

Jlamprang Batik: Pekalongan Cultural Identity from Natural Resources in the Environment

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Abstract. Pekalongan is one of the cities in Java Island that famous of batik as it has been established as Batik City by the local government on its 105th anniversary in 2011. As a creative art of creating fabric, cloth, and clothing; batik is continuously preserved the city cultural identity since it has been established as Creative City by UNESCO in 2014. Jlamprang is one of five original batik motives from Pekalongan that took its name from a local plant called Jlamprang tree which was previously found abundantly in the city. The natural colourings that were used to colour Pekalongan batik were also obtained surrounding the city's environment, including a particular blue colour called indigo which is taken from indigo tree. This research exposes the history of Jlamprang batik motive, its utilization, its meaning, and its benefit for Pekalongan people. The data were collected by applying a literature review of the motive, observation of its use, and interviews with the local people who understand well about it and its usage. The result shows that local people know Jlamprang batik motive and use it wisely for their benefit, like producing and wearing batik with Jlamprang motive and using it for handicraft and decoration.

1 Research Background

Indonesia is known for its various ethnics having various cultures but living harmoniously within the national spirit of “*Bhineka Tunggal Ika*” or Unity in Diversity. There are many research on Indonesian ethnics' different cultures ranging from their indigenous language, folktale, belief, ritual, traditional ceremony, traditional art performance, and traditional clothing, to traditional food and beverages as their culture identity. As part of the seven elements of culture [1] consisting of organization system, system of religion and religious ceremony, livelihood system, science and knowledge system, technology and equipment system, language system, and arts; traditional clothing is and interesting part of arts to study as it is not only showing the beauty of the clothing but also the philosophy behind the beauty.

Javanese is known for its high culture and civilization studied by scholars throughout the world. The evidence of how cultured and civilized Javanese people is, is batik. Batik and its making process become Javanese valuable heritage. Their creation of highly valued fabric for daily and certain purpose clothing shows their local wisdom of utilizing abundant natural resources available surrounding the environment. The complex process of making batik exposes their high civilization, while the philosophy behind batik motives and its usage exhibits their high culture.

Pekalongan is one of several cities in Java that is known of its batik. Pekalongan batik is called ‘batik *pesisiran*’ or maritime as the city is located on the northern coast of Java Island. ‘Batik *pesisiran*’ is identified with bright colours and natural motives. These 2 (two) features differentiate ‘batik *pesisiran*’ with Yogyakarta and Surakarta batik as the standard (*pakem*) Javanese batik. One of five oldest motives of Pekalongan batik is Jlamprang. This research shows how Jlamprang batik motive is created, how it is made, how it is utilized in the past and at present, and what is its meaning and benefit for the local people.

2 Theoretical Background

Batik and its making process are considered as culture since culture is defined as the arts and other manifestation of human intellectual achievement regarded collectively [2]. Batik is human being creation of making clothing not only to protect their body from heat and cold but also as culture identity of Javanese people. Batik represents their intellectual achievement of creating fabric, cloth, and clothing along with its philosophy, creating *canting* as a tool to hand-drawing the motives on the plain fabric, creating stamp as a more practical tools than *canting* to stamp the ready to stamp motives into the plain fabric with a high precision, using *malam* to draw or stamp the motive, to put the colour, or to block certain colour on the fabric, as well as utilizing natural dyes to colour the fabric without endangering the environment.

Batik is also an art since batik creation shows a complex process of combining intuition, talent, skill, as well as batik-making education, training, or experience. As an art, batik belongs to the 7th (seventh) elements of culture [1] in [3], as part of the third element, that is the science and knowledge of fabric making. Related to Pappas definition of culture [4], batik is part of culture since it shows what people wear and how they wear it. Therefore, batik plays an important role for Javanese people as they are using and wearing it in official and traditional ceremony within certain rules. There are certain philosophies of batik that makes it used for certain situation. For example, batik for ‘*mitoni*’ or baby shower is different from batik for wedding, while batik for ‘*abdi dalem*’ or the palace servants is different from batik for the royal families.

To maintain batik as Javanese people culture identity, batik must be able to adapt the current trend so that it can be used by many people of all age and all culture. Otherwise, it can be shifted, substituted, extinct, or even dead, as an effect of Javanese people attitude change toward their culture, that can be influenced by politic, economy, and social changes, reducing the value, usage, and respect of the culture [5].

When the threat on Javanese language is minor as the multilingual situations is not present [6], the threat on traditional clothing might be major since foreign cultures are welcomed by the government because of the globalization era where Indonesia wants to be part of the international community. Although some Javanese communities keep wearing batik as their culture identity, they are also wearing casual or international outfit to suit the trend. As a popular example of traditional cloth and traditional cloth making technique that is known internationally and worn by many people of all ages in many different styles; batik must be continuously preserved to prevent Indonesia from losing its Javanese heritage.

Beside Yogyakarta and Surakarta batik as the common batik, there is ‘*batik pesisiran*’ or batik made in cities along the coastal area such as Cirebon, Pekalongan, or Madura. This kind of batik has two unique features. The bright colour represents the influence of foreign traders who were arriving at Indonesian ports to sell their goods and then settled and assimilated with the local people such as Arabic, Chinese, and Indian traders. Meanwhile, the natural motives of flora and fauna found around the coastal area represents their local wisdom of using the abundant and available natura resource, other than the standard motive (*pakem*) of Yogyakarta and Surakarta batik.

Pekalongan batik is ‘batik *pesisiran*’ with five batik motives [7] that are Jlamprang, liong, lunglungan, semen, and tujuh rupa. Jlamprang is a batik motive with an interesting history and unique philosophy that must be maintained as Pekalongan cultural identity. There are 3 (three) batik producers who are still producing batik with Jlamprang motive. Only 1 (one) of them produces Pekalongan batik with Jlamprang motive. The other 2 (two) only produce it by request. Although the local government had already made their best effort to support Jlamprang motive by creating batik events and put batik mural with Jlamprang motive around the city, Jlamprang motive begins to be abandoned since batik users preferred more popular or stylish motive than the plain geometric one like Jlamprang motive.

3 Research Methodology

This research is done virtually during pandemic Covid-19 in 2022. A virtual literature study is taken to know Jlamprang motive history, variants, and philosophy. A virtual observation is performed using Purposive Sampling Technique [8] to select Jlamprang motive producer who is still producing fabric, cloth, and clothing with Jlamprang motive in their *pranggok* (workshop), that is, Batik Jlamprang H. Ismail Alwi. A virtual Interview [9] were carried out on 5 (five) informants, that are, Jlamprang batik producer, batik labour, batik user, and the local government to figure out the meaning of Jlamprang motive and how they keep it as their culture identity. The data were analysed by using 7 (seven) elements of culture [1] and Culture and Language Maintenance Theory [5, 10, 11] to know (1) how Pekalongan people maintain batik with Jlamprang motive as their Pekalongan-Javanese culture identity and (2) why they keep maintaining it.

4 Finding and Discussion

4.1 Finding

From the virtual literature review, the researcher found out that Indonesia, especially Java, is famous with batik. ‘Batik *pesisiran*’ or maritime batik is a kind of batik which is found on the northern coastal areas of Java Island. Batik *pesisiran* is commonly identified with its bright colour instead of dark colour like *sogan* in Yogyakarta and Surakarta batik or maroon in Lasem batik. Foreign traders who were stopping by, stay for a while, or live in Indonesian coastal areas to sell their product, give their colour influence on ‘batik *pesisiran*’. The green colour is taken from Arabic traders’ goods, the red colour is gotten from Chinese traders’ product, and the yellow colour is obtained from Indian traders’ commodity. Another feature of ‘batik *pesisiran*’ is the use of natural motive like flora and fauna which is abundantly found around the environment instead of standard (*pakem*) motive from Yogyakarta and Surakarta batik. One of examples of ‘batik *pesisiran*’ is Pekalongan batik. Beside of those three colours, Pekalongan batik has a particular blue colour called indigo, coming from indigo plant which is commonly found around the city. Jlamprang itself is one of five oldest motives of Pekalongan batik, coming from Jlamprang tree which is also easily found in the city.

From the virtual field research, the researcher found 3 (three) batik producers in Jlamprang Street, Krapyak, Pekalongan City, who are still producing Pekalongan batik with Jlamprang motive. Two of them produce it by request. While waiting for the limited request of the Jlamprang batik, they produce the more preferred batik to sell. Only one batik producer who is continuously producing Jlamprang batik cloth and clothing, that is, Batik Jlamprang H. Ismail Alwi. The history of Jlamprang motive and that of Batik Jlamprang H. Ismail Alwi along with Jlamprang motive’s variants and its making process, is described on the next sub chapter.

From the virtual interview and questionnaire on 3 (three) Pekalongan residence who produce Jlamprang batik, work on Jlamprang batik pranggok, and use Jlamprang batik cloth or wear Jlamprang batik clothing, the researcher figures out that Jlamprang motive has a long history which is strongly related with the city history. After the Hindu era is substituted with the Islamic era, the use of Jlamprang motive for spiritual purpose is changed into that of commercial purpose. The following framework shows how the researcher do this research.

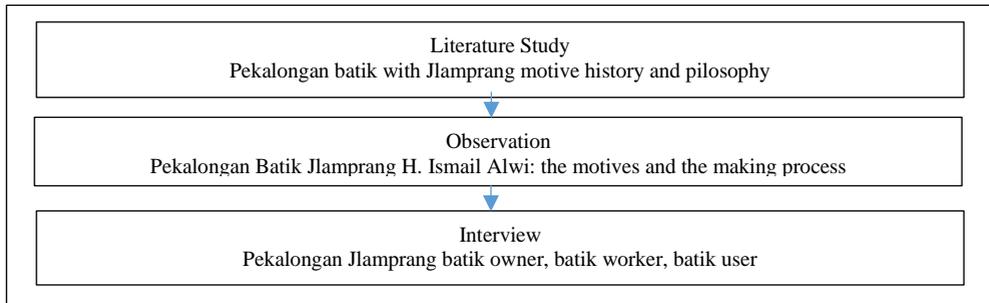


Fig. 1. Research Framework

4.2 Discussion

4.2.1 Pekalongan Batik with Jlamprang Motive

On Pekalongan City 105th Anniversary on April 1st, 2011, the local government launch the city ikon of “*Pekalongan Kota Batik*”. Pekalongan batik artisans’ creativity made UNESCO established the city into Creative City on December 1st, 2014. Since then, the old city ikon of “*Pekalongan Kota Santri*” is substituted with “*Pekalongan Kota Batik*” since the city is famous of its batik, called batik *pesisiran* Pekalongan.

Jlamprang is one of the five oldest Pekalongan batik motive other than Liong, Semen, Lung-Lungan, and Tujuh Rupa. The research and the community service related to Jlamprang batik in Pekalongan has already been done the researchers from Diponegoro University. In 2018, community service was done by Sundari and Savitri to document Jlamprang motive variants and rebranding Jlamprang motive as a new brand of Pekalongan batik [12]. In 2021, literature research is done by Maziyah, Alamsyah, and Lestari [13] on Jlamprang motive as representation of natural and cultural environment. The whole activities is done under the Memorandum of Understanding of Diponegoro University and Pekalongan City as well as the Letter of Agreement of Faculty of Humanities, Diponegoro University and Pekalongan Tourism Office.

This research is focusing on the development of Pekalongan batik with Jlamprang motive or Jlamprang batik, after being supported through the community service. It is hoped that this representation of Pekalongan natural and cultural environment will be preserved as the city culture identity that is also served as a commercial commodity in business and tourism to support the city’s economy development growth.

Jlamprang motive is found during the Dutch Colonial Era when Indian traders from Gujarat arrived in Batavia and continue their trip to Pekalongan taking silk and cotton *patola* woven or double tie fabric which is fond of and preferred by Pekalongan high class society as it has unique and beautiful motive with high quality fabric. The scarcity of this fabric made local batik producers who are descendants of Arabic, Chinese, Indian, and Javanese people made an alternative of *patola* fabric by creating batik with *patola* geometric patterns called Jlamprang, taken from the name of a common tree found around the city.

As Jlamprang creators are descendants of four different ethnics living harmoniously in Pekalongan on different areas, Jlamprang has three bright colours representing each ethnic, that are, green, red, and yellow, added with Pekalongan typical blue colour called indigo, taken from indigo tree which is abundant around the city. The geometric patterns were drawn using *canting*, stamp, and now also being printed in the form of dot, circle, and square with *padma* flower in the middle of the circle resembling the *patola* fabric. Figure 2 exposes Pekalongan batik with Jlamprang motive.

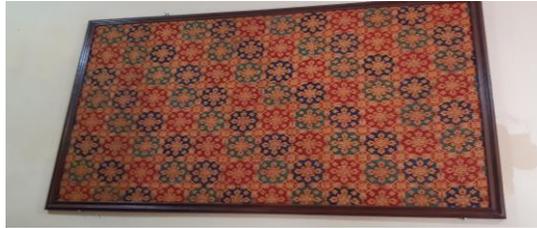


Fig. 2. Pekalongan batik with Jlamprang Motive (courtesy of H. Ismail Alwi)

4.2.2 Batik Jlamprang H. Ismail Alwi

Batik Jlamprang H. Ismail Alwi was established by H. Umar Wiryo or H. Umar Syifa in Jlamprang Street in 1900. The second generation running this business was H. Umar Syifa's daughter, Hj. Zahroh. H. Ismail Alwi was the third generation managing this business before H. Muhammad Ardiansyah Ismail, the fourth generation who is now dealing with the business of producing batik cloth and clothing with Jlamprang motive and *pesikiran* colour which was sold locally and internationally.

The batik making process is started by designing the motive on tracing paper or stamp. This *pranggok* does not have batik printing machine so that it only produces handmade and stamped batik. Before drawing or stamping the motive, the fabric is thoroughly washed to remove the starch. It is followed by *penggeloyoran* process or dipping fabric into castor or peanut oil mixed with rice straw ash to make it soften. Thus, it will be easy to absorb colour. The next step is *ngemplong* or hitting fabric with hammer to make it smooth. Thus, it will be easy to be drawn. After the fabric is dried, batik labour starts to *nyorek* or *ngecap*. *Nyorek* is directly hand-drawing the motive or tracing the motive from the tracing paper. Both processes were done using *canting* directly on the fabric. Meanwhile, *ngecap* is stamping batik motive stamp on the fabric using batik stamp. This process can be done also on the back of the fabric that has not been drawn to produce high quality fabric resembling *patola* where the motive is not only shown on one side but also on two sides, that is, the inside part of the fabric. The tracing paper and the stamp are *pranggok* assets containing batik motive that should not be imitated by other *pranggok* without permission.

The next step is *mbatik* or putting *malam* to the already drawn fabric. It is started with *nglowong* or drawing line outside the motive, *isen-isen* or filling the motive with drawing, and *nyecek* or putting dot in the motive. The last process is also called *nitik* or *nruntum* for more detailed dotting than *nitik*. After the whole drawing is done, *nembok* or covering part of fabric that should not be coloured with the basic colour using *malam* is started. The fabric is then dipped into the colouring water in *medel* process. After obtaining the expecting colour, *ngerok* or scrapping *malam* on the fabric using metal plate is done to remove *malam*. It is then cleanly washed in *mbirahi* process and then naturally dried under the sun. Another step called *mbironi* or covering colour using *isen-isen* in the form of *ceceg* or *nitik* using *malam* is done. It is followed by *ngrining* or filling the uncoloured part. The last part is *nglorod* or removing *malam* by dipping the fabric into boiling water. It is then thoroughly washed and naturally dried under the sun.

Basically, there is only one Jlamprang motive available resembling *patola* woven fabric. However, to provide more motives and colour, Batik Jlamprang H. Ismail Alwi creates various design and colour as their innovation to deal with customers who are boring with always the same Jlamprang design. Figure 3 exhibit kinds of Jlamprang motives created by Batik Jlamprang H. Ismil Alwi.

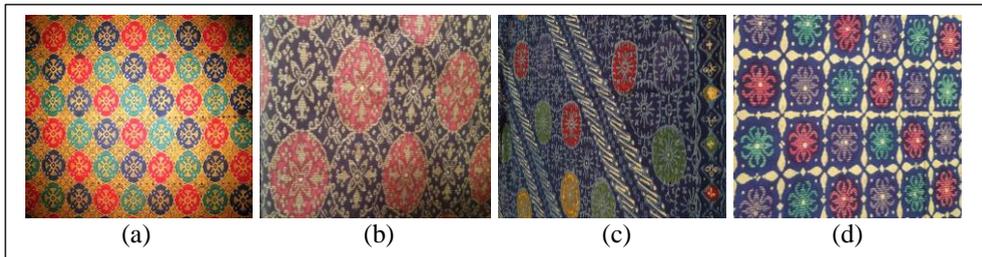


Fig. 3. Jlamprang Motives (courtesy of H. Ismail Alwi)

Figure 3 (a, b, c, d) shows Jlamprang variants of *cakar*, *cakar gedi*, *cakar gedi* combined with Yogyakarta or Surakarta standard motive, and *urang* motives. *Cakar* motive represents adults who are working to earn money for living just like rooster or hen who are scratching for food using their claws (*cakar*). *Cakar* motive is then modified into *cakar gedi* or big claw and combined with Yogyakarta or Surakarta *pakem* such as *parang*, *kawung*, or *truntum*. Meanwhile, *urang* motive shows the use of natural motive coming from local fauna which is commonly found in the environment, that is shrimp from the fishery business in the city's coastal area, which represents one of typical features of *batik pesisiran*.

As *batik pesisiran* from Pekalongan, Jlamprang motives shows four basic colours representing three influences of foreign traders who are coming into the city in the past and then assimilated with the local people and one Pekalongan typical colour representing Pekalongan wisdom of living harmoniously with different ethnics and utilizing the city's abundant and available natural resources. They are, green colour from Arabic traders, red colour from Chinese traders, and yellow colour from Indian traders, as well as blue colour from Pekalongan Indigo tree. The colour is then modified and developed with other colours such as brown *sogan* from Yogyakarta or Surakarta batik, red maroon from Lasem batik, or other 'modern' colours such as purple or pink.

This Pekalongan *batik pesisiran* with Jlamprang motive is continuously produced by Batik Jlamprang H. Ismail Alwi's *pranggok* in the form of cloth and clothing to serve the local, national, and international customers' demand as well as to preserve Pekalongan culture identity although not many local people fond of the motive since it is considered as an old fashion or a less modern motive than the nowadays *batik*.

4.2.3 Jlamprang Batik for Pekalongan People

Based on the virtual interview with H. Mochammad Hasbi Assidiqqi, the younger brother of H. Muhammad Ardiansyah, the fourth generation of Batik Jlamprang H. Ismail Alwi, Jlamprang motive is Pekalongan culture identity showing how cultured and civilized Pekalongan people were that was capable of creatively creating such a complex process of making fabric into fabulous and high-quality cloth as an alternative to substitute double tie woven fabric (Indian *patola*) which is difficult to make. Thus, this motive must be preserved like Yogyakarta or Surakarta standard motives. Batik Jlamprang H. Ismail had already shown their best effort to maintain Pekalongan culture identity by keep producing and promoting the motive in various events using different ways of promotion.

Based on the virtual interview with Imamudin Sugandi from Pekalongan Tourism Office, the city had also put their best effort to preserve Pekalongan batik, especially that of Jlamprang motive, by launching Pekalongan Batik City on the city's 105's anniversary in 2011 which is followed by holding various events promoting Pekalongan batik as well as putting batik mural around the city and batik kampong gate decoration in two most famous Pekalongan batik kampongs (Kauman and Pesindon) with various motives, including Jlamprang motive as follows.



Fig. 4. Jlamprang Motive on Mural Wall and Kampong Gate Decoration

Based on the virtual interview with Pekalongan batik users, especially young generation, Jlamprang motive is not as popular as it was in the past since there are many batik motives that are more preferred than Jlamprang motives which is considered less developed than the 'modern' motives. Therefore, Jlamprang motive needs to be re-introduced, re-promoted, and re-branded, to gain its past triumph again. Preserving this motive means proudly keeping the city culture identity just like any other cities possessing their own culture identity.

Conclusion

From the data analysis on the finding and discussion, the researcher figures out that Jlamprang motive is a particular batik motive of Pekalongan *batik pesisiran* as the city's culture identity showing the local people's local wisdom of using the city's natural resources and living in harmony with different ethnics who were coming and living together in the city. Pekalongan local people and local government had already put their best effort to maintain Pekalongan culture by preserving Jlamprang motive as traditional fabric, cloth, and clothing as well as the city's decoration.

Although Jlamprang motive is not as popular as it was or as the other modern motive, Pekalongan must keep it to not losing their culture identity. If the culture owners keep their culture practice, it will not be easily shifted, replaced, endangered, extinct, or dead. Instead, it will be maintained and learnt by people around the world. This way, the culture item becomes the nation wealth that can be spread throughout the world so that the culture owner can be proud of their culture item as their culture identity showing their local wisdom of the high cultured and civilized society like what is stated in Atrinawati's research [14].

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