

# Revitalization of Keraton Cirebon Batik:

## A Reflection of Cultural Integration

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**Abstract**—Keraton Cirebon Batik is one of three palaces in Cirebon including Keraton Kasepuhan, Keraton Kanoman, and Keraton Kacirebonan. At first, Keraton Cirebon Batik was grounded and developed merely around Keraton Cirebon. Development of this batik motif was much influenced by several cultures such as Hindu, Islam, China, and Europe. Therefore, this study was aimed to find out batik preservation program rooted in the keraton traditional batik and investigate the Cirebon traditional batik rooted from the keraton tradition batik either in the batiks that have been used in the national and international level. This study applied a qualitative method with an ethnographic approach. The findings revealed that Keraton Cirebon Batik revitalization was done through a model revitalization which covers: Revitalization context; Reproductive Context; Innovation context; Integration context (Equality of Cultural Perception). Besides, revitalization was also done by creating alternative forms of visual decoration which can be a platform to integrate the cultural stakeholders of the Keraton Cirebon community. This program also functioned to express aesthetic values on Cirebon batik leading to a harmonious value system in the Keraton Cirebon.

**Keywords:** *alternative batik motif, cultural integration, revitalization*

### I. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is one of the regions in Asia which has various batik cultures. One of the famous Indonesia batik was Keraton Cirebon batik which originally comes from Cirebon, a well-known city in Indonesia. This batik is categorized based on three palaces namely: Keraton Kasepuhan characterized by Singa Barong decoration; Keraton Kanoman characterized by Paksinagaliman's decorative styles; and Keraton Kacirebonan characterized by Bintulu ornamental variety [1]. Three of them are known as Keraton Cirebon Batik. However, there are some concerns about Keraton Cirebon Batik which are interesting to discuss: (a) The absence of activities focused on Cirebon Batik preservation program; (b) the batik motifs are still less well unknown and promoted by the community unless the two well-known motifs- *Megamendung* and *Wadasan* motif; and (c) The values carried out by the palace community stakeholders embedded in aesthetic values of Cirebon batik which can be used as alternatives for creating harmonious value system are not promoted yet.

The initial investigation showed that the existing Keraton Cirebon Batik initially grew and developed in Keraton Kasepuhan, Keraton Kanoman, and Keraton Kacirebonan. Since the beginning of its development, the batik motifs were developed by the influence of some cultures in Indonesia such as Hinduism, Islam, China, and Europe.

Based on field observation done by the researchers, ancient batiks belonged to Keraton Kasepuhan, Keraton Kanoman, and Keraton Kacirebonan were not found in a good condition. The motifs are hardly to recognize and physically those are fragile. Nowadays, Keraton batik motifs are produced by some Cirebon artisans although most of them did not well understand about the meaning and value carried out in the motif decoration. They also seemed to have a lack of knowledge related to classifications of Keraton batik motif and their functions within the palace community. Regarding this, revitalization process can be an endeavour to conserve Keraton Cirebon Batik. Further information about value, philosophy meaning, and details about Keraton Cirebon batik motifs were obtained from some informants in the palace such as Sultan Sepuh, royal families, and palace servant who well understand the meaning, philosophy, and function of the batik for royal family. Collected data were then analysed and compared with existing library data. Based on the description above, a study related Keraton Cirebon batik should be conducted to investigate and formulate Keraton Cirebon batik elements including: a variety of decoration / style, materials, and colours. In addition, this study also aimed to investigate some elements behind Keraton Cirebon batik such as meaning, philosophy, magical power, function of the batik in ceremonies, and etc [2,3].

### II. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to some literatures, Keraton Cirebon Batik motif was inspired by a combination of mystical creatures such as dragons, lions, and buroq birds [4]. However, the information related to Keraton batik is still limited so that further research is thoroughly required to discover more about it. In fact, books related to some aspects embedded in the Keraton Cirebon Batik have not been explored yet including the history, forms of ornamental Keraton Cirebon Batik, terminology, Batik aesthetics value, production processes, and Islamic influence toward the Batik ornament. It was also stated that Cirebon batik was strongly influenced by elements of Hindu culture,

Islam culture, and Chinese influences such as kilin (lion and dog) motifs and phoenixes. Furthermore, the growth of Islam around the north coast of Java also has great contribution to the development of Keraton Batik motifs. Nevertheless, the literatures and information related to this history and development of Cirebon Batik are still limited and not completed yet. A previous study conducted by Biranul Anas explored about batik from various areas in Indonesia. The study investigated batik in terms of some aspects including history, terminology, aesthetics values, production process, development of product diversification, fashion, and so on [5].

Considering those conditions, a comprehensive study specifically investigating Keraton Cirebon Batik is crucial to conduct. It is aimed to carefully explore the Keraton Cirebon Batik motif development and complete the literature regarding the Batik especially the ones concerning on Keraton Batik that now is less popular compared to modern Cirebon Batik. So far, there are a lot of Chinese batik artisans in Cirebon who produced batik in Trusmi Plered Cirebon- centre of Cirebon Batik production.

### III. RESEARCH METHOD

This research was conducted systematically using ethnographic approach. The purpose of this study is to investigate how to: revitalize Keraton Cirebon Batik which has become a rare item in commodity, raise the values carried out in ornamental of Telaga Teratai Batik Garden in Keraton Cirebon, and modify Cirebon Batik into a new modern batik so that it can be better known by international batik community. To collect the data, there are some instruments used including observation, interview, and document analysis. Direct observation was carried out through formal and informal approach [6]. Meanwhile, interviews were conducted with a formal structure by firstly selecting people who are eligible and expert in their fields so that deep and accountable information can be obtained [6]. In addition, document analysis and archive collection were conducted to collect data related to changes in batik design and development of batik sales to local and global regions [6]. In this case, batik designs used were owned by royal families such as: Kasepuhan Palace, Kanoman Palace, and Kacirebonan Palace family.

### IV. DISCUSSIONS

Panembahan Ratu II, who lived in Dalem Agung Pakungwati Cirebon, is Prince Arifin with the title Panembahan Ratu [1]. The coronation was carried out by Ki Fadhilah who was her own grandfather based on the will of Susuhunan Jati entrusted to Fatahillah. Since Panembahan Ratu ascended the throne, the conditions and situation of Cirebon had made a great progress. She continued the work of Susuhunan Jati who previously had worked hard and took a long time to build and develop Cirebon [7]. Unfortunately, authentic written evidence mentioning when batik was started to produce in Cirebon has never been found in ancient manuscripts or history books. However, there are some scripts that can be used as references about the entry of batik culture into Indonesia, including in the northern coast of Cirebon. First, the history can be found in the Van der Hoop's writings which mention archaeological findings in the form of a statue

in the Ngrimbi Temple near Jombang depicting a picture of Raden Wijaya, the first king of Majapahit, who wore a variety of Kawung ornamental fabrics.

It is supported by Dennys Lombard who said that the oldest designation about batik is found in the Sundanese manuscripts which was discovered in southern Cirebon around 1440 Saka / 1518 AD [1]. The word batik is not yet used but it is known as putting malam (a wax for creating batik) onto cloth. In addition, technical names of the nine motifs are mentioned in the literatures in which some of them later were reappeared and known in many batik literatures until now. Batik was first mentioned in European manuscript at Dagregister in Batavia on April 8, 1641. Dutch ambassador, in a compilation in 1622, was given by Sultan Agung some of his batik clothes which was then "painted in blue and white in accordance with the way of his country" [8].

Based on interviews with PRA. AN, it was explained that batik making craft has been exist since the era of prince Cakrabuwana but the exact year cannot be known because there were no manuscripts directly mentioning it. Meanwhile, the results of the interview with BI, as the cultural holder of Keraton Kacirebonan, stated that there were some historical evidences about the development of batik works in Cirebon that began to use merely within the palace community and became a community tradition outside the palace. First, the batik tradition carried out by Trusmi community cannot be separated from the figure of Prince Cakrabuwana (Pangeran Walangsungsang) as the founder of the Pakungwati Palace who spreaded Islamic da'wah with Susuhunan Jati. After that, he established the Curug Landung Islamic Boarding School. Prince Walangsungsang has a son named Pangeran Carbon married to Nyi Cuplek, a daughter of Ki Gede Trusmi. From this marriage, it was born Prince Trusmi as Bung Cikal who was given a throne as Pangeran Manggana Jati when he has grown up as an adult. From this brief description, it can be proven that Trusmi is a part of Keraton Cirebon community. It is certain that the Keraton Cirebon culture also belongs to the Trusmi either in terms of clothing especially batik. In Trusmi, Batik culture continually develops. In contrast, the culture has been abandoned by people in the palace community. Motifs of Cirebon Keraton Batik are inspired by the environment in the palace and its artefacts which were then combined by objects adopted from outside the palace. Based on the analysis, the inspirations of making batik motifs are obtained through some objects namely: (1) Kencana trains such as the Singa Barong Train, Jempana Train and Liman Paksinaga Train; (2) carved ornaments on doors, ornaments, wood carvings and stone carvings; (3) Buildings (landscaping).

Taman Dalem Agung Pakungwati, Sunyaragi Cave Water Park, Astana Gunung Jati, related objects in it; Ceramics brought by migrants from China [4]; also Puppet Golek Cepak [5] and Wayang Kulit Cirebon [9]. Not surprisingly that Keraton batik has a finer visual design, perfectionism, more "crunching" form, deep symbolism-laden Javanese cultural systems which ultimately brings impact on the ways of using Keraton batik and reveal some grips that must be addressed (symbolic) [10]. Besides that, creating Keraton Batik is mostly associated with an effort to give spiritual education in the form

of refinement exercises and a sense of nobility through visual engineering to paint beautiful decorations. Therefore, batik motifs are usually produced for a limited scope specifically for the nobility [11].

A. Keraton Cirebon Batik

From the history, Keraton Cirebon has been developed earlier than Keraton Mataram so that batik crafts in Cirebon have been developed before the establishment of Mataram Kingdom in Yogya and Solo. This is reinforced by a discovery of the oldest Sundanese manuscript about batik embryos in the South Cirebon area written in 1440 Saka / 1518 AD. Meanwhile, Keraton Kasepuhan Batik, according to interviews with AN, was initially produced from the cultural habits of making batik around Cirebon palace community. The custom of making batik was done by Pangeran Cakrabuwana and then taught to the other family's member in the palace and some people surrounding the palace. After that, the people outside the palace also learned to make Batik from the palace people. Furthermore, there are still some historical evidences in the form of flags and banners still stored in the palace although now the condition has damaged. This is in line with what was conveyed by Bambang Irianto when he launched the book entitled "The Flag of Cirebon" at Jakarta Textile Museum mentioning that Keraton Cirebon or Caruban Nagari banners with calligraphy decoration were made using written batik techniques. In the matter of making Cirebon batik, Sultan Sepuh said that the work on the decoration was done with careful thought by the makers in which the batik motifs were taken from the palace environment and had symbolic meanings. This statement is supported by Bambang Irianto who said that Cirebon traditional batik art is a process of creativity, taste and intention, as well as long thinking which relates with personality of Tanazul Taraqi. In line with this, Abdul Hadi explained that work of art related to a particular form of spirituality and religion must be explained by the information to what extent the creators' understanding and appreciation toward the spirituality and religion value in the Batik or what religious ideas and experiences are presented in his work. The example of Keraton Cirebon Batik can be seen below.



Fig. 1. Keraton kasepuhan batik MOTIF; Singa Barong. Hj. Nuryanti Widya's collection.

Keraton Kasepuhan Batik has a distinguish element from the other Keraton Cirebon Batik characterized by Barong lion decoration as one of its typical characteristics. In terms of batik

motifs, other palaces may have similarities with the batik motif found in Keraton Kasepuhan since those came from the same source and culture as taught by Prince Cakrabuwana- the founder of the Cirebon Sultanate. Cirebon Batik Patterns mostly use yellow-ivory as the basic colours or sometimes apply broken white. The colour is produced through propelorodan process. As a result of this melorod process, sometimes the basic colour of the fabric becomes unclear white. Another characteristic of this batik is that usually it has a background or base with a lot of space or empty areas so that it appears relieved (broad) and the form of a picture (outline) is thin connected with an older colour than the basic colour of the fabric. This strength makes Batik Keraton Cirebon different with batik produced by other regions.

Based on the results of interviews, Kanoman Batik almost has the same history as Keraton Kasepuhan Batik, in which the batik was produced for the needs of the palace community. After the need for batik cloth had increased while the princess of the palace could not fulfil the need for these fabrics so that they asked people outside the palace to make it. Then, at that time the Dutch colonial government collected taxes from the production of these batiks so the court stopped the batik production and finally all batik production activities were carried out by the people outside the Kanoman Palace. It can't be stated exactly when the batik fabrics making was started because there was no written evidence or photographic data that confirmed the time of the batik production.



Fig. 2. Keraton kanoman batik motif "Paksinaga Liman" Hj. Nuryanti Widya's collection.

The history of the origin of Keraton Kacirebonan Batik was certainly not recorded but based on historical records, Keraton Kacirebonan was established in 1807 after the wishes of Prince Raja Kanoman supported by the Dutch colonial government with the issuance of the Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies who appointed Prince Raja Kanoman to become Carbon Sultan Kacirebonan. However, there are some restrictions that the son and his successors are not entitled to the title of *sultan (king)* but only with the title of prince. At that time, it could be indicated that batik used by the Kacirebonan nobles had not been made by palace people but it was obtained from batik artisans who were also asked to made batik for the nobles of Kasepuhan Palace and Kanoman Palace. Furthermore, the Keraton Kacirebonan family made batik with a variety of decorations to be used by the family members of Keraton Kacirebonan. There are several batik collections that are owned by the Keraton Kacirebonan family as can be seen below.



Fig. 3. Keraton Kacirebonan motif “Bintulu Banaspati” Hj. Nuryanti Widya’s collection.

There is an interesting point about Kacirebonan Batik collection including batik with Bintulu motif. There is a story from Keraton Kacirebonan about a knight or young man who wanted to propose to a beautiful woman. After the construction of the palace, it turned out that Bintulu was exhausted and lost his power. In the gate, the construction has not been completed. The youth then completed making the outer gate, the middle gate, the inner gate, and the inside door which was made to slant and not made in a straight line. Thus, the positions of the gates in Keraton Cirebon were not in a straight line (oblique). The lesson taken from this fragment is someone who has a duty should make it efficient, not wasteful, and effective so that the goals and objectives can be well achieved [12]. Keraton Cirebon Batik as a Legacy of Traditional Art, in the history of Indonesian batik, has been recorded as one of the long-standing traditional traditions and has special characteristics although it is not as popular as batik found in the regions of Central Java and Yogyakarta. At least by looking at the development of Cirebon batik in the past 20 years, it supports Cirebon batik to be more well-known and renewed again after many hundred years ago it had become a noble cultural tradition built in line with the reign of Keraton Cirebon. Traditional Cirebon batik art is a process of creativity, taste and intention as well as long thoughts.

#### B. Revitalization Product of Keraton Batik Motifs



Fig. 4. Batik of Telaga Teratai Ratu Raja Fatimah with black background as the result of revitalization of Komar artisan.

Above picture is one the revitalization results. The experiment process did not stop until producing the Keraton batik cloth entitled “Telaga Teratai Ratu Raja Fatimah”. It was continued by producing Keraton Cirebon batik representing the Kasepuhan palace, Kanoman palace, and Kacirebonan palace which were then compiled and adjusted so that new batik forms were formed as called “Taman Telaga Teratai”. The presence of Keraton batik “Taman Telaga Teratai” decoration was

inspired from Keraton batik “Taman teratai” as the ornamental variety that has been selected in this study. Furthermore, the idea of the lotus object was continued with various experiments including the creation of Batik “Telaga Teratai Ratu Raja Fatimah” batik cloth and Telaga teratai made in printing fabric. When the batik cloth of the palace with the title “Telaga Teratai Ratu Raja Fatimah” is received well and get a good appreciation from the palace and the stakeholders of the palace culture, the development of batik with Telaga Teratai decoration continued at a deeper stage. After this, the study of the lotus and other elements including the findings that had been carried out at the analysis stage were collected then the experiment continued resulting the ornamental variety of “Taman Telaga teratai”. Obviously, to produce the batik of “Taman Telaga Teratai”, it is supported by the accompanying evidence including the statements of Sultan of Keraton Cirebon and proven by the signing of the design proposal for a long Telaga Teratai fabric for the Kasepuhan Palace, Kanoman Palace, Kacirebonan Palace. The production process of Taman Telaga Teratai ornamental batik fabric took some stages like the production of Keraton batik palace in general. Besides, it adjusted and improved the quality of production and enhanced the aesthetic values attached in the batik work in accordance with the spirit of batik revitalization. By doing so, Telaga Teratai ornamental fabric has a new structure different from the structure of the Lotus Park, the Lotus Park of the Raja Fatimah, and the printing version of “Taman Telaga Teratai”. The ornamental work of “Taman Telaga Teratai” is expected to give new values for the Cirebon batik palace especially after having an improvement in terms of its production quality and aesthetic values.

The process of forming renewed product was started from the process of forming decoration and considering some main motifs that may represent Keraton Cirebon, the selection of raw materials of Kencana brand Primmissima cotton cloth with the best quality, as well as the initial processing of the fabric before it is curved, the selection of good wax, the use of batik canting with various sizes from the smallest to the largest canting eye in order to create isen-isen work and closing. At the last, it is also important to consider the use of naphthol synthetic dyes with good quality with the right dose. All these processes are monitored and done carefully.

#### V. CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis, revitalization in this study is an implementation of cross-sectorial, multidimensional and disciplined activities beginning with the stages of searching, excavating, and reconstructing, innovating, reproducing, making new roles, new meanings, learning, preservation, and documentation. Revitalization of Keraton Cirebon Batik was done through a set of process started by initial data collection through studying historical sources especially artefacts found in Keraton Cirebon and its surroundings. The initial data were then analysed based on the principles of aesthetic morphological studies, making comparisons, classifications, and description of each artefact finding. After that, excavation is carried out to the maximum of the initial findings to obtain more complete information and data used as material at the next stage of the revitalization process. Data obtained from the

process of excavation was used to reconstruct new thing through restoring something based on the original element. The further stage was focused on improving aesthetic values of the original product.

Meanwhile, the next stage was concentrated to form innovation in order to produce new product from the results of creating and combining some elements into one renewed product. This innovation has been proven by creating products made from fabric and non-fabric including themes from lotus decoration. In line with the revitalization stage, the reproduction of Keraton Cirebon Batik cloths has produced 70 kinds of ornamental fabrics by exploring the aesthetic elements from the previous existing forms. The results of the old batik reproduction are also documented in the form of sketches written on tracing paper and a photocopy of batik photographs. In addition, Keraton Cirebon Batik now has various decorations and functions which are used not only as fabrics in the form of batik cloth usually worn by the Sultan and the royal family but also be used as other applied products, such as for aesthetic element material in the interior, household products, wood chips and carved windows.

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