed a special printing machine in Haarlem, known as "La Javanaise." It was able to print warm resin wax and was replaced around 1875 with a duplex roller resin-printing machine for

applying this reserve paste on both sides of a cloth.





14a



14b



14c



14d

FIG. 14  
Three steps of production of wax prints: a) cloth printed with colophonium paste, b) blue-dyed cloth, c) fabric after blue-dyeing and removal of the reserve paste, and d) detail of slightly shifted imprint on the border because of double print on the front and back, textile printing factory *Hohlenstein AG*, Glarus, 1972. Museum der Kulturen Basel, VI 37620b-d. Photo courtesy of the author.



FIG. 15  
Two out of twenty pattern samples from the textile printing factory *Hohlenstein AG*, Glarus, for Java and other Southeast Asian countries, probably early 20th century. Museum der Kulturen Basel, IIc 16955a and c. Photo courtesy of the author.





FIG. 16  
Pattern sample of wax print  
for West Africa, collection  
name "Javanese wing pat-  
tern," textile printing factory  
*Hohlenstein AG*, Glarus,  
around 1970. Museum der  
Kulturen Basel, VI 37621.  
Photo courtesy of  
the author.

(fig. 16). Another challenge was the imitation of the "flow," fluent contours where the dyes had slightly penetrated the areas covered with wax (fig. 27). This effect could be achieved by mixing the dyes with clay and other mordants and painting over it with *Tragacanthin slim*,<sup>21</sup> a treatment with cow dung and moist steaming.<sup>22</sup>

### Original or Imitation— A Comparison between Javanese Batiks and Glarus Imitates

Within the framework of this paper, it would be presumptuous to undertake a closer examination of the incredible range of Javanese batik patterns and the various regional styles.<sup>23</sup> In order to illustrate challenges and solutions, a few typical Javanese originals are presented and compared with pattern

samples from Glarus printing factories.<sup>24</sup> Mainly geometric patterns with a few figurative details in creamy white, blue, and brown color schemes are typical for the courtly batiks of Central Java. In Yogyakarta, they appear in more vibrant colors and greater contrast, while Surakarta prefers finer and more elegant designs on an ecru background. Characteristic of these batiks are dynamic variations of diagonally arranged, interconnected *parang rusak*, broken *keris*—traditional daggers representing power, authority, and royal status. Other important courtly designs are *semen*—a kind of sacred landscape—images of the macrocosm with Mountain Meru; small temples; and single and double wing forms, *lar* and *sawat*, symbolizing the mythical bird Garuda, carrier of God Vishnu (figs. 5, 17, and 19). Together with the frequently used *kawung* motif (figs. 6 and 19), a four-petal blossom, all these patterns are considered replete with spiritual power and formerly were strictly reserved for members of princely families. This interdiction was issued by decree under the Sultans of Yogyakarta and Surakarta by the end of the eighteenth century and remained in force throughout the nineteenth century in Central Java. In other regions, however, it was not strictly observed; therefore such patterns do appear on Glarus imitations in the second half of the nineteenth century (figs. 18 and 20). Interestingly enough, up to 1970 a Glarus printing mill continued to produce export batiks for West Africa with a design inspired from the *sawat* motif, running under the collection name "Javanese wing pattern" (fig. 16). The Pasisir area of the North Coast with its seaports and flourishing trade towns was a

<sup>21</sup> *Tragacanthin* is a rubber-like thickening agent, gained from trunks and branches of the species *Tragacanth* of the genus *Astragalus*.

<sup>22</sup> Adolf Jenny-Trümpy extensively described the complex process in a handwritten chapter on batik in volume XIV of his collection, compiled in 1926, and he added: *Dieser andersfarbige Fluss ist bei den Einheimischen auch allgemein beliebt*. (This flow of different color is generally popular

among native people).

<sup>23</sup> For further references, see Djoemena 1993, Elliot McCabe 1984, Hamzuri 1981, Heringa and Veldhuisen 1996, Jasper and Pirngadie 1916, vol. 3, Kerlogue 2004, Rouffaer en Juynboll 1914, Smend 2000, Smend 2006 and Smend 2015, Van Hout 2001, Veldhuisen 1993, and Veldhuisen-Djasoebrata 1984.

<sup>24</sup> The pattern samples are taken from albums preserved in the following institutions:

Archives Jenny, Comptoir in Ennenda (*Collection Adolf Jenny-Trümpy*, in twenty-two volumes with his valuable comments, particularly in vol. Bd XIV "Batik"), see Wanner 2017; Glarner Wirtschaftsarchiv in Schwanden (collection of samples of the enterprises *Blumer & Jenny*, *Streiff*, and other records); Archive of the canton of Glarus; Museum des Landes Glarus, Freulerpalast in Näfels; Museum der Kulturen Basel. Unfortunately,

only a few batik samples from Java could be discovered in these albums, and regrettably, the originals Conrad Blumer brought back from his travel to Java have completely disappeared. They probably were destroyed during a factory fire in 1933. The author would like to thank all collaborators in these archives for their constant support and commitment to her research.



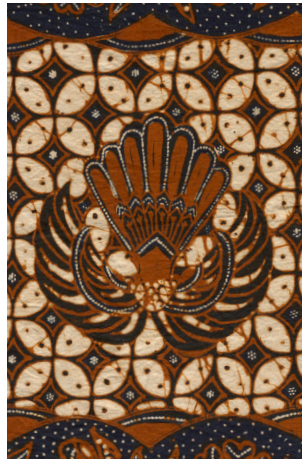


FIG. 17  
Headcloth, Java, Surakarta, early 20th century. Yale University Art Gallery, acc. no 1937.5466. Photography by Christopher Gardner.

FIG. 18 (bottom left)  
Pattern sample of Central Javanese style with *semen* and *sawat* motifs, textile printing factory *Blumer & Jenny*, Glarus, 1861. Glarner Wirtschaftsarchiv (gwa). Photography by Jasmin Simeon.

FIG. 19 (bottom center)  
Detail of a shoulder cloth (*selendang*) with *sawat* motif on *kawung* background, Java, around 1930. Yale University Art Gallery, acc. no 1945.437.

FIG. 20 (bottom right)  
Pattern sample with a realistic bird instead of the symbolic Javanese wing motif on *kawung* background, textile printing factory *Chr. Streiff-Trümpy*, Glarus, 1840–1860. Museum des Landes Glarus, Freulerpalast, Näfels. Photography by Katja Schatzmann.





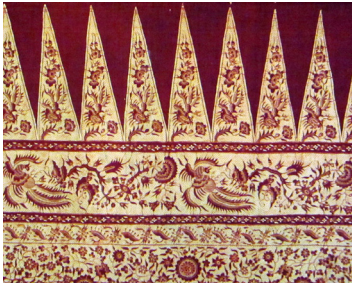


FIG. 21 (top left)  
Detail of the central section (*kepala*) of a sarong, Lasem, late 19th or early 20th century. Museum der Kulturen Basel, Ilc 16085. Photo courtesy of the author.

FIG. 22 (above, bottom left)  
Pattern sample in Lasem style with typical Turkey-red dyeing, textile printing factory *Blumer & Jenny*, Glarus, Schwanden, 1860s. Glarner Wirtschaftsarchiv (gwa). Photography by Jasmin Simeon.

FIG. 23 (above, top right)  
Sarong, Java, Pekalongan, late 19th century. Museum der Kulturen Basel, Ilc 16079. Photography by Peter Horner.

FIG. 24 (above, bottom right)  
Pattern sample for central section (*kepala*) of Pekalongan style sarong, textile printing factory *Blumer & Jenny*, Glarus, Schwanden, 1860s. Glarner Wirtschaftsarchiv (gwa). Photography by Jasmin Simeon.

FIG. 27 (right)  
Pattern samples with Chinese motifs like Foo, the guardian lion, and phoenix, with fluent contours (flow), textile printing factory *Blumer & Jenny*, Glarus, Schwanden, 1850–60s. Glarner Wirtschaftsarchiv (gwa). Photography by Jasmin Simeon.



hub of international maritime trade between India, China, and Southeast Asia. It was a melting pot of diverse population groups—Arabs, Indians, Malay, Portuguese, British, and the increasingly dominant Dutch and Chinese. Thus, it is not surprising that diverse batik centers evolved there and developed their own regional styles. Typical for their sarongs is a prominent central section with two rows of mirrored triangles, *kepala* (head), between two lateral parts with geometric or floral patterns, *badan* (bodies).

Lasem was famous for its excellent red coloration, as a result of its expert dyers and due to the special qualities of its local water (fig. 21). For the same reason, Glarus printing mills could also achieve wonderful deep red hues (fig. 22). The most important

and possibly the most innovative batik center was Pekalongan. Its sarongs with their triangle *kepala* separating two *badan* with geometrically arranged floral and animal designs fascinate through their blaze of colors (fig. 23). Increasingly, figurative representations and European patterns entered the design repertoire, inspired by lacework and embroideries, illustrations from journals, or botanical books and art nouveau wall paper as well. Called Batik Belanda (Dutch batik)<sup>25</sup> or *sarong buketan*, they often showed huge bouquets or flowering twigs (fig. 25). They were very popular in urban areas. Most of these admirable fabrics were manufactured in batik workshops of Indo-European or Chinese owners, and sometimes they were marked and signed with their name. Some of them were successfully imitated by *Blumer & Jenny* (fig. 24); however, for technical reasons, the large European-style flowery pattern repeats could not be reproduced in the roller technique used by the Glarus factories. In Lasem, Pekalongan, and other Pasisir areas, Chinese motifs were significantly popular among *Peranakan* families (descendants of Chinese immigrants), not only for sarongs but for all kind of covers and hangings such as *tok wi* for honoring gods and ancestors at their house altars (fig. 26). Chinese motifs—for instance Foo, the lion guardian or phoenixes—entered the Glarus repertoire of batik patterns in order to satisfy these substantial customer segments (fig. 27). Sarongs with geometric, floral, and animal patterns in exclusively dark blue or black shades were typical for Cirebon and Indramayu. Extremely popular among elderly *Peranakan* ladies, they were also imitated in Glarus in complex dyeing



25 Veldhuisen 1993; Raadt-  
Apell 1980–1981; Van Hout

2001, pp. 180–81.





FIG. 25  
Sarong with floral motifs in European style (*kepala* and borders) with animals and steamers, Java, Pekalongan, late 19th–early 20th century. Yale University Art Gallery, Indo-Pacific Collection, acc. no 1937.5488. Photography by Christopher Gardner.

FIG. 26  
Hanging for house altar, *tok wi*, for Indo-Chinese *Peranakan* clients, Lasem or Semarang, around 1900. Coll. Rudolf Smend.





FIG. 28  
Portrait of an elderly Indo-  
Chinese woman, Indramayu  
or Cirebon, around 1880. Coll.  
Rudolf Smend.

FIG. 29 (opposite top)  
Pattern sample for a sarong  
in Indramayu style, with tech-  
nical instructions of Adolf  
Trümpy for dyeing black with  
ferric solution and logwood  
powder, Glarus, around 1870.  
Archives Jenny, Comptoir,  
Ennenda. Photography by  
Reto Jenny.

FIG. 30 (opposite bottom)  
Order book of the textile  
printing factory *Luchsinger*,  
Näfels with an order from  
Batavia, dated January 14,  
1862. Coll. Museum des  
Landes Glarus, Freulerpalast,  
Glarus, Näfels. Photo  
courtesy of the author.





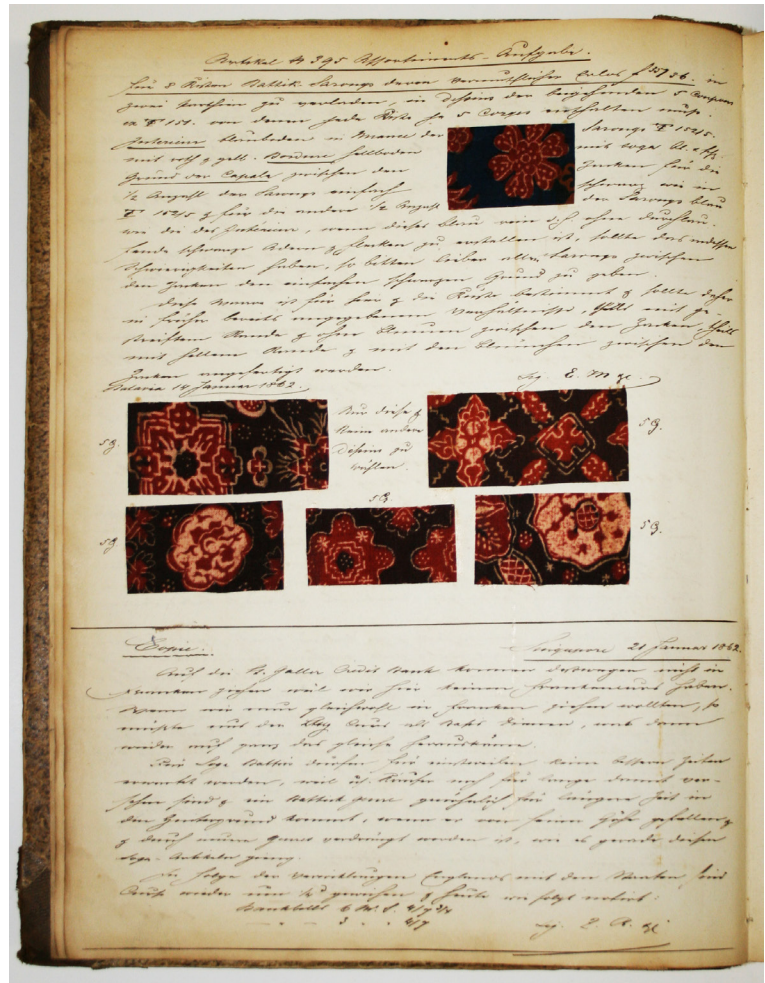
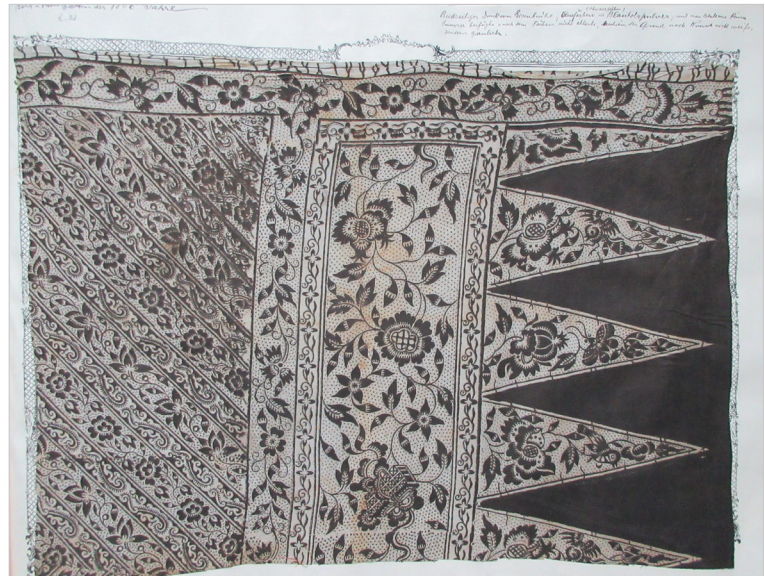
processes that were true to the original style (figs. 28 and 29).<sup>26</sup>

### Marketing and Reception of Batik Imitations in Java

The new business was successful indeed! The well-designed imitations were soon much in demand. The textile printing factory *Luchsinger* in Näfels, for example, delivered, among others, 125 sarongs with designs that had to be the exact equivalent of small pattern samples attached to an 1862 order from Batavia (fig. 30). In 1891, agencies in Surabaya and Semarang ordered five boxes of “slendangs à 20 coupons,” thus a total of 100 scarves.<sup>27</sup>

Such quantities may appear relatively low, but considering the many competing companies and the rather dispersed clientele, they seem remarkable nonetheless. Orders and deliveries were usually handled by agencies, so-called “commissionaires,” who sold the goods to local traders. They resold the fabrics to middle class customers, in particular to multicultural population groups of the North Coast Pasisir. Poorer people afforded them for important celebrations such as weddings. In the 1920s a Dutch author commented as follows: “Javanese people wear batik imitations from Dutch and Swiss cotton print factories because they are inexpensive. They feel ashamed and unfortunate if they cannot afford a costly batik.”<sup>28</sup> In conservative circles of the Central Javanese courts, customers would hardly buy such cheap imitations; they definitely preferred their own traditional and authentic batik. As to prices paid for batik imitations from Glarus, we have little information available so far. Dutch tax documents from Batavia from 1832 and 1834 that specified prices as a base for import tax, listed textiles exported to Java among other printed cottons from Switzerland and France.

*Beidseitiger Druck von Eisenoxide, Ausfarbner in Blauschwarzpulver; mit man lebteme Riese  
Sammere beifigle und dem Farben nicht eblete, sondern der Grund nach Kirscht mit weisse,  
sonnen gebleit.*



<sup>26</sup> The process with iron oxidation dye, described by Adolf Jenny-Trümpy, was in use from 1868 until 1887.  
<sup>27</sup> A “coupon” is a cut piece of cloth of specific measurements, for instance for a sarong or a shoulder cloth.  
<sup>28</sup> Die Batikimitationen aus

holländischen und schweizerischen Kattdruckereien trägt der Javaner der Billigkeit wegen. Ist er nicht in der Lage, sich für die Festtage einen immerhin teuren Batik anzuschaffen, so schämt er sich, fühlt sich unglücklich. Loebèr 1926, p. 10.



FIG. 31  
Cap printing workshop,  
Surakarta, around 1900.  
Published in Jasper and  
Pirngadie 1916, fig. 54.



These values, however, concern a slightly earlier period and were the official evaluations of textiles and other goods set by the Dutch custom officials on Java for taxation purposes.<sup>29</sup> An invoice book of *Blumer & Jenny* from December 1843—thus shortly after Conrad Blumer's return—provides details on a delivery to MacLaine Watson in Batavia, a trading agency that handled their orders and deliveries in Java. It mentions, inter alia, 20 corge of sarongs ("corge" was a unit of measurement used in Southeast Asia, equal to 20 pieces of cloth) with a value of *f* 37 each (the abbreviation *f* or *fl.* stands for "florin", the old name for the Dutch guilder), and a total of *f* 740 for 400 sarongs, or, respectively, *f* 1.85 per sarong only.<sup>30</sup> In addition, a customs tax of 25 percent was imposed on goods from all nations except the Netherlands, as warned by Conrad Blumer in a letter of December 17, 1840 to *Blumer & Jenny*: "I have to mention another fact, the customs duty. It is 25% for ships from all nations, regardless their flag or their port of origin. Only Dutch goods which are manufactured there and which are accompanied with a certificate of proof pay 12% only."<sup>31</sup> And as a smart businessman, he made some suggestions regarding how such certificates

might possibly be obtained—illegally. But in conclusion, this unfortunately does not clear up the actual selling prices to the end customers.

### Wax Print with Copper Stamps—The Response of the Javanese Batik Workshops

Around 1850 new paths for more efficient production methods were sought by Javanese batik producers themselves. They invented the so-called *cap* technique, which led to a significant advancement from pure handicraft towards serial production and industrialization.<sup>32</sup> By means of pairs of stamps soldered together from copper pins and fine slats, the melted wax could be printed much quicker onto the cloth (fig. 31). Depending on the fineness of a hip cloth pattern, twelve to fifteen days were required to apply the wax cover by hand with a *canting*. But with *cap* stamps up to twenty pieces could be finished within one day only. It is often rather difficult to differentiate between *batik tulis*, made with the *canting*, and *batik cap*. Sometimes outlines or insignificant parts were executed with *cap* stamps, while details continued to be drawn with the *canting*.<sup>33</sup> Towards the end of the nineteenth century,

<sup>29</sup> Wronska-Friend 2017, p. 56, and personal communication.

<sup>30</sup> Personal communication of the Glarner Wirtschaftsarchiv.

<sup>31</sup> *Auch muss ich noch eines anderen Umstandes*

*erwähnen, nämlich des Zolles. Dieser ist für die Schiffe aller Nationen, kommen sie unter welcher Flagge & aus welchem Hafen sie wollen, der nämliche, 25%. Nur die Holländ'sche Waare, in Holland selbst fabriциert &*

*mit einem diess beweisenden Certificat begleitet, bezahlt nur 12%.*

<sup>32</sup> Sekimoto 2003, p. 114; Kerlogue 2004, pp. 20–1. Further analysis is needed to assess to what extent this new technique had been inspired by European

models, or—as suggested by Kerlogue—by printing blocks as already used in Sumatra at that time.

<sup>33</sup> The differences resulting from these two methods are described precisely by Haake and Winotosastro 1993.



more and more workshops started to manufacture batik, particularly in Pekalongan. Some were run by Indo-Arab entrepreneurs, but the largest belonged to Chinese businessmen who traded their products too. This development went hand in hand with a stronger blending of regional design styles. The local production increasingly turned to export to other islands as well. Work was organized in a more professional way, and men took over the physically demanding *cap* stamping and dyeing, while women were in charge of wax application using the *canting*.<sup>34</sup> Working conditions were deplorable though. Dutch government officials criticized in vain the low wages, sexual assaults against young women, and excessively long working hours in poorly lighted rooms filled with suffocating wax smoke.<sup>35</sup> It was due to these circumstances that the first labor strikes occurred in the early twentieth century, which led to the formation of labor unions, early anti-colonial movements, and, finally, to Indonesia's Independency. Comparable developments in the Swiss canton of Glarus may be briefly mentioned here: the oldest worker union was founded in 1863, and the first strike, attended by around 600 workers, arose in 1873 after factory owner Egidius Trümpy installed a bell to control the start of work. Only a little later, in 1878, was a law adopted reducing labor to eleven hours a day.<sup>36</sup>

### The Decline of the Glarus Export Industry to Dutch East Indies

The heyday of the export of batik cloths and other printed fabrics to the Dutch East Indies lasted from 1840 to around 1890. In 1865, a total of twenty-three printing factories employed some 5,500 workers, but most of them had closed down by the early twentieth century. The reasons for the decline were numerous and complex. There was the turmoil of World War I, the world economic crisis, shortages of raw materials, export restrictions and Dutch customs safeguard policy, growing competition from abroad

with cheaper products, and the development of new printing techniques.

These developments did not only affect the manufacture of batiks for Java and the whole of the Dutch East Indies, but also the earlier export activities to India, the Near East, and the Balkan countries. *Egidius Trümpy & Cie* closed their printing mill in 1909, *Bartholomé Jenny & Cie* reduced their activities to only one weaving factory in Haslen (nowadays *Daniel Jenny & Co*). The huge "*Streiffigen*" factory buildings in Glarus town (formerly *J. & J. R. Streiff*) were blown up with dynamite in 1939, and *Hohlenstein AG*, which had survived far into the second half of the twentieth century thanks to their successful wax prints for Java and West Africa (figs. 14 and 15), finally had to close down in 1973. Only three printing mills still existed in 1957. Today there is just one left, *Mitlödi Textildruck AG* in Mitlödi, which specializes in printing small series of luxury textiles.<sup>37</sup>

A great epoch was coming to an end—an era of transition from specialized handicraft in small workshops to industrial production in factories and global trade relations. The negative impacts of European trade activities caused significant changes in Java—setting up bigger manufactories, creating more efficient production techniques, blending of regional design styles, and growth of export trade to other recipients. Another global development greatly affects the present situation of local batik producers: the huge supply of cheaper, industrially manufactured mass products, which destroys the demand for everyday batik cloths.<sup>38</sup> But Javanese handmade traditional and modernized *batik tulis* continue to generate great admiration and demand among well-off customers.

<sup>34</sup> Kerlogue 2004, pp. 21ff, p. 33, pp. 105–6.

<sup>35</sup> Van Hout 2001, pp. 61–62, refers to the report on working conditions of batik

workers in factories and small workshops written by Kat Angelino, 1930–1931.

<sup>36</sup> Freuler 1964, pp. 32–3.

<sup>37</sup> Von Arx 2005, pp. 106, 127,

143, 174, 327.

<sup>38</sup> Haake and Winotosastro 1993, p. 449.



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