

Jlamprang Batik Patterns as Pekalongan Local Wisdom of Using Batik Technique

Atrinawati Atrinawati¹

¹English Literature Study Program, Literature Department, Faculty of Humanities, Diponegoro University, Semarang, Indonesia.

Abstract. As Batik City, the branding launched by the local government to celebrate the city's 105 years anniversary on April 1st, 2011, Pekalongan has particular and unique batik called 'batik *pesisiran*' that has different colour and motive from Yogyakarta or Surakarta batik. Jlamprang is one of five original batik motives which was initially created to substitute Indian patola woven fabric pattern as it has geometric patterns consisting of dot, circle, and square with padma flower in the middle of the circle resembling the Indian patola pattern. The research shows how Jlamprang batik motive is found, how it is developed into batik motive, and how it is utilized by the local people. The data were obtained by using literature review on Jlamprang batik motive, observing its use, and interviewing the local people who understand well about it and its use. The result shows that although the local people understand Jlamprang history and use it for their benefit, such as producing and wearing batik with the motive and using it for handicraft or decoration; Jlamprang batik motive starts to be forgotten as it is less preferred by common buyers who preferred more popular or stylish motive than the ordinary and plain geometric ones.

1 Research Background

Batik along with batik making technique is one of many priceless Indonesian heritages which is originally coming from Java. Batik and its creative making process has been studied by many people around the world in various institutions. The Javanese local wisdom of creating high valued fabric for daily clothing, traditional ceremony, or industrial commodity, represents Javanese people high culture related to clothing, fashion, and lifestyle. It shows Javanese people high civilization of having batik for clothing, particular tools to make batik, and complex process to produce batik. Batik becomes Javanese people culture identity with sentimental and national value representing Javanese high cultured and civilized society.

Batik making process is not only possessed by Javanese people. The way a fabric is being drawn and coloured is also found in the fabric making process other than batik. But the use of *canting* as a medium of drawing pattern on the fabric, the use of batik stamp to precisely put the already made batik pattern on the fabric, the use of *malam* along with natural dye to colour the fabric, and batik motive or pattern are typical of batik making process. It shows Javanese local wisdom of creating batik motives along with its drawing, stamping, and colouring tools as well as colouring materials that is easy to find, easy to make, easy to use, and environmentally friendly.

Pekalongan is one of many cities in Java that is famous of its batik. Since Pekalongan is located on the northern coastal area of Java Island, Pekalongan batik is called 'batik *pesisiran*' or maritime batik. This kind of batik has a particular motive and colour that is different from Yogyakarta and Surakarta batik that are considered as *pakem* or the standard Javanese batik. One of five oldest and original Pekalongan batik motives is Jlamprang. This research shows how Pekalongan local people in the past create Jlamprang batik motives, utilize batik with Jlamprang motives, and develop the motives into product other than batik cloth to adapt with the modernization.

2 Theoretical Background

Batik and batik making process can be considered as an art of creating a particular kind of fabric and tailoring the fabric into cloth to be used or clothing to be worn. Batik becomes an important part of and has an important role in Javanese people life in the past as they are using it in official ceremony and wearing it as daily outfit under a particular rule. There are different philosophies for each batik motives that made it suitable or not suitable to be worn in certain situation. For example, batik cloth for new-born baby is different from batik for dead people and batik for bride and groom is different from batik for their parents.

As a treasure, batik is part of Javanese people wealth and heritage that must be preserved as Javanese people culture identity. As culture is defined as the arts and other manifestation of human intellectual achievement regarded collectively [1], batik is regarded as the art of creating fabric for various purposes resulting from Javanese people intellectual achievement of creating batik motives with its philosophy, creating *canting* to draw the motives on the plain fabric, creating stamp to precisely stamp the ready-made motives on the plain fabric, and using *malam* and natural dye as important components of colouring the already drawn fabric. As an art, batik belongs to seventh elements of culture [2] in [3] as part of third element of culture, that is science and knowledge of cloth and clothing making. If we look at how Pappas [4] describe culture, batik fabric, cloth, and clothing becomes part of culture as it shows what the people wear and how they wear it that is different all over the world.

To preserve batik as Javanese people culture identity, batik itself should adapt the current fashion and style so that it can be used by the next generation. Otherwise, it can be shifted, substituted, extinct, or even dead, as an impact of the change of Javanese people attitude toward their culture, that can be influenced by the change of politic, economy, and social changes reducing the value, usage, and respect of the culture [5].

Although the threat on Javanese language is mild as diglossic or multilingual situations is not actually present [6], the threat on fashion and style might be strong as external influence is not prohibited by the government resulting from the globalization where we want to be part of the global community. Even though certain Javanese communities keep batik as their culture identity by using or wearing it, they are also wearing casual outfit to suit the trend. As the most popular example of Javanese traditional fabric, cloth, clothing, and fabric making technique that goes international, used, and worn by many people of all ages in so many different styles; batik must be continuously maintained to avoid its extinction.

One of many batik motives in Java is Jlamprang batik motives. It is one of five oldest Pekalongan batik motives [7] with long history and unique philosophy that must be preserved as Pekalongan culture identity. There are three batik producers who are still producing batik with Jlamprang motive. Two of them only produce batik cloth with Jlamprang motive by request, and only one of them, Batik Jlamprang H. Alwi, who is continuously produce batik cloth and clothing with Jlamprang motive. Even though Pekalongan local government had already puts their best effort to support the life of Jlamprang motive by holding various events and put mural with Jlamprang motive, it starts to be forgotten as batik users tend to choose more popular or stylish motive than the ordinary and plain geometric one.

3 Research Methodology

Since pandemic Covid-19 situation in 2022 is still worrying by the existence of new variants of Delta and Omicron, this research is performed virtually. A virtual literature study is done to find out Jlamprang motive history and philosophy. Then, a virtual observation is executed on Batik Jlamprang H. Alwi to document how Pekalongan batik with Jlamprang motive is made. It is performed by using Purposive Sampling Technique [8] to select Jlamprang batik producer who is producing Pekalongan batik with Jlamprang motive cloth and clothing in their *pranggok* (workshop). A virtual Interview and Questionnaire [9] were also carried out on 3 (three) informants consisting of Pekalongan batik owner, batik worker, and batik user to find out how they feel about Jlamprang batik and how they keep it as their culture identity. The data were analysed using 7 (seven) elements of culture [2] and Culture and Language Maintenance Theory [5, 10, 11] to know (1) how Pekalongan people keep Jlamprang batik as their Javanese culture identity in the form of cloth and clothing and (2) the reason why they maintain it.

4 Finding and Discussion

4.1 Finding

From the virtual literature review, the researcher found out that Indonesia, particularly Java Island, is famous with batik. One of batik types is batik *pesisiran* or maritime 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 are stopping by, stay for a while, or finally live in Indonesian coastal areas to sell their products, give their colour influence on batik *pesisiran*. The Arabic traders sharing their green colour, the Chinese traders sharing their red colour, and the Indian traders sharing their yellow colour. Another unique feature of batik *pesisiran* is the use of natural motives of flora and fauna which is usually found surround the environment instead of the standard (*pakem*) motives 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 found abundantly around the city. Jlamprang itself is one of five oldest motives of Pekalongan batik, coming from Jlamprang tree which is also easily obtained in the city.

From the virtual field research, the researcher observed 3 (three) batik producers in Jlamprang Street, Krapyak, Pekalongan City, who are still producing Pekalongan batik with Jlamprang motive. Nevertheless, 2 (two) of them only 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 Pekalongan batik with Jlamprang motive and that of Batik Jlamprang H. Ismail Alwi, the Jlamprang motive variants and its development, and Pekalongan batik with Jlamprang motive cloth and clothing 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.

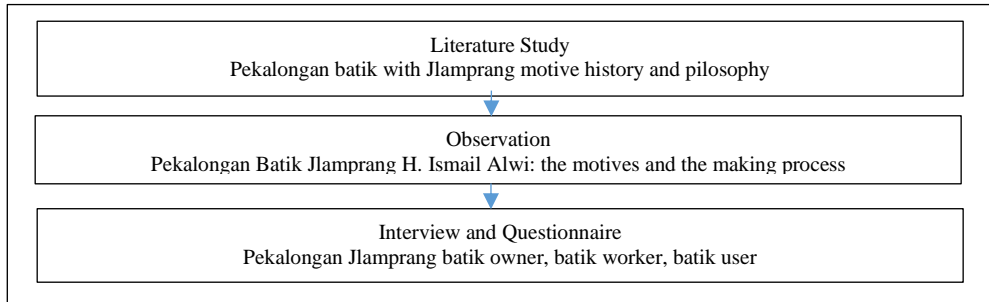


Fig. 1. Research Framework

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 2019, 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.

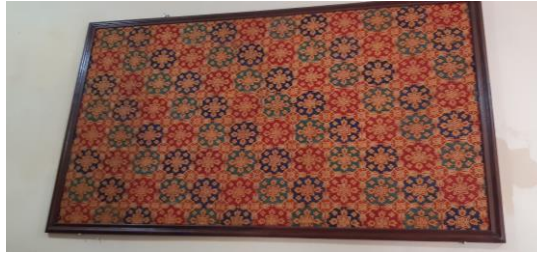


Fig. 2. Pekalongan batik with Jlamprang Motive (courtesy of H. Ismail Alwi)

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 *pesisiran* 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. 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.

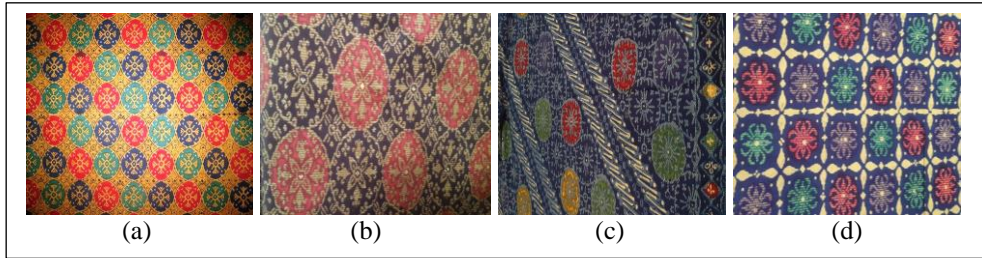


Fig. 3. Jlamprang Motives (courtesy of H. Ismail Alwi)

Figure 3 (a, b, c, d) shows Jlamprang variants of *cakar* or claw, *cakar gedi* or big claw, *cakar gedi* combined with *pakem* or big claw combined with Yogyakarta or Surakarta standard motive, and *urang* or prawn motives. Detailed information related to the making process and the philosophy of Jlamprang motives can be obtained in Alvatica research [14].

4.2.3 Jlamprang Batik for Pekalongan People

Pekalongan batik with Jlamprang motive is Pekalongan culture identity showing how cultured and civilized Pekalongan people were in the past as they were able to create such a complex process of making fabric into a high-quality cloth resembling a woven with double tied fabric. It also exposes Pekalongan people local wisdom of utilizing abundant and available natural resources as well as living harmoniously with different ethnics. For Jlamprang batik producers, the great history along with the philosophy of Jlamprang motive support their business to be continuously running throughout time although its usage has already been shifted from traditional and spiritual purposes for certain ceremony and ritual into art and business purposes for fashion and tourism. For Jlamprang batik labour who are working for batik producers, Jlamprang motive make them continuously earning money by working in the *pranggok*. They are sometimes share their ideas of how to create different Jlamprang motive by combining it with another motive such as Yogyakarta or Surakarta standard motives or batik *pesisiran* flora and fauna motives. For Jlamprang batik users, although they are sometimes gets bored with the same or similar pattern of Jlamprang motive, the existence of Jlamprang motive makes them proud of being part of the city. However, they hope that Jlamprang batik will be more developed so that it will not be left or forgotten by the city that create it.

Conclusion

From the data analysis on the finding and discussion, the researcher figures out that Jlamprang motive is the Pekalongan batik motive which is initially made by four different ethnics in Pekalongan as an alternative for the Indian *patola* double tie woven fabric. It is then used for various purposes such as traditional ceremony and spiritual ritual in Hindu era. Nowadays, in Islamic era, Pekalongan people used it as commercial commodity possessing high cultural and economy value. The researcher also finds out that the making process of Jlamprang batik is not different with that of other motives. The difference lays only on the process of designing the pattern and drawing or tracking it on the plain fabric as it needs high skill to draw geometric pictures with precisely the same size. For Pekalongan people, Jlamprang motives is their culture identity although it starts to be left by batik users as they preferred more up to date batik to suit the newest trend.

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