
BATIK MAJALENGKA AS THE LOCAL WISDOM OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

Yaya Warlia

SMA Negeri 1 Majalengka (Senior High School)
Jalan Pemuda Nomor 99 Majalengka, West Java, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

Majalengka is chosen as its status as the developing area and the district where Kertajati International Airport as the second largest Indonesian airport takes place. The research method of this fact-finding is descriptive-qualitative since the result is fully presented in words, instead of numbers. The writer gathered all batik patterns describing the unique character of Majalengka by interviewing indigenous people residing in Majalengka. This inquiry resulted in the fact that there are at least nine different batik patterns in Majalengka, which are Ratu Simbar Kencana, Nyi Rambut Kasih, angin mirroring the wind that blows hard, gedong gincu as a kind of mango which can be frequently found in Majalengka, lauk ngibing mirroring dancing fish, lele or catfish, jagung or corn, gunung seribu mirroring mountains and pesawat or aeroplane. These days this pattern is used in different kind of clothes, such as long-sleeved shirt, blouse, daily dress, scarf, skirt, long dress and fabric made of batik. Therefore, it should be maintained as the local wisdom reflecting the truly identity of Majalengka as the unique regency in West Java.

Keywords: batik Majalengka, local wisdom, Sundanese

INTRODUCTION

Majalengka is one of regencies in West Java, sharing its borders with the Regency of Indramayu in the northern part, the Regency of Sumedang in the western part, the Regency of Ciamis in south and the Regency of Cirebon in the east. In general, the residents are classified as Sundanese people, however, the existence of Javanese in this regency can't be denied due to its borders. Therefore, there is an enclave of

Javanese in Majalengka, called sub-district of Patuanan (Purwitasari & Karnain, 2019).

In addition, Indramayu and Cirebon that share borders with Majalengka are home to Javanese native speakers. Thus, the combination of Sundanese and Javanese culture can be easily found. This presumably results in the decision to select this regency as the place where international airport is located. It is respectively the second largest international airport in Indonesia after Soekarno-Hatta International Airport in Tangerang, Banten Province. Becoming officially accessible by public since 2018, this airport isn't still able to provide commercial flight until these days. However, the local people and government are very optimistic that this airport will be the main financial source for this little town as more tourists have been enjoying tourist destinations offered in this regency, especially local tourist.

As the number of local tourist increases rapidly within last five-year period, the infrastructure is improved, as well. Local government attempted to complete well-built public space and facility. They also promoted the unique characteristics of Majalengka. One of those efforts is holding a Festival During that encourages more people not only from Majalengka, but also from neighbouring areas, to come and enjoy durian as one of main commodity of this district. Besides, local government build a cooperation with other private companies and state companies and institutions in growing beneficial market to rise the funding source and to promote its commodity, such gedong gincu mango, catfish, durian, etc. These factors led the author to deepen Majalengka and explore more about Majalengka, especially on local wisdom reflecting in batik pattern.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Linguistically, the word batik comes from the term ambathik in Javanese that consists of two roots, e.g. amba 'wide (referring to its fabric)' and nithik 'making a dot/point' (Poerwadarminta, 1939). Therefore, batik is defined as a fabric in which a dot or point is made. It is widespread since the 17th century. Other reference mentioned that batik came from the district of Toraja (in North Sumatra, currently), Flores (in East Nusa Tenggara, currently), Halmahera (in Maluku, currently) and Papua (Tirta, et al, 1996). This assumption was emerged due to the old batik tradition found in those areas. At the beginning, batik was made by painting and writing in palm leaves. Time changed. The way of batik making is changing, as well. At that time, mostly beloved patterns were animal and plant.

As Hinduism and Buddhism entered Indonesia, batik pattern switched respectively, especially during the Kingdom of Majapahit that had the largest territorial area in Nusantara, the former name of Indonesia. Hinduism influenced this adjustment greatly. This was reflected through lotus pattern as the symbol of purity in Hinduism, garuda bird as the symbol of holy animal at that time and dragon as the symbol of life. Besides, temple pattern and its relief carvings were the most loveable patterns, as well.

Those patterns changed as Islam undertook Indonesia in the 13th century. Batik patterns acting for Hinduism steadily faded away. This was in line with the fact that Islam forbid human and animal pattern as batik pattern. This led to developing another pattern as the modification of flower and geometrical

ornament.

Batik industry developed rapidly since 1980's. At that time, batik pattern was influenced by Dutch culture and life values. This referred to writing style batik that is still produced until the beginning of 20th century. Then, Chinese culture affected batik, as well. Thus, batik pattern was dominated by phoenix pattern, snake pattern, dragon pattern and bright coloured flower that are the special characters of Chinese culture and life values. Chinese traders who came to Indonesia during Dutch colonization modified batik development greatly. They participated actively in spreading those patterns among Indonesian people as the indigenous people of Nusantara.

After Dutch colonization came to a close, Japanese acquired Indonesia. Thus, batik pattern changed again. Flower was the most used batik pattern during Japanese colonization. It was commonly called as Hokokai batik. As Indonesia proclaimed its Independence Day, batik patterns are in accordance with each local wisdom of the district where anyone comes from, including Majalengka as home of Sundanese-speaker. This singularity results in batik as **Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity** that is officially declared on 2nd October 2009 by UNESCO. Later this day is officially determined as the National Batik Day by the government of Indonesia.

As mentioned before, batik pattern represents local wisdom of each district and race. Geographical situation, nature, culinary aspect and frequent habit done consistently in a particular area become the ascertainment of batik pattern at recent times. This is in line with the opinion stated by Nugroho (2020). In the same reference, Nugroho claimed that there are numerous batik patterns, especially in Javanese culture. Those patterns are described ethically, as follow.

Alas-Alasan

Having the root of *alasan* or jungle in Javanese. It is mirrored by the existence of both small and large animals. This pattern remains people to keep alerted and careful in life that is full of hardship and difficulties.

Anggur

Its meaning is linked with the term of helping each other as reflected in its pattern that is linked with other patterns.

Emprit

Adopted from Javanese that means sparrow. People who wear this pattern are expected to keep environment safe and maintain good relationship with the others.

Gurdho Latar Kembang

This pattern is marked by crown in upper part of fabric and surrounding by blooming flowers. This represents prosperity and high social status. People who wear this pattern are expected to have high social

status, as well. Besides, it can be a symbol of high social status people wear it.

Gurdho Pisang Bali

It constitutes the faith to God. This pattern explains that in order to reach for higher place in life, people should struggle with much difficulties in their life.

Kokroso

Adopted from the character of wayang in Javanese. It acts for prosperity and fortitude.

Kukilo Latar Kambil Secuil

Consisting of two terms, referring to *kukila* 'bird voices' and *kambil* 'coconut trees' in Javanese. Bird voices represent a person with beautiful voice, while coconut trees act for strength that benefit people as coconut trees consist of several elements that can be used by people in daily life. Those explanations are in line with its philosophical meaning of this pattern that expects people who wear it to have good attitude and polite utterance while giving much to the others without expecting anything as a change.

Merak Lung-Lungan

Consisting of *merak* or peacock pattern as the symbol of luxury and *lung-lungan* or the symbol of exuberance. People who wear this pattern are expected to be a well-mannered leader who is able to serve others and give benefit for them.

Parang Kancing Ceplok Kupu

Parang means slope that is marked by diagonal pattern. Furthermore, *kupu* or butterfly represents a person who always seeks for good fortune in his/her future as butterfly always searches for honey to keep alive. People who wear it are expected to be a well-mannered leader who is always careful in leading a good life.

Sekar Jagad

Meaning of the flower of life. This pattern is marked by flowers that are dyed in fabric. People who wear it are expected to spread love to others in their life.

Sekar Nyamplung

Having the meaning of a flower named *nyamplung*. It is a flower that is easily found alongside the beach, has a strong smell, however, hard to keep alive. This pattern acts for a feminine woman who is attractive, strong and independent. This leads to the fact that women are more common to wear this batik, instead of men.

Semen Sawat Gurdha

It represents prosperity of people who wear it.

Sido Asih

Originating from Surakarta or commonly called as Solo and Yogyakarta. Consisting of two words, e.g. *sido* ‘to become’ and *asih* ‘love’. This pattern is commonly worn during the first night after marriage ceremony in order to keep them leading a romantic marriage and good life as a married couple. This habit can only be found in Indonesian tradition.

Sido Mulyo

Consisting of two terms, e.g. *sido* ‘to become’ and *mulyo* ‘prosperity’. As well as *sido asih*, *sido mulyo* is commonly used by new married couple on their wedding day in order to keep their financial matter steady during the rest of their life.

METHODOLOGY

This examination employed a descriptive analysis. The author gathered the data by interviewing artists who got involved in producing those batik patterns explained clearly in this work. Furthermore, the author also did the literature review by visiting a library to explore the knowledge of Majalengka and anything related to this regency. Then, the author analysed the data in accordance with information written and found in those documentation, reference books and old manuscripts.

RESULTS

Batik originating from Majalengka is pioneered by Hery Suhersono in 2000’s. It is produced by using the three techniques, e.g. *teknik tulis* ‘writing technique’, *teknik cap* ‘stamping technique’ and the combination of those two techniques. Furthermore, the mostly used dyeing method is immersion (Aditia, 2014). The batik patterns coming originally from Majalengka are described below.

Ratu Simbar Kancana Pattern (The Queen of Simbar Kancana Pattern)

Adopted from the name of a queen led this regency before Indonesia was colonized by Dutch people respectively. She directly inherited her crown after her father passed away and became officially the leader of the Kingdom of Talaga Manggung as one of biggest kingdoms in the Regency of Majalengka in the 8th century. During her leadership, this kingdom changed into a Muslim-based kingdom. Almost all people residing in this area converted to Islam. Besides, this kingdom also hit the peak of its popularity.

The Queen of Simbar Kancana is mostly explained as the reflection of an active, clever, lively, warm-hearted, charismatic and well-mannered queen. This results in the mirroring of batik pattern that shows a *kujang* or traditional weapon originating in West Java due to the fact that Talaga Manggung had very close relationship with the Kingdom of Padjadjaran as the foundation of Sundanese culture and people. Other pattern reflecting Simbar Kancana is the crown as the luxury icon linked closely with her as the only one queen led the biggest kingdom of this area. Thus, this pattern explains prosperity and glory of people in Majalengka.

Nyi Rambut Kasih (The Queen of Sindangkasih)

The Kingdom Sindangkasih – simply called as Sindangkasih, as well as the Kingdom of Talaga Manggung, was categorized as the biggest kingdom found in Majalengka in the past. One of well-respected queen of Sindangkasih was Nyi Rambut Kasih. Compared to Simbar Kencana, Nyi Rambut Kasih was well-known for having a beautiful shape and face together with her long hair covering her back. A respondent said, that Nyi Rambut Kasih was presumably the portrait of perfect queen in the past.

Nyi Rambut Kasih pattern describes tenacity and patience of indigenous people originating from and residing Majalengka. It is marked by three love leaves contemplating her, as written in old manuscript documented and told from generation to generation, as a respondent reported.

Wind Pattern

Originating from the title of Majalengka as the City of Wind for having heavy winds blowing. It is blemished by eight compass points that represent power, authority, persistence, toughness, efficiency and bravery of people in Majalengka. This constitutes nature of Majalengka.

Gedong Gincu Pattern

Gedong gincu mango is a specific mango variety in West Java (Ariningsih, *et al*, 2021). Majalengka is also a home for gedong gincu mango commodity. One of villages in this regency, called as Sidamukti, is well-known as the place of this variety. This pattern represents prosperity and welfare of indigenous people coming from Majalengka. Most people work as farmer and rely their life on agriculture and agro-tourism to make ends meet, especially rice field. Recently, there are two kinds of gedong gincu pattern commonly used daily. Even one of those patterns is used as the fabric pattern worn by students and civil servants throughout the district. Those two patterns are described below.

The first pattern is worn commonly by students and civil servants shows a striped gedong gincu mango along with three circles. There is a sunflower as the core inside and has two leaves mirroring wings, root and striped box. It acts for positive synergy among people as the residents of Majalengka in order to create a conducive environment as the reflection of indigenous people who are religious and well-being and able to get along with the others well.

The second pattern is dyed as the uniform pattern worn by primary school students in Majalengka. There are two gedong gincu mangos and two leaves and a stem as the completion that reflect the harmony of life. Besides, there is a blooming flower representing the prosperity.

Lauk Ngibing Pattern (The Dancing Fish Pattern)

Inspired by the nature found in Majalengka that consists of ponds, especially in the areas sharing border with the Regency of Sumedang and southern part of this regency. Generally, this pattern is accordance with nature in Majalengka, as mentioned before. Moreover, it is marked by five fishes dancing over a blooming flower. This is the reflection of consequence and responsibility of people in Majalengka and

becomes the great mirror of grateful feeling towards God and His kindness. Fish itself, however, represents the independence and toughness in facing any hardship people should struggle with.

Corn Pattern

Corn plantation is easily found during journey throughout the regency of Majalengka. Thus, an artist originating from Majalengka got inspired to create this pattern. It used to be the fabric pattern of batik uniform worn widely by primary school students before it was replaced by gedong gincu pattern. Furthermore, this corn pattern is a truly reflection of dream and on-fire spirit of life in indigenous people's life.

Catfish Pattern

As well as *lauk ngibing* pattern, this pattern is inspired by nature in Majalengka. This kind of fish is easily found in some sub-districts in this regency, such as Bantarujeg, Panyingkiran, Majalengka and Jatitujuh.

Gunung Seribu Pattern (Thousand Mountains Pattern)

Majalengka consists of mountains, rice fields, plantation and ponds geographically. This geographical condition gives inspiration to artists originating from Majalengka to create this pattern. Besides, this geographical situation benefits this regency in tourism aspect. It becomes the second commodity for this little town.

Aeroplane Pattern

The existence of international airport, called Bandara Internasional Jawa Barat Kertajati or West Java International Airport Kertajati, encourages this regency to transform itself into an aerocity. Thus, those people getting involved in art matter had interest in producing aeroplane batik pattern to show to the entire nation that Majalengka has a new name, e.g. the Aerocity.

DISCUSSION

Although those batik patterns representing Majalengka are welcome warmly by people from different age and social status, the promotion and trade of those batik patterns aren't spread widely yet. It is still sold locally, instead of nationally. Young generations, for instance, haven't any interest yet in helping growing that promotion. They seem to wear those batik patterns as the common uniform, instead of as the pride of their origin. Thus, the author suggested several matters, as follow.

1. Young people should be encouraged to take part in producing batik patterns by attending a batik dyeing class that is currently offered by a course founded by Hery Suhersono as the pioneer of batik patterns from Majalengka.
2. Visiting to batik galleries that sell batik pattern from Majalengka is another way to motivate people originating from Majalengka, especially young people, in introducing how local wisdom could inspire artists to express their pride of their origin and race. It could probably be a motivation for them to create another batik pattern, as well.
3. Participating in a seminar on Art by describing batik pattern originating from Majalengka.

Those ways could apparently help anyone linked to this industry to grow their love of batik as the identity of their origin place.

CONCLUSION

According to explanation mentioned before, it came to a conclusion that batik pattern is the reflection of local wisdom found in the particular area at the particular era. This is apparently mirrored in different social life of Indonesian society that consists of various races, instead of one race. Besides, batik pattern is accordance with distinctive character of each district. Batik gedong gincu mango, catfish, wind, Simbar Kencana, Nyi Rambut Kasih, aeroplane, thousand mountains, for instance, became the isolated characters and acted for Majalengka people and culture. Therefore, this batik should be kept alive from generation to generation.

REFERENCES

- [1] Aditia, D. (2014): Analisis Visual Motif dan Makna Simbolis Batik Majalengka. Bachelor Degree Thesis. – Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Bandung.
- [2] Ariningsih, E., Ashari, Saliem, H.P., Maulana, M., Septanti, K.S. (2021): Kinerja Agribisnis Mangga Gedong Gincu dan Potensinya sebagai Produk Ekspor Pertanian Unggul. – Pusat Sosial Ekonomi dan Kebijakan Pertanian 39(1): 26-49.
- [3] Nugroho, H. (2020): Pengertian Motif Batik dan Filosofinya. – Available at https://bbkb.kemenperin.go.id/index.php/post/read/pengertian_motif_batik_dan_filosofinya_0
- [4] Poerwadarminta, WJS. (1939): Baoesastra Djawa. – JB. Wolters, Batavia.
- [5] Purwitasari, A., Karnain. (2019): Bahasa Sunda Dialek Majalengka. – Rajagrafindo Persada, Depok.
- [6] Tirta, I., Steen, G.L., Urso, D.M., Alisjahbana, M. (1996): Batik: A Play of Lights and Shades. – Gaya Favorit, Jakarta.