

SIMBOL ȘI TEHNICĂ ARHAICĂ-RAPEL ÎN CREAȚIA CONTEMPORANĂ

BITAY ECATERINA

1 SUMMARY

The Shibori, Batik and Ikat techniques are known as resist dyeing techniques. „Shibori” is actually an old name of the Tie-dye technique, a widespread expression in the hippie communities of the 60’s – 70’s period, when this technique had a great success also among the fashion designers, making a spectacular comeback, after a long period of sporadic isolation in certain areas of the world, especially in Japan, Africa and South America. The first textiles found by archaeologists are so old that we may say that world history could be read in the nations’ textiles. The rise of the civilizations and the fall of the empires are woven and printed on the scarves and the shrouds of the great conquests main characters. Archaeological diggings revealed signs of these traditions of 5000 years old.

Religion, traditions, myths, superstitions and rituals are closely related to the textiles belonging to many nations of Eastern Asia, Asia Minor, and of the Pacific Islands, their aesthetic value being, more than once, secondary.

CHAPTER 1

THE SHIBORI TECHNIQUE

The origin of the word “Shibori” is the verb “shiboru” which means to wring, to twist, to press. Even if “shibori” refers to a particular group of resist dyeings, the word’s origin suggests the cloth manipulation process and it can comprise modern methods of dyeing which involve the same type of cloth treatment, possibly without pigments or treatment with pigments applied by using totally different methods than the ancient ones. Shibori can be divided in many ways: according to the areas where it is used, such as Japan, China, India, Africa, Indonesia, South America or according to the details used in the technique. According to the technique, the main Shibori technique divisions are: tying resist, folding and tying, folding and pressing between different types of plates resist technique, sewing resist, once the material is dyed by boiling in

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case of some colourings or cold dyed in case of the indigo.

THE BATIK TECHNIQUE

The Batik technique is also a resist technique, however not by tying, but by reserving the different surfaces of the textile material with hot wax or rice paste, kaolin paste, starch, gutta percha etc. This technique can also be used at cold; the pigment will be fixed later, by ironing or by steam fixing. The word „Batik” has a Javanese origin, from the term „ambatik”, derived from „tik”, which means „to mark”. In a broader sense, it means to draw, to paint, to write. The word appeared for the first time in the Dutch documents of the 17th century, with reference to a load of clothes on a boat, brought from the Dutch colonies.

There has been a continuous controversy related to the technique origin, because the first pieces were found on archaeological sites in Eastern Asia, Central Asia, India and Asia Minor.

The Dutch import of clothing pieces made in the Batik technique led to the development of small workshops in Holland where the original technique is used at present to produce textile material, and in 1900, a school of arts and crafts was founded in Harlem, the „Batik” technique representing the basis for training professionals in the „art nouveau” field.

The „Batik” technique is used nowadays in Indonesia, China, Japan and Africa. In each of these countries the technique has a different name.

THE IKAT TECHNIQUE

The Ikat technique is a combination of the following techniques: Shibori, Batik and the weaving. There are two known types of Ikat techniques: the simple technique – only the warp is dyed by using a resist technique - Shibori or Batik; the double technique – both the warp and the weft are dyed by using one of the resist techniques, according to the effect desired after the weaving.

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The first pieces made in the Ikat technique, in the 17th century, were found in the caves of Ajanta. From here, the techniques allegedly spread towards the Middle East, Near East, Central Asia and the Indonesian Islands.

The diggings made at Mahenjo-daro also revealed textile fragments. The „Mahabharata” scripts contained references to the fabrics dyed in the Ikat technique. The word origin is Malaysian-Indonesian, „Mengikat” having different meanings depending on the context, but the word means generally „knot” or „tied”. The technique is used at present in India, Indonesia, Uzbekistan, Guatemala and, sporadically, in Japan.

CHAPTER 2

THE SYMBOLIC CONFIGURATIONS CLOSELY RELATED TO THE ARCHAIC TECHNIQUES, CREATIVE RECOVERY, BATIK TECHNIQUE CASE STUDY

1. TYPES OF SIGNS AND SYMBOLS USED IN THE ARCHAIC TECHNIQUES, COLOUR SYMBOLS IN THE BATIK TECHNIQUE

General aspects concerning the colour symbolism and colour symbolism peculiarities in the Hindu and Buddhist religions or in Japanese and Polynesian cultures.

The white colour in the East is the colour of death and of the mourning, as contrasted with Europe and America, where white suggests innocence and holiness.

The black colour is, most of the times, a symbol of the evil forces, of hell, mourning and death. In absolute value, black, the opposite of white, is white's equal. It becomes the absence or the sum of the other colours, black or their synthesis. In the Far East, the duality white-black is generally the duality light-shadow, day-night, knowledge-ignorance, positive-negative, yang-yin, and sky-earth.

At the Hindi people, that duality is a translation of the tendencies,

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„tamas” – tendency to fall and „sattva” - tendency to rise. Shiva is white and Vishnu is black. For the Chinese, black is a correspondent of the Yin feminine principle, terrestrial, instinctual and maternal.

Blue is one of the most immaterial colours, an accumulated void of the water, of the air, or of the crystal.

The Christian symbolism sees that representation as the mantle that covers and hides the Divinity.

Blue is the Yang's colour, the colour of the geomantic dragon, therefore of the beneficial influences. Huan – which means „blue” – the colour of the dark sky, of great distances, suggests the seat of the immortality and of the not-manifested.

In Japan, the blue colour represents the innocence and the lack of experience. In Egypt, blue is the colour of the truth.

Red is everywhere associated with fire, blood, cinnabar, fertility, libido, heart, symbolising immortality. In Japan red is worn exclusively by women, as this colour suggests happiness and honesty. In China, the red colour is closely related to the social position and to luck and in China, in India and in Japan the brides wear red as a symbol of pure love.

The duality of the red colour symbolism consists in the fact that it suggests battle, war, blood, hell, power, but, on the other hand, red is a symbol of love, wealth, life and immortality, of the union made in Heavens.

The yellow colour is associated with the gold, the sun, with brightness, but also suggesting envy, cowardice, and quarantine during the Plague. In China yellow has been the imperial colour since the 16th century, as it is associated with the Sun and the Emperor.

In Islam the golden yellow suggests wisdom and good advice, while light yellow is a symbol of betrayal and deception.

Green is the colour of the spring, of youth, of hope and joy, and of rebirth but, at the same time, it is the colour of the decline and jealousy.

For the Muslims it is sacred, because they believe that everything in Heaven is green, and they all wear green clothes as the prophet Muhammad.

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Violet is the perfect balance between the passion symbolised by the red colour and the lucidity of the blue, the balance between earth and sky, instincts and spirit, passion and intelligence, love and wisdom. In the Far East, violet is seen as a transition from active to passive, from yang to yin, while orange is the balance point between spirit and libido. If this balance breaks, the orange turns to a symbol of debauchery or to the revelation of the divine love.

2. MOTIFS AND CONTENTS

The symbolism is an old universal catalyst language, sharing information and generating emotions.

The word „symbol” derives from an ancient Greek habit of breaking into pieces a clay plate, each member of the group receiving one piece of the plate. When the group reunited, the pieces were reassembled as a puzzle, thus the group individual identity was confirmed. This is how the Greek word „symbolon” – „recognition mark” was created. Every religion developed a great variety of symbols meant to represent particular aspects of their beliefs.

Examples are: the crucifix, the Ganesha dragon with elephant head specific to the Hinduism and the image of Buddha.

Trying to explain the inexplicable, magic creatures, such as the Sphinx, or the Greek Minotaur, started to populate the world’s mythology, and their extraordinary hybrid forms started to symbolise supernatural characters and forces.

In the Hinduism, the struggle between good and evil is represented by the conflict between the solar bird and the Naga snakes or, in the Western tradition, between the eagle and the dragon. In any case, many cultures with ancient traditions admitted that the true perfection is reached when Universe’s opposite forces are reconciled and united: the Taoist symbol yin-yang and the androgen figure both represent this ideal.

The identity symbols are the ones which appear most often in the decoration of clothes and of the rooms – for different ceremonies and in the religious edifices.

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The symbolism has been used, since old times, to express identity and to confirm affiliation to certain social groups.

Membership of certain professions or occupations can be additional information in order to define identity, the occupational generic symbols can be added to the people practising them.

The members of the tribal cultures express their group identity by specific symbolic signs, from tattooing their body with various symbols, to decorations or tribal outfits and to totemic symbols.

There is the same trend for the modern cult groups: Punk, Goth, Emo or for the sport team fans, but also for the present tribal communities, African, aboriginal, Amerindian, with century-old traditions.

The sacred symbols are those often found in the textiles decorated in the Batik technique, due, among other reasons, to the primordial purpose of religious use. The rich variety of the world religions is the proof of man's primary need to justify his existence.

Therefore the cult objects are more than simple graphic representations of religious clothing subjects; they are filled with deep meanings, converted into a sign, thus serving to evoke the principles of faith, helping to focus and develop faith.

Such elements are the lotus, the word "Man", the Buddhist wheel, the yinyang sign, the Jewish slate, the Islamic calligraphy.

The natural world creatures can signify, too, a sacred concept, especially in the Buddhist faith, but also in the beliefs of the Australian and American Indian aboriginals, where animals such as the kangaroo and the bull are totems endowed with supernatural powers; in the Hinduism the bull has symbolic resistance; there are the dove and the lamb in Christianity, and the fish represents also Buddha and Jesus Christ.

The conclusion is that there are indications of connections between the early religious ideas, and there are also common cosmic interpretations.

This chapter cannot and does not intend to cover the world's great number of sacred symbols, but its goal is to present the most representative ones, found as

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decorative patterns in the Batik technique.

The elements with symbolic and religious significations analysed in this chapter are: the wheel, Buddha's hand, Abridha, the fish, the lotus, and the holy footprints.

In the Indian religious tapestries there are often animals such as the elephant, the bull, the snake, the tiger, the peacock, the turtle, the cock, the rat, the dragon-fly, the fish, the bat, the crane and the crab. Each of them are analysed in Chapter 2 of my thesis.

The fantastic creatures symbolism and the allegories related to them are analysed in three groups: those representing the Air super-natural powers, or the Earth's powers and the powers of the Sea, fighting against each other many times, their eternal conflict suggesting the eternal battle between the good and the evil, between light and darkness.

Therefore, the magic creatures used to decorate the clothing pieces or cult objects in the Far East are: the Dragon, the dog- Lion, the Naga snake, Makara, Phoenix, Garuda bird, the Basilisk.

A special category is formed by the textiles decorated with scenes from the shadow theatre and those with decorations from the Islamic calligraphy. To complete the significations of the decorative patterns found on the textiles made in the Batik technique, I analysed the decorative elements that are not explicitly related to a particular religion and do not have a primary role in the garment decoration, but have the role of accompanying and varying the main element.

These are often geometric shapes, flowers, plants, fruits: the swastika, the circle, the spiral, the double spiral, the triangle, the flame, the rhombus, the knot, the scales, the dot, the cross, the garden, the fig-tree, the bamboo, the cane, the tamarind, the chrysanthemum, the rose, the peony, the hemerocallis lily, the iris, the fern, the algae, the fruits, the pumpkin, the peach.

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3. TYPES OF SYMBOLIC CONFIGURATIONS IN THE ARCHAIC TRADITIONAL TECHNIQUES, PARTICULARLY IN THE BATIK TECHNIQUE.

The Batik technique has a special role in the textile world. No other technique, in the field of the textile printing, especially in the Indonesian Archipelago, is charged with so many symbols, becoming part of their cultural inheritance.

In this chapter I analysed in detail the symbols of the decorative patterns found on the clothes specific to the Indonesian Archipelago, because the Batik technique is used in a wide range of clothing: from the daily outfits of the simple people working in the rice fields or in food markets to the strict royal family garments, for many generations. Certain Batik models are destined to be worn by the aristocracy, others by the Royal House, some are allowed to the social classes determined by specific occupations, others can be used in wedding, baptism or funeral ceremonies, circumcisions and tooth extractions, but there are models with a protection role against diseases, pain and even against bullets when men go to war.

An important aspect, other than the symbols of the fabric elements, is the textile wearing, wrapped in specific directions around the body, on the head, as a baby carrier or as a decoration piece worn in a particular ceremony.

The detailed analysis is made considering the geographic areas which give certain features both to decorations and to the Royal Houses of the respective areas: the Maratam Royal House, the Royal Houses of Yogyakarta and of the Surakarta, the Sultan of Cyberon, the Indramayu, Pekalongan, Madura, and Jambi areas.

The names of the clothing pieces made in the Batik technique are not given exclusively considering the pattern contained, but also according to the cloth's colours, especially its background.

The colour combinations have clear significations. The red colour – as the femininity symbol and the white – the masculinity symbol, combined together suggest

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fertility and prosperity, and that is why this combination is used in marriage ceremonies.

The green colour, associated with the white colour, suggest the Jasmin flowers and leaves; the garments in this combination of colours are offered to the Queen of the South Seas at the „Labuhan” ceremony organised in her honour by the Sultan of Yogyakarta.

A precise way to invest a piece of cloth with magic powers is to cover it with written words, having special significations, and the Batik technique is very appropriate for this task. Quotes of Koran appear on men’s scarves, because of the great number of Muslims, but there are also Turkish calligraphic symbols or Jewish signs, such as Solomon star. These elements form the specific features of the calligraphic prints, found in a large number in The Padong areas and in the city of Jambi.

CHAPTER 3

ARCHAIC TECHNIQUES UPDATES IN DESIGN, TRADITION – RENEWAL – CREATIVITY IN THE SHIBORI TECHNIQUE – CASE STUDY.

1. SHIBORI AT THE PRESENT TIME.

A silent revolution against mass production in the textile industry led to the positive appreciation of the increasing number of manually dyed textiles, of the pieces unique of their kind, having special textures.

In the major arts, many artists started to flirt with acrylics, to turn their attention from the classic pigments and the classic interpretation style to the visceral pleasures given by the material they were working with, the dye sprinkling, dripping and pouring, the use of spray painting, in order to create new expressivity surfaces,

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blurs, transparencies, chaotic areas, to evoke new emotional reactions.

The fortuitous process, the availability to find accidentally new effects, surfaces, valuable and beautiful images, the tendency to do an uncontrolled work, producing images differing from the initial idea, all these take proportions among the North-American artists.

This modern art trend has turned the Shibori technique from manual labour to art.

2. DEVELOPMENT AREAS AND CREATION GROUPS

“The Dyear’s Art” Ikat, Batik, Plangi” publication, issued in 1976, written by Jaxk Lenor Larsen and the “Shibori” publication, written by Mary Rice, Jane Barton and Yoshiko Iwamoto Wada in 1983, were very helpful for the artists who, in order to discover new expression means, were using archaic techniques, rather isolated in the arts world. The first exhibitions and workshops organised in the 80’s by H  l  ne Soubeyran had as a result an increase in the number of the artists that were experimenting the Shibori technique in Europe, in the Scandinavian countries and in Australia.

In 1989 Grethe Wellejus wrote a book about the Shibori, using the book to teach this technique in Europe, at different schools and universities. The book had a great importance in the Scandinavian countries, as an introduction to the technique. In 1976, Jason Pollen and the chemist Joy Batrup founded in Kansas the „Surface Design Association” that has now 3,200 members and is issuing constantly the „Surface Design Journal” magazine. After the Second World War, the Shibori handicraftsmen from the Arimatsu-Narumi area and the textilists from Tokyo and Kyoto reintroduced and actively used methods as the „devor  ” and the discolouring, trying to create new styles in the textile design.

In 1992, the textile artists in that field decided to organise the First International „Shibori Symposium” in Nagoya. The symposium subject was the

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Shibori redefinition, as a process of the bi-dimensional material into tri-dimensional shapes, an aspect to which the artists responded with lots of enthusiasm. The presentation quality led to further dialogues and to the foundation of the „World Shibori Network” in December 1992.

India and Indonesia are active centres of the textile production for the fashion houses in the Asian world of fashion. In many areas in Western and Northern Africa, there are unique and very interesting traditions in the production of textiles from raffia, cotton and wool, all dyed in the Shibori techniques; these textiles are unique, made in minimal conditions and with elementary tools.

Since the Nagoya International „Shibori Symposium” held in 1992, the Japanese fashion designers started to co-operate with the manufactories that had to permanently meet the constant demand for novelties, exploring the countless possibilities of the fibres, of the weaving methods and of the fabric possible treatments.

One of the patterns that is still used by the Shibori technique received the name of a painter who became a dyer, Motohiko Katano (1899-1975), who created a lot of sublime works, dyeing with indigo and other natural pigments. Trained by Soetsu Yanagi, leader of the „mingei” movement – traditional manufacture -, Katano recognized the humble beauty of Arimatsu Narumi art.

The Second International „Shibori Symposium” was held in 1996-1997 at Ahmedabad – India, where the designer Asha Sarabhai was a remarkable presence, as he exhibited superb garment pieces, surprising combinations between the ancient „Bandhani” techniques and a sophisticated sense of contemporary fashion.

The workshops held by the Japanese designers in the „high-tech” Shibori techniques had a great success among the participants, including the Indian traditional manufacturers.

In 1973 Julie Dale founded the „Handicraftsmen Gallery” in Manhattan; Sandra Sakata opened the „Obiko” Gallery in San Francisco, promoting the creations of more than 200 artists in the textile field, and her work is carried on nowadays by Monique Zhang. Thus, Shibori became gradually an important part of the Japanese

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fashion and of the object-clothing in North America.

In the 60's, in the theatre and music hall field, Marian Clyden's costumes had a real succes. Joan Morvis created recently spectacular costumes using the Shibori technique, for the pieces „Can you Feel the Love Tonight?” and for scenes from „The Lion King”.

The Third Shibori Symposium was held in Santiago – Chile, in 1999, having as theme „the Dye, or shaping resist in the pre-Columbian textiles”. This was the first opportunity, in the case of the pre-Hispanic studies in the textile field, for an exhibition to focus on the „amarra” area and to make known this side, until then neglected, of the textile arts.

The fascination of studying the Shibori technique origins, for the potential introduction in the modern technologies, is shared by a various community of practitioners, artists who use the technique in sculptural shapes, in installations, to designers who create the object-clothing.

Many of them co-operate with each other, inspiring one another, despite the fact that they speak different languages and come from different cultural areas.

SHIBORI TECHNIQUE'S CONTEMPORARY REPRESENTATIVES

Shibori has evolved as a technique since the 20th century, from a trade practised by anonymous craftsmen to an independent form of art.

The fact that the Western haute-couture designers discovered in the 70's the Tokyo designers stimulated an essential change in the perception of the textile material. Half of the artists and craftsmen named in the following pages are Japanese, not only because Shibori originated in Japan, but also because in Japan there are the opportunities that an artist needs for innovation and creative work.

I made an analysis of the creation and innovation activity of numerous artists in the textile field, who contributed significantly to the development of the Shibori technique and its repositioning in the artistic field.

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These are: Jun'ichi Arai, Hiroshi Murase, Tsuyoshi Kuno, Trine Mauritz Eriksen, Elisa Ligon, Reiko Sudo, Jurgen Lehl, Awa Cissé, Andrea Serrahn, Yoshiko Jinzenji, Sara Chiarugi, Catharine Ellis Muerdter, Hideko Takahashi, Yuh Okano, Joan Morris, Mascha Mioni, Patricia Black, Angelina Deantonis, Issey Myake, Makiko Minagawa, Yohsi Yamamoto, Asha Sarabhai, Marian Clayden, Carter Smith, Ana Lisa Hedstrom, Carol Lee Shanks, D'Archie Beytebiere, Mike Kane, Steve Sells, Mariana Carreno, Dorita Gomien, Karren Brito, Lori Bacigalupi, Marshall Bacigalupi, Ioan Mc Gee, Mark Thomas, Genevieve Dion, Barbara Rogers, Jeung-hwa Park, Mie Iwatsubo, H  l  ne Soubeyran, Yoshiki Hishinuma, Hiroyuki Shindo, Yukiko Echigo, Michie Yamaguchi, Kaei Hayakawa, Keiko Amenomori – Schmeisser, Junco Sato Pollack, Joan Morris, Inge Dusi, Lynn Klein, Jean Williams Cacicedo, Marie-H  l  ne Guelton, Chad Alice Hagen, Judith Content, Liz Axford, Jan Myers-Newbury, Peter Wheeler, Sharon Baurley, Masae Bamba, Yuh Okano, Moira Doropoulos, Terri Fletecher, Emily Dubios, Elisa Ligon, Linda Lee Kerr, Lessley Nishigawara.

CONCLUSION

Shibori technique archaeologisation and its update in a post-modern creation process. Hence, the authenticity of the demarche and originality of the solutions.

CHAPTER 4

I selected from my own creations 11 representative works, that I analysed, then I presented concisely the result of my work as a teacher in the field of the Shibori and the Batik techniques.

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