

Local Wisdom in The Expression of The Written Batik Lexicon in Lasem

(Ethnolinguistic Study)

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Abstract— Batik art in each region has its own characteristics that represent the culture of the community. Lasem Batik is one of the kind of coastal batik, which has a great influence on Chinese culture, thus making Lasem batik has its own distinctive characteristics compared to other areas. In the world of Lasem batik, there is a lexicon that reflects the batik's local wisdom. The lexicon that appears in this batik activity has an element of language that is very interesting. This research discusses the local wisdom of the batik community in Lasem which is reflected through the lexicon of written batik in Lasem. The purpose of the research are to describe the reflection of the local wisdom created by the batik makers in Lasem, including the lexicon of tools and materials, Lasem batik motifs, and batik process and coloring. The data collection techniques are done through the participatory observation, in-depth interview with the interview guidelines, and literature review. The qualitative data analysis was used by reducing data, presenting data, and drawing conclusion/verification. Data was then analyzed using the ethnoscience methods to find the local wisdom meaning. The results showed that the reflections of local wisdom in the lexicon of Lasem written batik as a reflection of the local community are (1) it reflects the ability of the people in Lasem to acculturate with other cultures, (2) it reflects the ability of the people in Lasem to adapt with the ecological nature, (3) it reflects the creativity of the people in Lasem, and (4) it reflects the ability of the people to follow the development of technology.

Keywords— *Local wisdom; Lexicon; Lasem; written batik; Ethnolinguistic study; Ethnoscience method*

I. INTRODUCTION

Lasem batik is one type of coastal batik which is highly influenced by Chinese culture. Thus, Lasem batik has its own characteristics compared to other Batik from other areas. Liang (in Putra, 2016:116) explains that Lasem batik is a noble work of the nation as a result of cross culture between the indigenous people and the Chinese. This batik is characterized not only by the colors and motifs which are rich in Chinese nuances, but also by how it is closely related to the historical values and the way of life of the Lasem community. The motifs and the decorations of Lasem batik is a mixture between the Chinese culture and the local culture (there is a touch of *vorstenlanden* batik culture). Lasem batik was originally produced and used only by the Strait-born Chinese community (all Chinese people born in Indonesia). Additionally, it was used for altar fabric on the pagoda (*tokwi*) and as a big table cloth (*mukli*). The Lasem batik which was only used by the Strait-born Chinese is known as *encim* batik. Nowadays, Lasem batik can be used by everyone, and even the indigenous people who used to work as batik laborers can make their own company now. The center of Lasem written batik is mostly located in Babagan Village, Gedongmuljo Village, Karangturi Village, Soditan Village, and Sumbergirang Village.

Lasem batik has its own uniqueness as a form of the Lasem cultural wisdom which has been passed on and interpreted for a long time by the Lasem community. The most distinctive characteristic of Lasem batik is the coloring system. Lasem batik is famous for its red color known as *abang getih pitik* (red blood chicken) which cannot be imitated by other areas. This red color is the result of mineral content in the water which is different from water in other areas, and it means that Lasem batik can only be made in Lasem. The motifs of Lasem batik are *lokchan*, *hong* bird, *latohan*, *lung-lungan*, *watu pecah*, *patsian*, etc. which come as a form of acculturation between the Chinese people and the indigenous people and a utilization of ecological nature as a source of ideas in making motifs of batik. The lexicon that appears in the process of making batik has a very interesting language element.

The lexicon used in the process of making batik by the Lasem community is not necessary understood by other communities. Examples of terms in the lexicon are *ngeteli*, *bang biron*, *beras wutah*, etc. The people who understand those terms are only those who work with in the environment of the production of written batik. It is because there are local wisdoms of the Lasem community in the process of making the batik and naming the motifs. The local wisdoms contained in the lexicon of Lasem written batik does not only describe the past heritage, but also the wisdom of the batik makers towards the development of the current technology. Along with technological development, there has been a lot of changes in the process of making batik in Lasem. For example, during the process of making and coloring the batik which does not leave its original properties, many combinations of motifs have been developed. It also means that not only the *pakem* motifs are made for the batik. This gives rise to a new lexicon in Lasem batik. This condition shows that local wisdoms have the ability to adapt to the current context and even give positive energy to the new traditions and new values that come into a certain community. It is proof that local wisdom is supposed to be known, utilized, and applied in various aspects of life, and it can be developed in line with the development of life. It also means that local wisdom teaches us to know and to acknowledge the existence of local values, not to intervene and let alone abolish them (Kurniawan in Ermanto, 2016:225).

Based on the idea above, it is necessary to examine the lingual forms in the lexicon form of batik in Lasem which can reveal the local wisdoms of the batik makers in order to give an idea about their way of thinking in facing the past, the present, and the future. This study obtains an illustration about how the people in Lasem to do inventarisasi, codify, and revitalize their local wisdom in Lasem batik by reviving and replacing the present context through the lexicon creation in Lasem batik.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Surbakti (2013:3), a lexicon is a collection of lexemes in a language. The study of lexicons include the definition of "word, vocabulary structure, word usage and storage, word learning, word history and evolution (etymology), relationships between words, and the process of word formation in a language. According to KBBI (2008:805), a lexicon is a language component that contains all information about the meaning and usage of words in a language. Chaer (2009:2) states that the term lexicon comes from the ancient Greek language which means 'word', 'utterance' or 'way of speaking'. Based on the definitions above, it can be concluded that a lexicon is a component or a collection of lexemes which contain information about the meaning and the use of words in a language. Batik lexicon are words containing information about batik as well as things related to batik. From the explanation above, it can be concluded that the use of lexicon in batik-writing in Lasem District can be a representation of batik technique in Lasem that cannot be separated from the use of written batik terminology.

According to Putra (1997:1), ethnolinguistics is the study about how culture is formed and its relation to language. In line with that statement, Duranti (1997:2) states that ethnolinguistics is the study of language as a cultural resource and speaking as a cultural practice. This means that language and culture are related to each other. It means that ethnolinguistics examines the relationship between language and culture in a society. Abdullah (2014:1) defines ethnolinguistics as one of the branches in linguistic studies. He also explains that language, which involves the culture in a certain society as the object of ethnolinguistic study, can be primitive, traditional, and modern. The ethnolinguistic study of the relationship between language and culture can address various phenomena related to ecological, historical, and demographical factors that influence the change of various categories and language and cultural expressions along with the various demands of life (Abdullah, 2014:2).

Local wisdom is a view of life and science along with many life strategies in the form of activities done by the local people as a way to answer various problems in the fulfillment of their needs. According to Sedyawati in Abdullah (2013: 51-52), local wisdom can be defined as a system of knowledge in a community which was passed on by the previous generation or comes from experiences related to the environment and society to overcome challenges of life. In line with that statement, Abdullah (2013: 53) explains that the local wisdom is a local knowledge system owned by the society based on the self-experience and the ancestors' instruction through generations which is flexible in overcoming the local situation and condition. It is reflected in verbal and non-verbal expressions used to achieve peaceful co-existence in a humane and dignified manner. In this case, the local wisdom in the community has an important role as a part of cultural heritage in the midst of the growing society activities. The concrete proof from the concept can be observed from the existence of Lasem people's batik activity which still shows the existence of local wisdom in the midst of technological development.

Local wisdom is generally defined by Alfian in Emanto (2016:225) as a view of life and science along with various life strategies in the form of activities done by local people as a way to answer various problems in the fulfillment of their needs including all aspects of life, such as religion, economics, technology, social-organization, language, and art. Abdullah (2013) also explains that local wisdom is highly valued and has its own benefits in the people's life. The system is developed because of the need to perceive, watch, and live according to the situations, conditions, abilities, and values that are shared within the community. In other words, local wisdom then becomes a part of their wise way of life to solve various life problems that they face. With local wisdom, they can live their life and even develop sustainably.

Some scientific works that specifically discuss about Lasem batik are Nopiningsih's *Istilah-istilah Batik Tradisional Jawa* (2009) and Rahayu's *Perkembangan Motif Lasem batik Cina Peranakan Tahun 1900-1960* (2014). Further research was conducted by Rizaldi (2016) entitled *Social Relation Between Javanese and Chinese community in Batik Processing in Lasem Central Java*; Putra, A.Y. (2016) about *Menggali Lasem batik Sebagai Simbol Akulturasi Nilai-nilai Budaya Cina-Jawa*. Some of

these works provide information related to the empirical data and some of the things required in this paper such as the methods and the theories used.

III. METHOD

This research uses the Ethnolinguistic approach. The data in this research are in the form of oral and written data. The oral data in this research is speech quotes that allegedly contains the lexicon of Lasem written batik obtained from the interview with the interviewees. The written data is literature, namely the sources of data in the form of library materials (reference book) related to the lexicon of batik in Lasem.

The data collecting techniques are in the form of participatory observation, in-depth interview with the interview guidelines, and literature review. To select the interviewees, the purposive sampling technique with snowball sampling model (Sutopo, 2006) was applied. The validity was obtained by triangulation (source, method, theory, and researcher) (Moleong, 1989:112; Sutopo, 1986:70-74). The qualitative data analysis was used by reducing data, presenting data, and drawing conclusion/verification (Moleong, 1989:112). Data was then analyzed using the ethno chemical framework. The results are presented in a narrative text with an interactive analysis (Sutopo, 2006).

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Result

The results of this research shows that the lexicon in Lasem written batik which reflect the local wisdom are in the forms lexicon in of tools and materials, motifs of the written batik, and process and coloring which is classified into four groups. The first is related to the ability of the Lasem community to acculturate with other culture, in this case the Chinese and Champa culture. The second is related to the ecological nature around the Lasem community as the sources of creative ideas in the creation of Lasem batik motifs. The observation of the nature surrounding the Lasem batik community inspires the creation of batik motifs, such as animals, plants, and other objects related to the mountain and the coastal ecology. The third is related to the creativity of the Lasem community which is shown by the development in the process of making batik in Lasem. This is done as a way to adjust to the batik market so that Lasem batik can compete with the batik from other areas. If the Lasem batik community cannot be creative, they will be left behind since there is no progress and Lasem batik will lose its existence. If Lasem batik dies, one creative economy will be lost. As a result, there will be a loss in income that will eventually increase the poverty rate. Lastly, the fourth shows that Lasem is a community who keeps up with the development of technology. This helps the process of making batik which results in more batik produced and higher quality compared to the traditional way of making batik.

B. Discussion

The discussion of the research are described below.

1. *The Lexicon of Lasem Written Batik as an Expression of the Local Wisdom Related to the Ability to Acculturate with Other Cultures*

During the era of the Mataram Kingdom, the coastal area in Lasem was used as a port to land trade ships from other countries such as China, Champa, and India. This made it easy for Lasem to acculturate with the foreign cultures. This acculturation is reflected on the lexicon of written batik motifs in Lasem. One of the motifs influenced by the Chinese culture is the *burung hong* [buruŋ hɔŋ] motif and *lok chan* [lɔʔ ɕan] motif. The *burung hong* [buruŋ hɔŋ] motif belongs to the large bird motif. It is always displayed in pairs with an odd tail. The tail feathers are long and curved when depicted with one bird. Meanwhile, the *lok chan* [lɔʔ ɕan] motif is a motif similar to the motif in *sekar jagad*. *Lok chan* comes from the Chinese language in which *lok* means blue and *chan* means silk. Therefore, *lok chan* can be interpreted as blue silk.

The other form of acculturation occurred with the Champa culture which is still being maintained today. This is reflected in the lexicon of *tumpal* [tumpal] which is a triangle-shaped decoration located on the batik's head. The motif of *tumpal* in Lasem batik is similar to the sun motif on the bronze drums of Ngac Lu in the Dong Son (Vietnam) era which influenced the development of the *tumpal* motif on Lasem batik. The motifs show that the Lasem community can accept influence from other cultures without having to abandon its own culture. This acculturation has made Lasem become an area with a high tolerance values.

2. The Lexicon of Lasem Written Batik as an Expression of the Local Wisdom Related to the Ecological Nature

The geographical condition of Lasem, which is a coastal and mountainous area, affects the livelihood of the people. They do not only rely on farming and trading, but also fishing. This livelihood is reflected in the lexicon *iwak-iwakan* [iwa?-iwakan] and *latohan* [latohan]. The motif of *iwak-iwakan* [iwa?-iwakan] is a non-geographic structure of written batik motif which represents the images of the marine life especially fish. The motif symbolizes the wealth of the sea as well as the livelihood of the people as fishermen. Meanwhile, *latohan* [latohan] is a curved, arch-shaped motif decorated by small circles around it. This *latohan* motif is unique to the Lasem area because it is inspired by many marine plants found in the area. This *latohan* motif also represents the livelihood of the Lasem people as fishermen. The *latohan* and *iwak-iwakan* motifs represent the marine ecology in Lasem.

Besides being reflected in the lexicon of *iwak-iwakan* [iwa?-iwakan] and *latohan* [latohan], the ability of the Lasem community to adapt with the mountainous conditions is also reflected in the lexicon of *gunung ringgit* [gunUŋ ringIt], *lung-lungan* [lUŋ-luŋan] and *tiga negeri* [tigo nəgəri]. The *gunung ringgit* [gunUŋ ringIt] motif is in the form of semicircles stacked on top of each other. This motif was created by the batik makers in Lasem to express their hope of seeing the sunrise. Because their area is blocked by mountain, they cannot see the sunrise. Meanwhile, the *lung-lungan* [lUŋ-luŋan] motif is a stylization of the elongated tendrils of many plants which grow in the mountainous area.

Meanwhile, the *tiga negeri* [tigo nəgəri] motif is a batik motif which consists of three colors. They are usually *sogan*, red, and blue with the dominant motif of flora and fauna. In the past, the dyed process was done in Solo (*sogan*), Lasem (red), and Pekalongan (blue). As time went by, many synthetic dyes were used in the coloring process. Today, it is no longer done in different areas. In batik *tiga negeri*, Lasem is famous for its red color known as *abang getih pitik* or “the red blood of chickens” which cannot be imitated by other areas. This is because the water used during the coloring process contains specific minerals which can only be found in Gunung Argopuro Lasem. This kind of lexicon represents the mountainous ecology in Lasem.

The lexicon which represents the freshwater ecology in Lasem district is *iwak mas* [iwa? mas] and *kura-kura* [kura-kura] motif. The *iwak mas* [iwa? mas] motif is a stylization of the goldfish, while *kura-kura* [kura-kura] is the stylization of the tortoise. Both lexicons are a stylization of the freshwater animals. Other lexicons which represent the plant ecology are the *buketan* [bukətan] and *mlati* [kawUŋ məlati] motifs. The motif *buketan* [bukətan] is flower motif arranged into a bouquet, while *kawung mlati* [kawUŋ məlati] is a geometric cross motif which is arranged like jasmine flowers.

3. The Lexicon of Lasem Written Batik as an Expression of the Local Wisdom Related to the Creative Community

The lives of people in Lasem cannot be separated from batik. Many batik makers develop Lasem batik motifs to increase the market. One of the motifs is *sinografi* [sinəgrafi] which is a motif containing words of wisdom in the form of Chinese characters, but in its application it is written among other motifs. These motifs are a form of acculturation between Lasem and Chinese culture. For instance, the motif of *sekar jagad* is given the motif of *sinografi*. The addition of *sinografi* motifs in the non-Chinese motifs as well as Chinese motifs shows that the Lasem people are very creative in increasing the selling value of Lasem batik.

Other than motifs, the people have also developed some tools to simplify the process of making batik, such as *complongan* [cɒmplɒŋan] and *jegol* [jəgɒl]. *Complongan* [cɒmplɒŋan] is a tool in the shape of fine-needle combs used to make *cocohan* or smooth points obtained after the *mori* (fabric) is given the wax. Meanwhile, *jegol* [jəgɒl] is a tool used to *nembok* (redraw using hot wax) which is made of a stove axis inserted into a pipe or bamboo with a length of about 10-15 cm. *Jegol* is used like a brush, which is to cover the patterns with a relatively larger wax. Thus, the batik makers only need to *nembok* (redraw) the larger areas with *jegol*. If the narrower areas need to be redrawn with hot wax, they can use *canting tembakan*.

The development of the motifs or tools derived from the ideas of the people reflects a creative society who considers both good and bad and the profit or the loss. The naming of the motifs, tools and the process can be either similar to or different from other areas.

4. The Lexicon of Lasem Written Batik as an Expression of the Local Wisdom Related to the Society who Follows the Development of Technology

Along with the development of the more sophisticated technology, people are competing to create an innovation in the technology in the form of sophisticated tools that help humans work. The development of technology affects the life of the society, including the life of the Lasem society. In this case, Lasem has made some changes to follow the development of technology by using some tools such as irons and compressors to make their work easier. The use of irons, known as *nyetrika* [nətrika], shifts the activity of refining the fabric manually which was done through *ngemplongi* [ŋəmplɒŋi]. The process of *ngemplongi* is considered time and energy consuming. In addition, the people of Lasem also make use of compressor tools to maintain the fire pressure. The use of compressors is considered efficient because the batik makers do not have to maintain the fire manually.

The coloring process has also developed. Before using synthetic dyes such as *naphtol*, *indigosol*, and *rapid*, the coloring process was done naturally by using materials derived from nature. The use of natural dyes is considered time consuming and costly. Currently, there are not many batik makers in Lasem who still use the natural dyes. The batik makers and the consumers

prefer the batik which is made with synthetic dyes because it is faster to make and there are more colors to choose from. The explanation above shows that the people of Lasem follow the development of technology by using various tools to simplify their work.

V. CONCLUSION

The reflections of local wisdom in the lexicon of Lasem written batik as a reflection of the local community are (1) it reflects the ability of the people in Lasem to acculturate with other cultures, (2) it reflects the ability of the people in Lasem to adapt with the ecological nature, (3) it reflects the creativity of the people in Lasem, and (4) it reflects the ability of the people to follow the development of technology.

This research is a preliminary study of the mindset of people in Lasem who work in the batik industry which observes the lexicon of written batik in Lasem. The mindset shows that the local wisdom in Lasem during the process of making batik is taken in various ways in order to survive in the batik industry. By understanding the process of acculturation, ecological nature, creativity of the people, and the ability to adapt with the development of technology, the Lasem community will always try to preserve the coastal batik of Lasem so that it becomes the heritage for the next generations. Through the local wisdom, the young generation in Lasem will be able to know and to preserve all things related to the written batik of Lasem.

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