

Lurik as Javanese Low Class Society Local Wisdom of Utilizing Natural Resource for Clothing

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Abstract. Culture represents human being civilization. The more complex a culture is, the more civilized human being who are possessing the culture. A cultured and civilized society can be seen through its lifestyle. As part of human lifestyle, fashion plays an important role as culture identity. Lurik is Javanese low to middle class society culture identity. It is their local wisdom of utilizing abundant and affordable natural resource of fabric or clothing material in Java. This research shows how Javanese people understand lurik philosophy as Javanese traditional clothing and its particular use for the low-class society. The data were collected by doing literature review of lurik's philosophy, observation of lurik use, and interview with local people who understand well about lurik and its meaning for them. The result shows that only particular Javanese people understand the lurik philosophy well and utilize it properly for the low-class society benefit, such as wearing it as a particular clothing that protects them from danger and wearing it as uniform for traditional ceremony. The meaning of lurik is already shifted from protection from danger under its philosophy and culture identity as low-class Javanese society into casual daily outfit and commercial goods for business including tourism.

Keywords: culture, lurik, Javanese local wisdom, clothing

1 Research Background

Culture is human being creation that is used to live their life the way they want it to be. Culture reflects human being civilization because a civilized society can be identified from its culture. The more complex the culture is, the more civilized the society is. One of representations of cultured and civilized society is lifestyle. One of examples of lifestyles is clothing or fashion. We can see how cultured and civilized a society is from their clothing. The more complicated the clothing is, the more cultured and civilized the society is.

Javanese people are famous of batik as their cultural identity of clothing and fashion. Batik is initially made for high class society as it is specially made by taking certain duration and several steps of processing the fabric into batik, particularly for handwriting batik (*tulis*) using *canting* by batik artisan. Although nowadays batik is also made by printing the motives

or the patterns just like any other manufactured fabric, batik is considered as special outfit for special occasion like official ceremony.

As a local wisdom of utilizing abundant natural resources, Javanese low to middle class societies create lurik as an alternative of batik which is -at that time- considered more difficult to make than lurik. Lurik is made by weaving threads made of cotton from cotton tree (*randu*)- which is abundant in Central Java and Yogyakarta- into cloth with a particular stripe and checked pattern. Lurik was then used not only by the society who created it but also by the high-class society as it contains great Javanese philosophy which is believed to be the protector of outside danger.

Nowadays, lurik now also worn and utilized by people other than Javanese people such as visitor or tourist coming to Central Java and Yogyakarta as it has already become business and tourism commodity. This research shows Javanese people local wisdom of creating cloth and clothing for the low to the middle-class society as alternative for batik which is especially made for the high-class society. It exposes the philosophy of lurik, explain the kinds of lurik patterns, describe how to make lurik cloth, and reveals how Javanese use lurik in their daily life.

2 Theoretical Background

Java Island, especially Central Java, is known for its culture and language with a particular orthography resembling Indian and Thai orthography. The history recorded Javanese culture as one of the oldest cultures in the world. Throughout history, Javanese culture and language attract people around the world to know more about it that makes some of campuses abroad open Javanese class or program teaching Javanese culture and language. The complex Javanese culture represents the high civilization of Javanese people who live the way they live with their great principles of life.

To maintain the culture, the practice should be able to be applied in modern situation. The culture practice flexibility shows Javanese culture adaptation throughout time that lengthen its life so that the culture can be continuously practiced in the future and served as Javanese people culture identity. The culture maintenance is important to do since culture and its representation such as language or lifestyle can be shifted, substituted, extinct, or even dead.

The loss of culture is started with the change of people attitude toward their culture that might be resulted from politic, economy, and social changes reducing the value, the usage, and the respect toward the culture [1]. It can be happened also because of the external threat from another culture such as the invasion of the western culture like American and British pop culture or the eastern culture like K-Pop and K-Drama.

Related to Javanese language maintenance and shift, Pauwels [2] said that the threat on Javanese language is light as the diglossic or the multilingual situations is not actually there. It is proven by the existence of Javanese speech communities who still speak the language along with its various dialects as their first language to talk to their Javanese fellows in their daily activities in casual or informal situation as in formal situation they must use Bahasa Indonesia as Indonesian official language.

Related to Javanese culture maintenance and shift, the threat on the cultural items might be strong since foreign cultural items such as food, fashion, or art burst into the country as an effect of the globalization and the items were preferred by the young generation although they are still speaking their local language. It means that, speaking the language does not always mean that they also make and consume the food, wear the clothing, or perform the art. The threat can grow stronger than before when we consider the social psychology of Javanese people as the minorities in global society where the inferior might feel reluctant to show their cultural identity and choose to use more beneficial and 'high' cultural identity [2]

such as language, food, or fashion. The use of English in social media also made the users tend to use more English than their mother tongue.

When Javanese language may only be used and maintained by Javanese minorities in particular number and area, Javanese traditional clothing face different treatment from Javanese people. Batik is the best example of Javanese traditional cloth, clothing, and cloth making technique that goes international as it is worn not only by old Javanese people but also young generation from different ethnic in many different styles. As high-class society clothing, batik is fond of Javanese people and many people around the world that inspire batik artisans to produce different types of batik for different occasions to fit their need.

On the other hand, Javanese low-class society who are at that time cannot afford batik, shows their local wisdom by creating their own clothing utilizing abundant but affordable natural resources found on their environment. Using threads that is spined from a particular kapuk (cotton) from a particular randu (cotton) tree, they create lurik, by weaving those threads into typical striped and checked traditional cloth. Lurik becomes an alternative clothing for Javanese the low-class society to be cultured and civilized just like the high-class society. Lurik is now utilized for various purposes like traditional clothing, daily clothing, or part of fashion and accessories [3].

3 Research Methodology

Due to the pandemic Covid-19 situation in 2022, this research is done in three virtual stages. A literature study is done to know the history and philosophy of lurik. Then, an observation is executed to observe how Javanese people utilize lurik in their life. To get more information, an interview is performed to understand the meaning of lurik for Javanese people. This research holds a virtual field research by documenting how lurik is made by Javanese people using Purposive Sampling Technique [4] to expose 3 (three) major lurik patterns along with its making process. The researcher also describes 2 (two) samples of lurik usage using Purposive Sampling Technique [4] to see how Javanese people utilized lurik in the past and at present. To get more information, the researcher gives virtual Questionnaire and holds virtual Interview [5] to 2 (two) informants to know the meaning of lurik for Javanese people. The data were analysed using 7 (seven) cultural universalities of language [6] as well as Culture and Language Maintenance Theory [1, 7, 8] to know (1) how Javanese people shows their local wisdom through culture and (2) how lurik as Javanese people cultural item is maintained as their culture identity.

4 Finding and Discussion

4.1 Finding

Lurik is a particular cloth made by weaving threads spined from cotton tree to form a particular striped and checked patterns. Lurik commonly made in dark colour combined with bright coloured thread to make it attractive. Lurik Pakan Malang, the oldest lurik pattern, was recorded in 851-822 Century in an inscription of Hinduism Mataram Kingdom [8]. Lurik and lurik particular loom were also mentioned in literatures and folktales from different parts of Indonesia, which is famous of woven cloth, like West Sumatera (Padang), North Sumatera (Medan), South Sumatra (Palembang), Java, Bali, Buton, Lombok, etc. [8].

From the virtual field research, the researcher selected 3 (three) kinds of lurik pattern commonly produce by Yogyakarta and Surakarta lurik producers that were sold as cloth, tailored into traditional and modern clothing, or integrated into various commercial products. The researcher also figures out how lurik were produced and utilized as well as the benefit

of lurik-compared to other cloth- in the business. The following framework shows how the researcher perform this research.

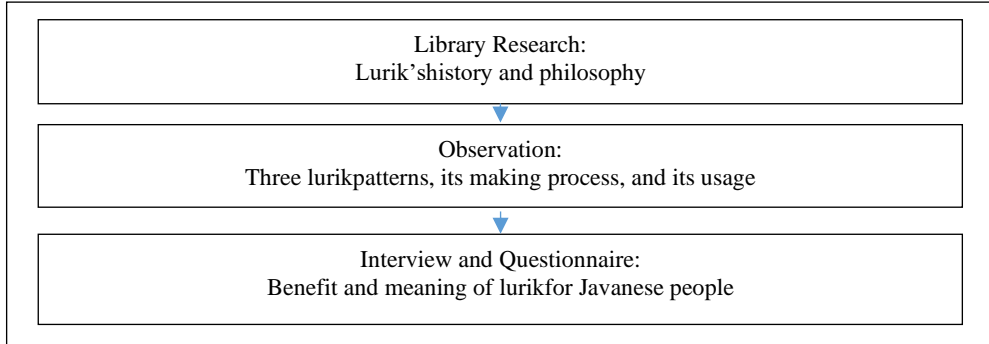


Figure 1. Research Framework

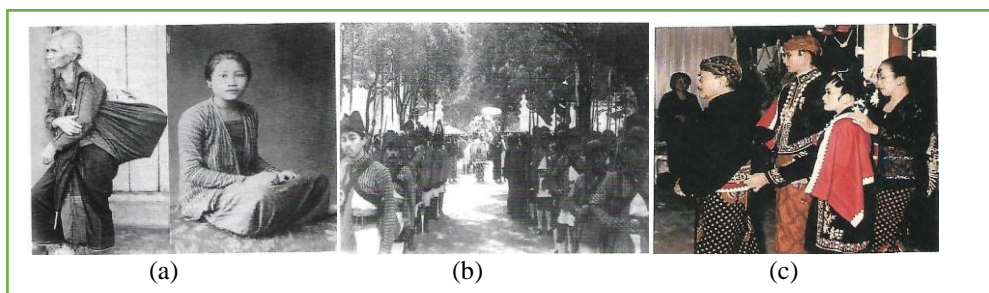
4.2 Discussion

4.2.1 Lurik History and Philosophy

Lurik is Indonesian modest and simple cloth from Java, both in the physical appearance and in the making process compared to other Indonesian woven cloth from Sumatera. Lurik is mentioned in literature and inscription and shown in statue and relief during Hindu era. The oldest record of lurik is Pakan Malang pattern which was mentioned in an inscription of Hindu era Mataram Kingdom in 851-882 Century [8]. Lurik was also mentioned in Sundanese and Javanese folktales showing its existence, usage, and meaning.

Indonesian National Encyclopaedia (1997) defines lurik as a typical woven cloth from Java, which is made of dark coloured cotton threads, which is spined, woven and interspersed with bright coloured threads with striped and checked patterns to make it aesthetic. The word 'lurik' derived from Javanese root 'rik' which means lines or ditch. The line resembles fence which represents protection from the outside danger as fence is the border for outside people from the house owner. The ditch represents the palace border which is usually made to protect the palace from outside attack.

Since lurik means protection from danger, Javanese people who wear lurik is expected to be free from any danger. Therefore, lurik is not only worn as daily clothing but also specially used in official and traditional ceremony to protect the person holding the ceremony from any danger. Lurik, which was initially made for the low and the middle-class society such as the palace *prajurit* (soldiers) and *abdidalem* (servants) who wear lurik as uniform showing their social status as civil servant, is also used by the high-class society who utilized it to get the benefit based on its philosophy, that is, to be protected from danger. Figure 2 shows the use of lurik based on its meaning and philosophy.



4.2.2 Three Lurik Patterns, Its Making Process, and Its Usage

There are three lurik motives or patterns from Yogyakarta and Surakarta [9]. ‘Lajuran’ is lurik pattern in which the stripes run in the direction of the warp, vertically. ‘PakanMalang’ is lurik pattern where the stripes run in the direction of the weft, horizontally. ‘Cacahan’ or ‘Kotak-Kotak’ is lurik pattern, formed by the intersection of ‘Lajuran’ and ‘PakanMalang’ forming checked pattern as it is a cross between the vertical and the horizontal lines or stripes. Nowadays, there are so many versions, variations, and colours of those three lurik patterns. However, Lajuran becomes the most preferred pattern for lurik users as it has a classic touch representing the humble Javanese people. Figure 3 shows those three lurik patterns.

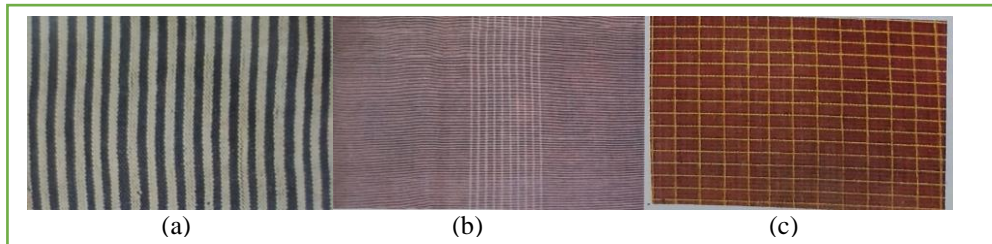
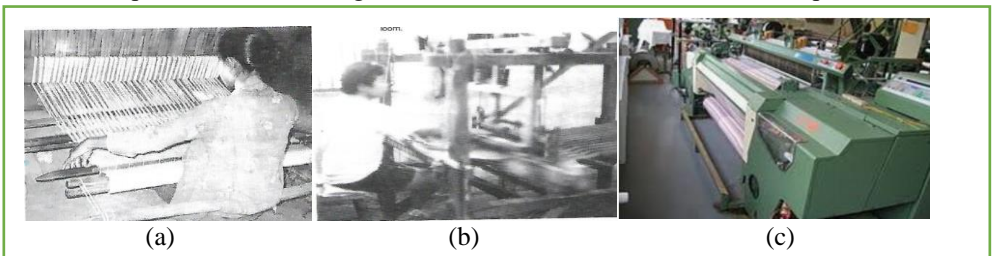


Figure 3. Yogyakarta and Surakarta Major Lurik Patterns [9] in [3]

Lurik is made in weaving process. Before weaving, threads from *kapuk* (cotton) that is taken from *randu* (cotton) tree is spined using spinning wheel. The spined threads were then coloured in dyeing process. This is different of the colouring process of batik and lurik where batik is coloured after it was made (drawn, stamped, or printed) and lurik is coloured before it was made (weaven). Most of the threads colour is dark, combined with some bright colour to make it attractive. The colours are commonly made of natural colouring such as tarum for blue, black wood for black, mengkudu root for red, tinggik for soganor brown, teak tree for reddish brown, curcuma for yellow, cotton and mango skin for green, and mangosteen for purple. The colour and its combination have a particular meaning based on its philosophy.

The coloured threads were then weaving using a particular loom named Back-Strap loom as the oldest loom that is initially used to weave lurik. Nowadays, only limited lurik artisans keep this loom and use it to produce lurik. That is why, the lurik cloth which was made using Back-Strap loom is priceless as it took ample of time and effort to produce a piece of cloth made by a single artisan. Most of lurik producers now use *Alat Tenun Bukan Mesin* (non-mechanical loom) or *Alat Tenun Mesin* (mechanical loom) to produce lurik. The price of lurik which is made by ATMB is higher than that of ATM since ATMB is used by human being who is manually weaving the threads into the cloth, while ATM uses machine to produce the cloth. Figure 4 shows three different looms used to produce lurik.



In the past, lurik was used by Javanese low and middle-class society as their clothing. Lurik was also used by Javanese high-class society as part of traditional ceremony symbolizing a particular belief. Nowadays, lurik is utilized in many ways. It is not only used as daily clothing such as Malioboro horse carriage as well as Yogyakarta palace soldiers and

servants' uniform but also integrated as part of high fashion and accessories [3]. Lurik waste is also utilized in local and small handicraft home industry in Yogyakarta. Lurik Surjan itself is now becoming a tourism commodity as a commercial goods provided for tourist in tourism sites as souvenir or merchandise. Figure 5 show the modern usage of lurik.

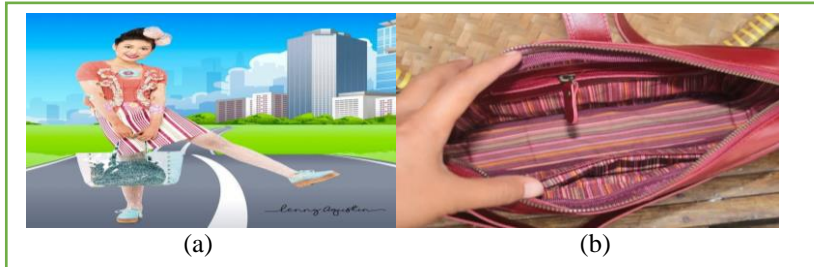


Figure 5. Lurik in Fashion and Accessories [3]

4.2.3 Lurik Meaning for Javanese People

From the Interview and Questionnaire result of 2 (two) informants, that are, business owner utilizing lurik in their products and his worker, the researcher figures out that lurik has a particular meaning not only as low to middle class Javanese people culture identity possessing philosophical value but also as an industrial commodity having economical value, especially in lifestyle and tourism business. For the business owners, lurik is the best choice of affordable but durable and aesthetic fabric to be used in their product. Meanwhile, for their workers, who is mostly housewives coming from low-class family, lurik is a blessing, enabling them to have an opportunity of getting additional weekly income for their family form their part time job in the home industry. For the royal palace family and people involved in traditional ceremony such as traditional wedding make-up artist, lurik have great Javanese philosophy that makes it continuously used in the tradition. Maintaining lurik means maintaining Javanese culture as its people culture identity. Thus, it is necessary to be done both by the old and the young generation in different ways of maintenance.

5 Conclusion

From the data analysis on the finding and discussion, the researcher found out that lurik is a traditional Javanese cloth made by and for the low to the middle-class society by utilizing abundant and affordable natural resources, available surround the environment. Javanese local wisdom reflects in the use of *kapuk* from *randu* three that is spined into thread that is used as the raw material of lurik cloth. The local wisdom is also shown by the utilization of natural dye to colour the thread before it is woven using back-strap, ATMB, or ATM loom into lurik cloth.

Lurik that is previously used for Javanese low to middle class society is also utilized by the high-class society as it has a particular meaning and philosophy as protection from danger so that it is used in traditional ceremony to cast away danger. Nowadays, as lurik is already developed into industrial commodity, it is utilized in various business to give traditional, classic, but unique touch for their product.

For the business owner utilizing lurik, lurik has a special meaning as affordable but durable raw material for their business product. Meanwhile, for the labour who are working in the business that are commonly arrived from the low-class family, lurik means their only hope and opportunity to have extra income for their family from this part-time job. Therefore, maintaining lurik as business and tourism commodity is important to do by Javanese people

and the local government to keep Javanese people culture identity as well as to support their economic growth development like what the local government of Wonogiri keep Dhopleng Traditional Market alive [10] and the local government of Banjarnegara keep the tradition of cutting natural dreadlock hair of Dieng children [11].

The whole effort shows that if the language speakers as the culture owners keep their language use, both the language and the culture will not be easily shifted, replaced, endangered, extinct or dead. In fact, it will be maintained and also learnt by people around the world. This way, the language becomes the nation wealth that can be spread throughout the world so that the owner of the language can be proud of their indigenous language as their culture identity.

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