

Semarang Local Wisdom of Creating Batik with Natural Colouring for Tourism Industry

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Abstract. Culture is preserved by keeping its practice so that it will not be forgotten, replaced, or gone. Culture existence shows the society's effort in preserving a cultured life. Batik is one of Javanese culture reflecting their local wisdom of using natural resources for their benefit. This research shows Semarang city local wisdom in creating batik with natural colouring for tourism commercial product. It reveals the city's effort in maintaining their culture, preserving their environment, and increasing their economy. The data were taken by doing literature review, observation, and interview, while the analysis is done by utilizing folklore research method. The result exposes that Semarang city local wisdom as Javanese is actualized in their effort of producing Batik Semarangan, managing water pollutant, and having additional income from tourism industry.

1 Introduction

Javanese culture is studied by scholars and practiced by people around the world. It reigns its supremacy in the ancient era and maintained by being practiced with adaptation. Its durability and flexibility made its way to modern life where the young generations speak the simple language, wear creatively modified clothing, consume traditional cuisine in modern way, and practicing culture that is considered beneficial for them like the use of Lurik Javanese traditional fabric for eclectic youth fashion by Lenny Agustin in @funkykebaya [1].

Javanese culture is characterized from its religion system and ceremony, social system and organization, knowledge system, language, art, living system, as well as technology and tools system [2] that is preserved by the local people. However, not many young generations practice their culture as it is considered old fashion or less modern than western culture or new pop culture. It should make Javanese people aware and alarmed that modernisation can serve as potential threat for their culture as it makes people neglect their culture by practicing other culture that is considered up to date. This research shows how Semarang local people maintain their culture by producing Batik Semarang, utilizing Mangrove waste as natural colouring, and promoting it as the city merchandise in tourism industry. The effort is supported by the government as it supports the sustainable development goals.

2 Result and Discussion

Javanese culture is Indonesian great heritages that must be maintained as it has complex characteristics of culture [2]. A slight change of culture is common since human being development leads into minor to major changes. Problems arise when culture is no longer being maintained by the next generation due to various reasons. A culture can be neglected and replaced by another culture that is considered more valuable than the previous one because of several considerations, such as politic, economy, and social changes that might reduce the value, the usage, and the honour of the culture [3].

Javanese people maintain their culture by involving it in religion system and ceremony, social system and organization, knowledge system, language, art, living system, as well as technology and tools system. Therefore, the threat on Javanese culture maintenance is light. This is in line with what Pauwels [4] stated related to the minor threat on Javanese language as the multilingual situations do not truly exist in the speaking community. Sadly, not many young generations in urban area, understand Javanese language. Most of them speak Javanese with the lowest level of politeness called *Ngoko*. Not many of them understand

the language politeness level well. The young generation who lives inside Javanese speech community might understand that there is Javanese politeness level, such as *Krama* and *Krama Inggil*. Yet, they face difficulty to use it, respond the older people who are using it, or understand the meaning of words from the higher politeness level. Those who live outside Javanese speech community as minority might feel reluctant to show their cultural identity by using Javanese language and choose to use more beneficial and 'high' language than theirs [5]. It shows that the light threat on the language should not be put aside as it might lead into a more significant threat on the culture and its items. Batik is Javanese cultural item that goes international. Problem comes from the fabric colouring waste management that can minimize the negative effect of the pollutant caused by artificial and chemical batik colouring.

This research is done to show how Semarang people maintain their culture through their local wisdom by utilizing folklore research method [6]. The data were gathered by holding Library Research, Observation, Interview, and Questionnaire [7]. The Library Research is done to find out the folklore behind Batik Semarang as the city cultural heritage, while the Observation is done to record how the people utilize their local wisdom to produce the cultural item. Meanwhile, the Interview and the Questionnaire is done to show the way and the reason the culture is maintained. The data were selected by utilizing Purposive Sampling Technique [8] to get Semarang batik producer who produce Batik Semarang with Mangrove waste as natural colouring that is used as collectible item in tourism industry.

It was analysed by using seven elements of culture [2] and Language Maintenance theories [3, 4, 5] as part of culture maintenance theories to see how Semarang local people maintain their culture by producing Batik Semarang, preserving their soil and water environment by utilizing Mangrove waste as a natural colouring for their product, as well as improving their economy by promoting it as tourism commercial product, providing job for housewives workers from low-class family, giving additional income for local government, and supporting central government program of sustainable development goals

Batik is known as Javanese way of drawing motives on cloth and colour the cloth using wax-resist technique. There are three ways of drawing batik pattern or motive on batik. The dots and lines that creating batik motive can be directly drawn by *pembatik* (batik artisan) on the wax-resisted cloth with a special spouted tool called *canting* to create a highly valuable batik cloth named *batik tulis* (hand-made drawn batik). A ready-made motive that is made of a particular chopper stamp called *cap* can be directly stamped on the cloth to make *batik cap* (stamped batik). To produce a massive batik cloth in a short time, *batik* textile manufacturer prints the computer-drawn motive using a highly

sophisticated textile printing machine to get *batik printing* (printed batik).

Several cities in Java Island were known for its batik. For traditional batik motive that serves as standard batik motives called *pakem*, Surakarta and Yogyakarta offer classic batik with particular dark brown colour called *sogan*. Another unique batik comes from Lasem that was characterized by specific dark red colour that is resulted from a particular colouring agent of the water in the area that change the red colour into maroon. Other unique batik that was characterized by bright colours and natural motives that is different from Surakarta, Yogyakarta, and Lasem batik is called *batik pesisiran* or coastal/maritime batik. Batik with bright colour such as red, yellow, green, and blue that is resulted from the contact of Javanese batik artisan with fabric traders from China, Middle East, and Asian countries is characterized by local flora and fauna as its main motive. Cities along Java Island northern coastal areas such as Cirebon, Pekalongan, Semarang, and Madura Island were producing this batik.

As Batik Semarang industry helps its artisan to run their business that employ housewives as part time worker in their workshop, Indonesian central government support this business as part of the sustainable development goals program to minimize poverty and improve the economy of the low-class family. Semarang local government also support this industry as it adds income from business and tourism sectors and provides decent job for local people who are mostly do not have adequate qualification to get high-skill job as they lack education due to the poor economic condition. The local people who get the job support this business as it fulfils their daily need. Batik Semarang activists support this product development as their effort of preserving valuable cultural item that characterized the city and the local people as Javanese. Since the scholars have deep concerns on the environmental threat resulted from batik colouring waste, they develop new way of colouring batik without damaging the city's water and soil by holding research and creating natural colouring for batik that is made of natural waste that were polluting the city's sea water. The use of natural colouring adds environmental value on Batik Semarang that is potential to be promoted as tourism product exposing the city's cultural identity and creative way of handling environmental issue. This effort made this Javanese cultural item preserved, the city's environment saved, and the local people's economy improved.

To produce this highly valuable cultural item, the artisans must follow several standard steps. The first step is *nyungging* or drawing motive on paper [9]. The natural-realistic motive of Batik Semarang shows the city's ecosystem and landscape. Several motives expose acculturation of local people with the Chinese and the Arabic ethnics

[10]. Up to now, only six out of fifty-nine Batik Semarang motives documented by two Indo-European women, Mrs. Oosterom and Mrs. VonFranquemont in the 19th Century, survive. Tugu Muda KekiteranSulur (monument of youth surrounded with vine plants) tells us about the five days battle against Japan Colonial soldiers from October 15th to 20th, 1945. LawangSewuKekiteranAsem (thousand doors building surrounded with tamarind trees) reflects the effort of preserving the Dutch colonial era building as cultural heritage. Ceng Ho NengKlenteng (Ceng Ho in Klenteng) shows the contact of Javanese and Chinese ethnics as Chinese admiral, Ceng Ho, travels to, stays in, and builds Klenteng (Kong Hu Cu praying house) in Semarang although he was converted into moslem. WarakNgendog(mythical creature) exposes the acculturation of Javanese, Chinese, and Arabic ethnics in the form of a mythical creature with dragon head (Chinese), *burraq* body (Arabic), and goat legs (Java). It is annually shown and paraded in *dugderan* or Islamic celebration to mark the arrival of Ramadhan Islamic month. AsemArang (endemic tamarind trees) and BlekokSrondol (endemic birds living on tamarind trees along Setia Budi street, Srondol area, uptown Semarang City) exhibits the city's natural resources in the form of local flora and fauna. AsamArang also shows us about the city's history since it tells us how the city got its name from the tree's name *wit asemor* tamarind tree that were rarely found or *arang-arang* in the area. The two words were combined into Sem-arang word or Semarang.

The second step is *njaplak* or tapping batik motive from paper into fabric. After the whole motive is tapped using pencil, the third step is *nglowong* or drawing motive using a particular tool for drawing motive called *canting* that serves like a pen filled with liquid *malam* that serves like ink. The solid *malam* is melted into liquid on a small frying pan using small traditional stove. The fourth step is *ngisen/ngiseni* or filling the motive with *malam* to cover specific motive with *malam* to avoid being coloured with specific colour. The fifth step is *nyolet* or colouring the motive. The colour can only be put on specific part of the motive that is not covered with *malam* on *ngiseni* step. The sixth step is *mopok* or covering the motive with *malam* using a kind of paint brush to cover it from batik colouring. The seventh step is *nembok* or covering the whole background of the motive with *malam* using paint brush to cover it from batik colouring. The eighth step is *ngelir/nyelup* or colouring the fabric by dipping it into liquid colouring. The colouring can only paint part of fabric that is not covered with *malam*. The ninth step is *nglorod* or removing *malam* from the fabric by dipping it into boiling water to melt the *malam*. The tenth step is *ngrentesi* or putting another drawing to create additional motive. The eleventh step is *nyumri/nyumuk* or covering some part of the fabric with *malam* to give additional colour that is followed by another *ngelir/nyelup* step. The twelfth step is the final

nnglorod to remove the *las malam* after the whole motive is fully drawn on the fabric and the colour has already put on the motive as well as the fabric. During *nnglorod* step, *ngerok* step can be added by scrapping the sticking *malam* with a kind of metal knife to clean the whole *malam* from the fabric.

Batik Semarang specialty is the use of natural colouring that saves the city's environment from water and soil pollutant. Through research scholars from Diponegoro State Universities found out that Mangrove waste which is polluting the city's sea water can be processed into natural colouring that is saver for the environment than chemical colouring. The waste's use helps the city to solve sea water pollution problem and gives income for mangrove farmers who get economical value from the tree's waste as well as local people who collect waste and processed it into natural batik colouring or sell it to batik artisans to be processed.

Mangrove waste natural colouring is simply made in four steps [11]. The first step is collecting rotten Mangrove's root, trunk, bark, leaf, and bud that are polluting the sea water from the decaying process. The second step is washing the waste to remove the dirt so that only the clean waste is processed into natural colouring, without the dirt. The third step is sun dried the clean waste to produce the best colour when they were boiled. The fourth step is boiling the dried waste for 2-3 hours to get dark reddish-brown to brown colour. The colour produced from the boiled waste is ranging from light to dark colour and dark red to brown colour depending on the amount and the quality of the waste. To colour fabric using natural colouring, batik artisans hold *ngelir/nyelup* step. However, as natural colouring has different colouring quality to colour fabric, they need ample of it with longer duration to colour the fabric and get the expected colour. It makes some batik artisans reluctant to use the natural colouring.

The first benefit is given to the Semarang City along with the local people. As part of Javanese ethnic, maintaining a cultural item like batik means that they honour their ancestor by inheriting and maintaining the inheritance as local cultural heritage that identify their culture as Javanese. Moreover, the use of natural colouring means that they follow what is best for the nature from their ancestors who were also using natural colouring in the past since artificial and chemical colouring has not been invented yet.

The second benefit is provided for the Semarang City's environment. The use of Mangrove waste makes coastal area's preservation more beneficial because the tree is useful for overcoming natural disaster and the tree's waste management is useful for solving sea-water pollution problems. Furthermore, the use of natural colouring protects the city's clean water and soil from pollutant like the waste of

artificial and chemical batik colouring that is poisoning living creature and difficult to decompose.

The third benefit goes to the whole parties who were actively and fully involved in producing Batik Semarang with natural colouring from Mangrove waste. As it has cultural and environmental values, Batik Semarang with natural colouring from Mangrove waste has a high potency to be promoted as souvenir or merchandise from the city or commercial tourism product for its uniqueness. The economic value of the product is beneficial for the Mangrove farmers who farm the tree and get economic benefit from the waste selling; the local people who collect the Mangrove waste, process it into natural colouring, and sell it to the batik artisan; the batik artisans who produce the product; the batik artisans workers who get the additional income for their low-class family; the tourists who enjoy the product; the local government that get additional income from business and tourism sectors; and the central government that gets support for their sustainable development goals program as it overcomes poverty by improving the economy and increasing the wealth of Indonesian citizen in Semarang City.

3 Conclusion

From the discussion in two previous chapters, the researcher concludes that promoting Batik Semarang with natural colour as tourism product reveals the local wisdom of the city and the local people as Javanese of maintaining cultural inheritance, utilizing abundant natural waste, and making profit from the industry creative process. It shows us that if a culture is maintained and an environment is preserved, the economy improvement will follow. This effort can be followed and developed further by other cities and ethnics to protect our national heritage in a beneficial way like the preservation of traditional market [12] or ritual/tradition [13].

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