

THE INDUSTRY AND ART HISTORY OF BATIK IN WEST SUMATERA¹

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Abstract

The history of batik in Indonesia has been going on for a long time, even long before Hindu and Buddhist entered Indonesia. The batik art tradition, then, undergoes its booming time at the era of Hindu and Buddhist in Java, particularly, in the era of Majapahit Kingdom (13th – 115th century), and as well as in several Islamic empires in Java from 16th up to 18th A.D. it went on until the independence of Indonesia the batik tradition well develops up to the present moment. Some areas in the Java Island, the batik tradition keeps developing and even becoming the icon of batik in Indonesia. Furthermore, until now the art of batik pervades almost across provinces of Indonesia so that there appear a various number batik varieties outside Java such as the batiks of Riau, Jambi, Borneo, and Papua. Particularly, in West Sumatra with Minang batik, there is batik called *tanah liek* (clay)

This paper will discuss the history of batik in Indonesia and the history of the entering and developing of batik art in West Sumatra. This paper will also answer the question of when it started into industrialization in West Sumatra than who were the important agents were playing the roles developing both the art and industry of batik in West Sumatra (Minangkabau). This paper is attempting to answer and analyzes the questions above.

Keywords: history, art, tradition, batik, West Sumatra, and Indonesia

¹ This paper was presented at 10th *International Coverence on Malaysia and Indonesia Relations*, at University Malaya, Kuala Lumpur Malaysia, on 16-18 August 2016. This paper is based upon the temporary research result financed by the research scheme “Hibah Klaster Riset Guru Besar” University of Andalas Padang, Budgeting Year 2016, Decision Letter of Rector No. 524/XIV/A/UNAND-2016.

Background

Literally, the term *batik* is originated from Javanese (Ave, 2007:24). In Javanese *batik* is written in *bathik* referring to Javanese character *tha* telling that batik is a series of dots forming certain illustration (Wulandari, 2011:4). The term batik or hambatik would not be clearly introduced in annals of Sangkala written in 1663 as well as in the annals of Panji Jaya Lengkor written in 1770 (Anshori & Kusrianto2011).

Basically, the word batik is to describe a technique to paint batik done by Indonesian people long since their past era namely the technique of color blending². The original Indonesian color blending is by using *malam* 'wax' with a tool called *canting*. The technique of using both wax and canting is peculiar to Indonesia. Therefore, such a technique is of Indonesian origin. (Kusrianto, 2013:vii - viii; Ave, 2007:24). This is the technique prevail up to the present moment and the use pervades across Indonesia.

Prior to 2008, Malaysia administration ever claimed that batik is the cultural heritage of Malaysia. At that time almost elements of Indonesian people felt "resentment" and even a better part of them refuted such a Malaysian claim. The strongest refutation appeared among culture observers, academicians, and among the people activating the field of arts and batik industry in Indonesia, for examples, the batik painters, and entrepreneur running batik business in Indonesia felt uneasy of it.

At the moment, the Indonesian government did not stand still under the Malaysian

² The technique of making, and painting batik could also be seen in Tuckman and Jan Janas. Creative Silk Painting Dozens of Inspiring Project and Techniques with Instruction on Easy-To-Use New Dyes.

claim. Thus, the Indonesian government had the batik registered into the representative registration of intangible Indonesian cultural heritage to UNESCO in order to acquire a representative acknowledgment as Indonesian cultural heritage. Passing through a long process, thus, on September 3.2008 initiating by including batik as a nominee into UNESCO, and officially accepted by UNESCO on January 9.2009 to be processed further. The government's attempt was sweetly fruitful by the letter issuance of UNESCO on October 2.2009 to install that batik is the intangible cultural heritage of Indonesia (Wulandari, 2011:7).³ Later on, the Indonesian government made October 2 National Batik Day commemorated yearly. Since the installation by UNESCO, the activity of both art and batik industry became more glittering.

Ave (2007) said that thousand people to part in creative batik process, millions got involved in production process, and millions wore batik in their lives as well (Ave, 2007:18). In 2006, the activity of batik painting can be found within 17 provinces in Indonesia (Nuryanti, 2008:9).. Nowadays, each province has developed its own art and batik industry including West Sumatra Province. Especially West Sumatra, both art and batik industry has not developed so well.

History of Batik in Indonesia

Based upon the history, tradition of painting batik has gone since the olden time. An expert named J. L. Brandes stated that painting batik is the original heritage belonging to

³ The installation by UNESCO was done in Abu Dhabi , United Arab Emirates on October 2.2009.

Indonesia. According to him, prior to the coming of Indian influence, the Indonesian people have preserved ten items of original element of Indonesian cultures so that it could be said that Indonesian culture is already equal to the other cultures on earth. As quoted by Sulaiman (1986), the ten items of cultural element are as follows:

1. Wayang (shadow puppet)
2. Gamelan (gongs)
3. Independent metric
4. Batik
5. Metallurgy
6. Independent currency
7. Dependable sailing technology
8. Astronomy
9. Wet paddy planting
10. Orderly government

Based upon the idea of Brandes, the smart skill in painting batik belongs to the original cultural element of Indonesia having existed prior to the coming of Indian cultural influence to Indonesia. This statement then is supported by the other expert such as Sutjipto Wirjo Saputra as cited by Kusrianto, stating that prior to the coming of the Indian culture to Indonesia, various territories in the Archipelago has recognize the technique of painting batik cloth. The technique developing at that time was primitive technique (Kusrianto, 2013:viii).

However, is assumed that the smart skill of painting batik has developed since the era

of pre-Hinduism-Buddhism in Indonesia. Several archaeological remains could be evidenced that the archaeological remains such as pottery found in Indonesia showed that a number of decoration varieties used, pottery was also used as to decorate batik. It can be said that that the batik arts were inspired by the pottery.

The smart skill of painting batik affluently grew in the era of Hinduism-Buddhism Kingdoms holding power and in the era of Islamic Kingdom in Indonesia as well. The tradition of painting batik reach its peak as the Madja Pahit Kingdom took power in Java Island. At the areas of Mojokerto and Tulungagung, the tradition of painting batik called *kalangbret* batik. Later on, the *kalangbret* batik was taken into the court by the royal Knights and royal families of Madja Pahit so that, later on, the tradition of painting batik underwent a rapid development and was respected as the traditional dress of the Kings and the royal families in Madja Pahit Kingdom⁴.

A number of archaeological findings in form of statue in the classical era also showed that the statues looked wearing clothes decorated in beautiful batik patterns. Just say, for example, decoration of basic motifs *lereng* as found on a golden statue of Shiva (created in 19th century) at Gemuruh, Wonosobo, and *ceplok* motifs found on Ganesha statue at Banon Temple (created in 19th century). The same case was found on the statue Padmipani in Central Java estimated 8th - 10th century. Then, the batik with lined motifs

⁴ At the booming of the Madja Pahit Kingdom, the regions of Mojokerto And Tulung Agung were ruled by an Adipati Kalang who did not recognize the power Madja Pahit. Then Adipati Kalang was invaded. He died in a village called Kalangbret. A number of royal armies and families then resided permanently at Kalangbret, and some of them studied painting batik. Then both the armies and the families brought the smart skill of panting batik into the royal palace of Madj Pahit Kindom (Ulum M. D., 2016:23)

was found on the statue Manjusri at Ngemplak, , Semongan, Semarang (created in 10th century). Similarly, the statue found at Temple Ngirimbi pictures the figure of Raden Wijaya (the first King of Madja Pahit taking power 1294 - 1309 wearing batik clothe of *kawung* motifs (Wulandari, 2011:11 - 12).

Then, as the end of Madjapahit, the batik tradition grew better and better when the Islamic Kingdom took power in Java. At that time the developing of batik was done more at the eras of Mataram, Solo, and Yogyakarta Kingdoms (Ulum, 2016:23). At the era of Islamic Kingdom taking power, batik occupied a respectful position among the Kings and the Royal Family.

Afterwards, it could be said that a number of regions in Java Island became a batik center having a strong power toward the surrounding regions also including the ones outside Java among others, the regions are as in East Java is in Madura, in Central Java the regions of Tulung Agung and Mojokerto, , Ponorogo, Solo, Yogyakarta, Kebumen, Pekalongan, Tegal, and Puworejo. In West Java, just say, for example, Ciamis, Cianjur, Garut, Suka Bumi, dan Tasik Malaya (Wulandari, 2011; Kudiya, and at.all 2014; Prastiwi, 2009; Ministry of Culture and Tourism RI 2010). The batik centers have have become developing centers of arts and batik industry in Indonesia. Such regions have also born particular designs of batik pattern in step with the character of their own regions (Wulandari, 2011; Prastiwi, 2009; Kudiya, and associates, 2014; and Kusrianto, 2013).

The History of Batik in West Sumatra

The history of batik in West Sumatra could be said has started since the olden time.

Nevertheless, based upon historical evidence, the history of batik in West Sumatra does not have any obvious red thread and even it seemed up and down.

It is assumed that since 13th century the art of batik has been introduced to Minangkabau. Based upon the archaeology evidence Found in Dharmas Raya, there are some potteries decorated with flowery patterns were mostly used on batik in Java Island. If a close look is taken, the statue Amagapasha sent to the King Kertanegara (the King of Singhasari Kingdom) in 1286 to Dharmas Raya through the event of Pamalayu, showed that the statue pictured as wore a sarong of batik decoration. The findings indicated that the batik art was already introduced in Dharmas Raya by the Team of the Singhasari's Kingdom. Probably, afterwards, the local batik product has started pioneering the batik of nowadays called batik tanah like (clay batik)⁵ in West Sumatra. Then, there was no obvious development of batik in Dharmas Raya from 13th century up to 16 century AD.

In 16th century, the batik art appeared again in West Sumatra. At the era of Minangkabau Kingdom centered in Pagar Ruyung, the batik tradition reappeared⁶. It was since 16th century its historical development is not clear. According to Susanto (2010), West Sumatra Province belongs to batik consumer since prior to World War I, primarily, the batik produced in Pekalongan, Solo, and Yogyakarta. According to him, especially in Padang, batik started developing just by accident. It was due to Dutch blockade, the business of batik did not glitter in this region so that a number of batik traders who

⁵ Among the women in Minangkabau, the clothe of tanah like (clay) is a term usually use for batik nalh like (Thaib, 2014).

⁶ Some believe that the origin of batik tanah liat is derived from China entering Minangkabau in 16th century A. D. (http://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/batik_tanah_liat).

usually obtained then supply of batik from Java region did not keep stock of batik to trade. Under such a condition, eventually, a number of the batik traders started producing their own batik. Furthermore, Susanto said that mostly the features of batik from Padang are of black, yellow, red, and purple colors with Banyumasan, Indramayuan, Solo, and Yogyakarta patterns⁷

Not apart from it, at the beginning of independence days in some places in West Sumatra there have been art activities and batik industry in a small scale. In 1946, there were noted that a number of businessmen activated arts and batik industry in both Pariaman and Lima Puluh Kota. The first batik company appeared in West Sumatra was at the region of Sampan Regency of Padang Pariaman in 1946 managed by among others Bagindo Idris, Sidi Ali, Sidi Zakaria, Sutan Salim, and Sutan Sjamsuddin, and in Paya Kumbuh in 1948, it was managed by Waslim (from Pekalongan), Sutan Razab (Ulum M. D., 2009). Up to the end of 20th century 1994, the development arts and batik industry in West Sumatra was not obvious.

At any rate, batik as a part of creative industry would not reappear and glitter again until the end of 20th century exactly in 1949 in West Sumatra due to the effort of one of public figures of West Sumatra namely Hasan Basri Durin along with his wife who was full of spirit to enliven the batik industry in West Sumatra. A number of people interested to develop batik appeared up to now.

Nowadays, in West Sumatra, a number of batik crafters have appeared. One of the experience batik crafters named Wirda Hanim since last some years stated that the batik

⁷Susanto, Djulianto. "Sejarah Batik" dalam *Majalah Arkeologi Indonesia*, <https://hurahura.wordpress.com/2010/11/14/sejarah-batik/>

activists suffered from ups and downs in managing their business for they faced obstacles which are uneasy to cope with. One of the blocks is in forms of creating decorative motifs to make design of batik. According to her, there is a few that is able to create the batik design of motifs peculiar to Minangkabau since the one peculiar to Minangkabau has to prominence its Minangkauness.

The crafters have crowed the atmosphere of creative industry in West Sumatra. A number of crafters stated that they have profited from the cultural heritage of Minangkabau in forms of traditional decorative patterns of Minangkabau to promote the batik. Though they are attempting to defend their own traditional art identity, however, in some designs, and batik patterns the produced frequently run out of their habits and traditional philosophy. Owing to both patterns and designs of batik they yielded they often picture natural living creatures. They just forget that making picture of living creatures are prohibited in the norms and philosophy of the adat. If only they want to draw a picture of living creatures, is done abstractly. Reasonably, it is due to business interest, they intentionally draw the pictures of living creatures naturally on the batik patterns they printed.⁸

Closing

The tradition of printing batik is considered as heritage of Indonesian ancestor and has already been olden time. It is assumed that since the era of pre-Hinduism-Buddhism

⁸ The motifs of picturing kudo bendi (cart horse), kabau padati (cart buffalo), urang baladang (people cultivating rice field) are some of the examples how the picturing appears naturally of the living creatures (Herwandi, 2014).

in Indonesia the Indonesian people have preserved the smart skill of painting batik. The tradition of printing batik underwent golden era at the time of Hinduism-Buddhism, and Islamic Kingdoms.

The history batik printing in West Sumatra could be said that it has been old. It is assumed that since 13th century A. D. the batik art was already introduced to Minangkabau nonetheless it did not lie any red thread obviously so that it seemed ups and downs without any detailed explanation.

The history of printing batik in West Sumatra could not be separated from the history of Minangkabau's decorative patterns which has been long time ago.(Navis, 1986 Marah, 1987; and Herwandi, 2013). Lot of batik motifs appearing in West Sumatra are developed from the Minangkabau's traditional decorative patterns. Therefore, from its beginning era up to the contemporary time of nowadays, the decorative patterns are still playing the important roles in the creative industry in West Sumatra.

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