

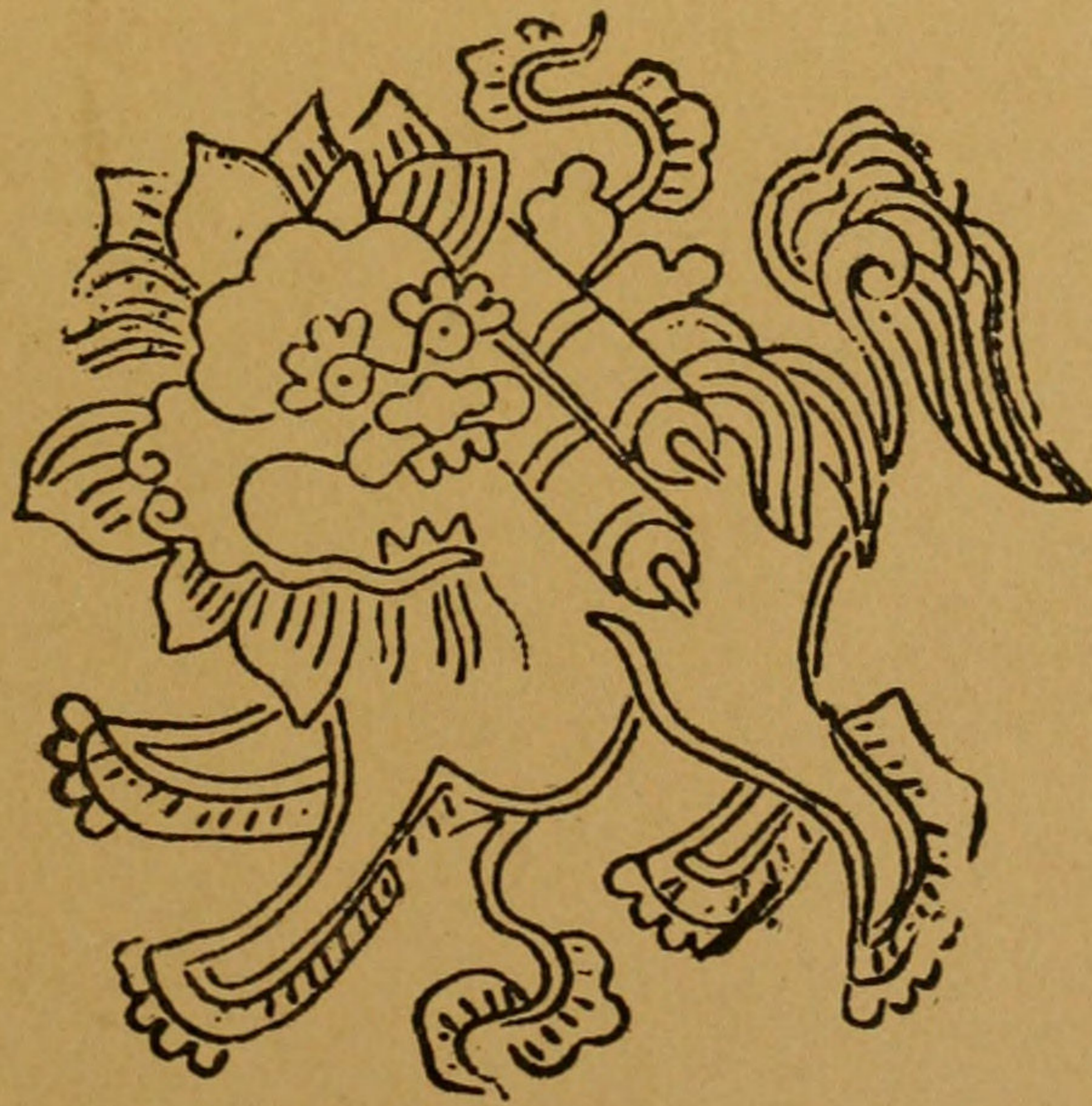
# JAVANESE BATIK DESIGNS FROM METAL STAMPS

*by*

ALBERT BUELL LEWIS

Assistant Curator of Melanesian Ethnology

24 Plates



ANTHROPOLOGY DESIGN SERIES No. 2

FIELD MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

CHICAGO

1924

### ANTHROPOLOGY DESIGN SERIES

This is the second number in a series dealing with primitive and oriental designs. The first issue "Block Prints from India for Textiles," is devoted to reproductions of the ink impressions obtained from wooden blocks, used for printing designs on cotton and silk textiles. The majority of the reproductions used are actual size and consist chiefly of border and all-over designs.

A brief introduction explains the meaning and use of the designs.

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PORTION OF A JAVANESE SARONG, SHOWING BATIK DESIGNS. NEARLY  $\frac{1}{2}$  ACTUAL SIZE.

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## JAVANESE BATIK DESIGNS FROM METAL STAMPS

The process of drawing or painting a design in wax on cloth so that when dyed only that part not covered by the wax takes the color, has been known and practised in Java for many generations. Cloth which has been treated and dyed in this way is known as batik. The wax is put on the cloth by means of a small copper container with a long slender spout. This is called a *tjanting*. The waxing of the cloth is a slow and tedious process, and is done only by the women.

Formerly such work was carried on chiefly by the women of the leisure class, much as fancy embroidery is done in some other countries. About 1860, however, a new method was introduced, in which metal stamps were used to apply the wax. By this means ten to twenty or even more sarongs could be stamped or waxed in a day, while by the batik process it would take a woman twelve to fifteen days to wax a single sarong. This process was so much more rapid that it soon became extensively used on a commercial scale, often under Chinese management. The stamping was done by men, and the finished cloth was known as *chop* work (often spelled *tjap*) from an Indian word meaning a stamp. This *chop* cloth proved so much cheaper than true batik, that a large proportion of the cloth dyed in Java is now waxed by this method, or by a combination of stamped and batik work. For example, the cloth may be stamped on one side, and batiked on the other; or the borders may be stamped, while the central design is batiked. Some handwork, usually with a brush, is often done over the stamped design to broaden the effect (Plate XXIV).

The stamps used are made of thin strips of copper about half an inch wide, set on edge, with short pieces of wire for the dots, all soldered to an open metal base of the same material, but of heavier strips. To this is fastened a curved iron handle (Figs. 1 and 2). The work requires great skill, and there are not many men who can make such stamps. The design wanted is carefully drawn on paper, and this the workman keeps before him, using a pair of compasses to get the lines and spaces exactly right. Frequently it is desired to stamp both sides of the cloth, in which case a second stamp must be made accurately repeating the design, but reversed, and corresponding to it as a negative corresponds to a positive. In the cheaper cloths the wax is stamped only on one side, but penetrates sufficiently to allow the design to show fairly well on the opposite side when dyed. The melted wax is kept in a metal pan near-by, in which floats a thick cloth pad, on which the stamp is pressed before placing it on the cloth. Aside from the use of the metal stamp instead of the *tjanting* for waxing the finer lines of the design, the manipulation is the same as in true batik work.

Practically all the batik and chop work is now done on factory-made cotton, European or Japanese, as there is very little native cloth made at present. Not

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