

The Existence of Artists and Preservation of Sukapura Batik Art, Tasikmalaya City

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ABSTRACT

In fostering the existence of culture and art in an area, conservation and development efforts are needed, one of which is the batik culture which has not developed much in the City of Tasikmalaya. Sukapura batik is one of the written batik from the city of Tasikmalaya that has existed since the 19th century. Sukapura batik has different characteristics from other Tasikmalaya batik, namely in terms of coloring, it is dominated by dark colors such as red, black, white, brown, and black. White. The purpose of this study is to examine and dig deeper into the existence of Sukapura batik in Tasikmalaya City about some of the efforts of batik craftsmen in preserving Sukapura batik. The method used in this study uses a qualitative approach. Through documentary studies on previous literature sources that discuss Sukapura batik in Tasikmalaya City. Data triangulation method through observation, interview, and document study. The results showed that the crisis in 1998 had an impact on the decline in the number of Sukapura batik craftsmen, the price of expensive raw materials for making batik cloth also affected the selling price of batik so that batik artisans in Sukapura turned to printed batik.

Keywords: *National identity, Cultural heritage, Sukapura batik.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Batik cultural heritage of humanity (intangible cultural heritage of humanity) which is the identity of the Indonesian nation and has been legally recognized by UNESCO since October 2, 2009 [1]. The Dictionary of Scientific and Technical Term [2] explains that batik contains two connotations, namely the technique of patterning motifs on the fabric called 'resist' (verb) and the fabric itself which has been patterned and colored (noun). Whereas in the general public, the term batik is more defined as a noun that refers to an object produced by making batik (verb).

Not only the identity of the Indonesian people, but the diversity of batik has become the cultural identity of the Indonesian people. As we know that Indonesian batik has developed in various corners of the archipelago. Some batik-producing areas in West Java are Cirebon, Indramayu, Garut, Ciamis, and Tasikmalaya. This is closely related to the various batik motifs of each region in Indonesia so that from batik motifs we can find out from which area the batik originates [3]. This phenomenon has become a reality in the Indonesian philosophy of 'Bhinneka Tunggal Ika',

that batik has a role as a regional identity as well as a national identity.

Batik Tasikmalaya generally "...has a pattern of various variations of machetes with reddish and black sogan colors on a reddish light yellow background...in addition to the Sundanese people liking bright colors – creations according to local tastes were born" [4]. Therefore, it is not surprising that the people of Tasikmalaya currently prioritize bright colors for their batik works, because Tasikmalaya is basically a Sundanese Tatar "... who is creative and dynamic" [4]. Of the many types of typical Tasikmalaya batik produced by several sub-districts in Tasikmalaya, there is one type of batik from Sukaraja sub-district, namely Sukapura batik. Sukapura Batik is one of the national identities of the Indonesian people which also describes the identity of the East Priangan people, especially Tasikmalaya. Sukapura batik has a characteristic that the motif and manufacture are always closely related to nature, especially plants. In addition to the motifs that take many natural concepts, the manufacturing process also uses many plants in terms of coloring [5]. This has an impact on the quality of Sukapura batik which is more durable and does not fade quickly.

From time to time, batik marketing in Indonesia has an important role in the development of batik, especially in Sukapura batik. As reported by the print media Kompas Cirebon in early 2013 (Monday, 22 March 2013, p. 22) that "...The Tasikmalaya Regency Government is targeting an increase in Sukapura batik production to 100 percent in 2014. This is done by increasing promotion through exhibitions and training for batik craftsman. Based on this news, the need for efforts to increase the promotion of Sukapura batik will have a positive impact on the development of Sukapura batik in the future. And the key to the development of Sukapura batik depends on how the local community cares for Sukapura batik.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with ethnographic methods in accordance with the paradigm of this study, namely to observe certain cultural groups for a long period of time [6]. The subject of this research is a group of batik makers in the Sukaraja area of Tasikmalaya City who are still active and classified as the most senior so that they are able to provide adequate references. The number of research subjects as many as three people who are still focused on batik because some of the batik has started to plunge into printed batik. In addition, the data collection techniques used in this research are interview and questionnaire techniques.

To achieve success in qualitative research, here the author will collect factual data through questionnaires and interviews. The author can collect various data ranging from relevant documents in the form of interviews, photo documentation, and recordings. The written data obtained by the author is not only from informants, but there is some data from the local government, namely Sukapura Village, and from the Tasikmalaya Tourism and Culture Office (DISPARBUD). Then at the stage of data analysis techniques used include biographical studies of Sukapura batik to explore how they acquired batik skills; in-depth interviews and observation of objects (Sukapura batik).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Etymologically, the word batik comes from the Javanese language, namely 'ambatik' which means having small dots [7]. Then explained that the root of the word batik is 'tik' which comes from the word 'dot'. In his book [8] explains that the word 'ambatik' is composed of the word 'amba' which means wide, wide, cloth; and 'matik' which means to make a point (verb). In Javanese, batik is written 'bathic' which means a series of dots that form a certain motif. The motif

formed from a batik is able to indicate which area the batik came from.

In Indonesia, batik has a long history and is strongly influenced by the background of the Indonesian nation as an archipelagic country that had many kingdoms before becoming a unitary state. As a prosperous, large, and victorious kingdom for centuries, Majapahit has been known to have a batik culture that is deeply rooted in the archipelago and began to be developed by the community during the kingdoms of Mataram, Solo and Yogyakarta batik [8].

Batik spread through cultural acculturation. Initially, only the royal families and their followers used batik, but because of the many royal followers, batik was imitated by the community and batik became the daily tradition of ancient women. The researcher found that until now the work of batik is still predominantly done by women while drawing/patterning motifs is done by men. A similar phenomenon occurs in almost all of the archipelago [9].

The rapid development of people's batik skills at that time made batik an elite business commodity. Apart from being synonymous with royal employees, batik also requires high art and a long process so that the price of batik is quite valuable to be used as a source of income. The development of Islamic kingdoms helped accelerate the batik culture in society so that batik spread to various regions.

The history of Sukapura batik in Tasikmalaya began around the XVII century. At that time batik entrepreneurs from Central Java moved to West Java because of the war, so it is not surprising that Sukapura batik is still influenced by Pekalongan, Tegal, Banyumas and Kudus batik. Although there is a fusion with Javanese batik, Sukapura batik has its own characteristics. These refugees from Central Java, according to the story, started to develop batik cloth, from making black cloth soaked in rotting Tarum (*Indigofera*) leaves so that until now in the Tasikmalaya area there is an area called "Tarum". Until now there are not many references to the history of Sukapura batik. However, there are quite a few research reports that discuss Sukapura batik in the history of Indonesian batik, West Java batik and Tasikmalaya batik [10-12]. Among the people of Tasikmalaya itself, the history of Sukapura batik is not well known. However, they believe that the Sukapura batik tradition is an ancestral heritage that has existed since the time of the Tarumanegara kingdom.

From the form of black cloth, it developed into batik cloth, at first with the style and pattern of their local origin, gradually developing according to the tastes of the local community. The local people's tastes are, among others, liking bright colors. So it is not surprising that in the development to date, the color of batik from

the Tasikmalaya area is bright and has more than two colors. The advantage of using this tarum tree fiber is that the color is more natural and the batik cloth is more durable. The abundance of natural resources such as tarum trees has earned Tasikmalaya an additional nickname other than the 'City of Santri', namely 'The Pearl of East Priangan'.

The Tarum tree signifies the identity of the kingdom that was victorious in Tasikmalaya at that time, namely the Tarumanegara Kingdom. Sukapura batik is mostly produced in the villages of Sukaraja, Wurug and Manonjaya because these villages became the center of government of the Tarumanegara kingdom at that time. Sukapura Batik has developed very rapidly, even the official website of the West Java Provincial Government notes that Tasikmalaya was once the center of the West Java province batik industry.

The batik culture in the Sukapura community existed before the arrival of the refugees, which had an impact on the development of Sukapura batik. The community began to be influenced by using Soga (a tree capable of producing batik colors) after the arrival of refugees from Central Java. This makes the development of Sukapura batik faster because it is easier and faster.

Sukapura is one of the batik craftsman villages in Tasikmalaya. The hallmark of the batik industry in Sukapura is that it still maintains the original written batik. This does not mean that there is no printed batik, but at least the dominance of written batik is still high in this craft center village. The community admits that the tradition of written batik has shifted to printed batik, besides being easier for reasons of economic value, it is also a major factor because the price of printed batik can be sold at a cheaper price so that it sells more quickly. Researchers only found 5 five people who still survive with their batik. It turns out that a similar condition has occurred since 2005 as reported by one of the national television stations [4]. However, the number of printed batik entrepreneurs is still relatively large and easy to find in the Tasikmalaya area.

Researchers found a number of reasons for the decline in the number of Sukapura batik craftsmen. This depreciation has occurred since the monetary crisis that hit Indonesia since 1998. After the monetary crisis the price of batik raw materials (fabric) soared from IDR 50,000 to IDR 170,000,- per cloth, while people's purchasing power fell because other prices rose. So the price of Sukapura batik is quite expensive. One alternative is to start producing printed batik because the process of making printed batik is relatively faster so that it can lower the selling price. A number of batik craftsmen in Sukapura admit that the people of Sukapura have developed into other industrial businesses such as handicrafts of kelom (wooden sandals) and embroidery so that a number of employees have changed professions because from an economic

point of view they can earn higher incomes. The rest still survive to be batik and farming. Even in the planting and harvesting seasons for rice, the community prioritizes their agriculture except for a number of employees who do not own agricultural land.

The hallmark of the Sukapura batik motif is the nuances of nature. The motifs depict many natural objects such as plants and animals. In contrast to batik from Solo, Yogya and Pekalongan, which are heavily influenced by royal elements, the objects depict philosophical authority [3-5]. Although based on its history, the development of Sukapura batik is influenced by the life of the Tasik people, namely living in nature, living with nature and living with nature [13]. The motifs taken from nature depict simplicity, in contrast to motifs influenced by royal elements, which depict more authority.

4. CONCLUSION

The history of Sukapura batik starts from the era of the Tarumanegara kingdom. The term Tarumanegara is related to the term tarum tree, which is a tree that is widely available in East Priangan and can be used for fabric coloring. The people of Sukapura use the leaves of the tarum tree to dye batik cloth. The Tarum tree signifies the identity of the kingdom that was victorious in Tasikmalaya at that time, namely the Tarumanegara Kingdom. Sukapura batik is mostly produced in the villages of Sukapura (Sukaraja), Wurug and Manonjaya because these villages became the center of government of the Tarumanegara kingdom at that time. Sukapura Batik has developed very rapidly, even the official website of the West Java Provincial Government notes that Tasikmalaya was once the center of the West Java province batik industry.

Sukapura Batik is one of the identities of the Indonesian people which symbolizes the culture of the East Priangan people of West Java. Sukapura Batik is not just clothes decorated with beautiful motifs filled with patterns and regularities, but Sukapura Batik is used by the Sundanese people as formal clothing and has sacred values. The hallmark of Sukapura batik is that it contains elements provided in nature. These motifs carry the story of the past with a moral message in it. The moral message will certainly have a good impact if it is realized and preserved for the next generation, because good morals will bring this nation to progress. The signs on this motif are not just patterns and regularities but have meanings and moral messages that are very in line with the philosophy of life of the Sundanese people.

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