

The Actualization of Islamic Concept in Batik in the Malay Culture Area

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Abstract – Batik was originally lived and developed in the Javanese palace and then spread in various regions and combined with the traditions of the people who received it so that there was known as enclave batik such as batik Lasem which has Chinese cultural nuances, batik Cirebon which has a distinctive Cirebon tradition, batik Madura with Madurese cultural peculiarities. Batik also lives and develops in Sumatra in the midst of Sumatran Malay culture. Batik is a complex expression of its society. Batik is closely related to the condition of the natural environment and the conditions of social society. Every batik motif reflects the natural and socio-cultural conditions of the community. Batik Malay, of course, also cannot be separated from its natural environment and social conditions. Malay culture cannot be separated from Islam. Islamic relations with Malays occur because Malay is one of the tribes of several tribes where between religious and ethnic identity is dual and overlapping. Religious identity is at once as a tribal identity. In this case, Malay identity is Islam. So that, there are almost no Malays who embrace religion other than Islam (Judith, 1974). This paper reveals the actualization of Islamic concepts in batik Malay. There are two locations that are the object of this study, namely Malay Jambi batik and Besurek Bengkulu batik, batik in these two regions is processed with the nuances of Malay culture, a culture that is densely related with Islamic nuances. This paper is based on research on the actualization of Islamic concepts in batik Malay using qualitative descriptive research methods. In this study a comparison was made between batik Jambi and batik Bengkulu besurek which still retain the batik tradition on the island of Sumatra. Both although in one cultural family, namely Malay, show an unequal expression in its batik tradition.

Key words – Malay, batik, Islam

I. INTRODUCTION

Batik is a fabric that is given a variety of ornamentation with dye dip technique. Almost all regions in Indonesia have batik crafts with their respective characteristics. Java is the point of spreading batik in the archipelago. Batik in Java firstly developed in the kingdom. The batik makers are the princesses in the kingdom. Some famous batik cloth motifs are made by the king, for example *sidamukti* batik motif, *wahyutumurun* and so on. Batik in Java has many functions which one of its functions is as a marker of social status. *Parang* batik motif is a special motif used by the king while *sembagimotif* is used by the king's servant. Besides relating to social status, batik is also related to life cycle ceremonies.

Batik, which was originally developed in Java, then spread to the archipelago. Each region in Indonesia has batik production with their respective characteristics. One of the archipelago areas that has batik with different characteristics with other regional batik is Jambi known as batik Jambi and Bengkulu, known as batik besurek. Batik Jambi has been known in the Jambi Malay era. At first batik Jambi functioned as clothing worn during royal and religious ceremonies (Suhikmah, 2008). The strong influence of Islam on Malay influenced the batik Jambi motif. Batik Jambi was firstly developed by the family of Malay kings in Jambi. Batik Jambi was carried out for generations by relatives and families of the Jambi Malay royal palace. During the Dutch and Japanese colonization, batik production was decreasing because the people and the court were fighting against the invaders. Meanwhile women at that time were prohibited from doing activities outside the home because it could endanger themselves (Philpsen in Suhikmah, 2000). In 1975, a batik expert named Haji Muhibat and his family arrived in Jambi. His arrival made batik Jambi grow again.

Meanwhile the batik Besurek Bengkulu had been exist since the 16th century when the spread of Islam began to develop rapidly in the city of Bengkulu. From several customary leaders in the city of Bengkulu it is obtained an information that at that time, *Basurek* cloth had been used in various official regional events and in the implementation of traditional ceremonies such as traditional ceremonies, arts, marriages, etc. (Linda Haryono). Historically, the art of batik Besurek in Bengkulu was introduced by batik merchants and artists from Demak. This could be traced from the history of the Demak Sultanate (the first and largest Islamic kingdom on the island of Java 1475-1548). During the heyday of the Demak Sultanate, many batik makers made batik with Arabic calligraphy. The patterned batik of Arabic calligraphy is commonly used to close the Al-Quran among the sultanates

and the Demak royal family. As time goes by this motif developed widely in most communities in Demak then it began to spread in several other kingdoms that became trading partners of the Demak Sultanate, including Cirebon, Jambi and Bengkulu (Firmansyah, 2017- Kompas.com).

II. THEORETICAL REVIEW

Batik has never stopped developing, it always changes with the development of the times and the culture of the people who made it (NianJumena, 1990). Jambi and Bengkulu culture as part of Malay culture cannot be separated from Islam. Islam is estimated to arrive in Jambi in the 7th century and developed into a royal religion after the 13th century. Persians (Iran), Turks and other Arabs were present on the east coast of Jambi (Bandar MuaraSabak) around century 1 H (7 M). The process of Islamization in Jambi resulted in a Jambi culture that was filled with Islam. Islam and Jambi culture are difficult to separate. Judith (1974) stated that the relationship between Islam and Malay, including Jambi and Bengkulu, occurs because Malay is one of the tribes of several tribes where the religious and ethnic identity is double or overlapping. Religious identity is at once as a tribal identity. In this case, Malay identity is Islam. So that almost no Malay people embrace other religions besides Islam. Idris Zakaria (2012) mentioned the five aspects of Islamic thought which become the principle of the formation of Malay culture, namely 1) ideology of belief, 2) rational in Islam, 3) tolerance in Islam, 4) brotherhood (*ukhuwah*), 5) Islamic universal views, and 5) art in Islam.

The difficulty of separating Malay from Islam is seen from the verses that reflect the relationship between Malay culture and Islam, namely "*adat bersendi sarak, sarak bersendi kitabullah*". This slogan actually comes from Minangkabau (BahrulUlum, 2019). In this verse, it shows that Malay culture originates from the Qur'an and Hadith, as a guideline for Muslims to live their lives. The aspects that build a culture have a relationship between one another in building a unity. One aspect of Malay culture is batik. As one aspect of culture, batik Malay especially batik Jambi and Bengkulu also reflects Islamic values that are source of Malay culture.

III. METHOD

This research is a qualitative as proposed by Nunan (1992), Lincoln and Guba (1985), Patton (1990), Charmaz (2000) and Sutopo (2002). To maintain data validity, this research used triangulation of data source and triangulation of method (Miles danHuberman, 1992; Denzin, 1997; Denzin& Lincoln, 1994; Sutopo, 2002).

This research used a single case study that is focused on one characteristic in research activities. The sampling technique in this research is purposive sampling. The data sources in this study were informants, activities, and document. Data collection techniques were carried out by interview, observation and content analysis. Data analysis techniques in the research were using interactive analysis, namely the interaction of data reduction, data display and conclusion/verification (Miles &Huberman, 1992).

A. Batik Jambi

Batik owned by regions in Indonesia has different motives, functions and philosophical meanings. Each batik in the regions has its own characteristics because batik is influenced by their respective socio-cultural conditions and its natural environment. The condition of Jambi's natural environment reflected in batik appears with the motives of flora and fauna. Batik Jambi motifs as flora reflections including: *bungomelati* (jasmine flower), *bungo pauh* (*pauh flower*), *duren pecah* (broken durian), *bungo sawit* (palm flower), *bungo nago*, *daun karet* (rubber leaf), *pohon rotan* (rattan tree), mangos teen, *daun melati* (jasmine leaf), *daun kangkung* (kale leaf), *bungo jatuh* (fallen flower), *kembang duren* (durian flower), grapes, mushrooms, *bungo kopi* (coffee flower), pineapple, pineapple shoots, and so on.

Batik Jambi has motifs of animals (fauna) or related to animals, among others: *kuau berhias* (ornamental kuau), *merak ngeram* (brooding peacock), *sisik ikan* (fish scales), snails, *angso duo* (two geese), *kerang lepas*(loose shells), and so on. However animal pictures in Jambi batik motifs are distilled so that the shape of the animal does not look as clear as a living animal. This is also related to the prohibition in Islam not to draw living things. With this distillation, the figure of an animal in a batik motif becomes blurred.

There are batik Jambi with natural environment motif, among others: mountains, sun, Batanghari (a name of river in Jambi) and so forth. Batik motifs that are associated with livelihoods including: *kapal sanggat* (sangat boats), *perahu layar* (sailboats), *perahu* (boats) and so on. Batik Jambi motifs will continue to develop in accordance with the socio-cultural development and new batik motifs will emerge.

The motif of batik Jambi is a motif that is not strung together, each is independent (*ceplok-ceplok*). The simplicity of the Jambi batik motif is a reflection of the character of the Jambi society. Namely, the community is simple, egalitarian and open to outside culture, but rather slowly responds to change. This character is illustrated by displaying elements that are uncomplicated and flexible on each motif. If batik Jambi emerges which is complicated and complex in detail, it is a developed motif.

Giving motifs on batik Jambi is given to each form of motif, such as *bungo pauh* motif in the form of pauh flowers, *angsa duo* motifs in the form of paintings of two geese, *kapal senggat* motifs in the form of stuck ships and so on. A piece of batik cloth contains a number of basic motifs, while the empty space between the main motifs is filled with *tabo ritik* motif, *tabor bengkok* and other filling motifs. The naming of batik motifs corresponds to the main motive. This is different from the motif batik of Java, for example, the provision of batik motifs based on a series of motifs on cloth.

B. Batik Bengkulu

Batik Bengkulu is known as batik besurek. The word "*besurek*" comes from the word "*surek*". Besurek in the Bengkulu regional language has the same meaning as the words "composing a letter" in Indonesian. Batik Besurek is a writing-letter-like batik. The word letter relates to the names of the letters in the Al-Qur'an, namely the holy book of Islam which speaks Arabic and is written in Arabic letters.

Batik came in Bengkulu in the sixteenth century together with Islam. This is supposed that besurek has been used in Bengkulu tradition. Historically, the art of batik Besurek in Bengkulu was introduced by batik merchants and artists from Demak. This could be traced from the history of the Demak Sultanate (the first and largest Islamic kingdom on the island of Java 1475-1548). During the heyday of the Demak Sultanate, many batik makers made batik with Arabic calligraphy. The patterned batik of Arabic calligraphy is commonly used to close the Al-Quran among the sultanates and the Demak royal family. As time goes by this motif developed widely in most communities in Demak then began to spread in several other kingdoms which became trading partners of the Demak Sultanate, including Cirebon, Jambi and Bengkulu (Firmansyah, 2017). Similar statement was conveyed by Linda Haryono (2012): Historically, Basurek's fabric had been exist since the 16th century when the spread of Islam began to develop rapidly in the city of Bengkulu. From several customary leaders in the city of Bengkulu it is obtained information that at that time, Basurek's cloth had been used in various official regional events and in the implementation of traditional ceremonies such as traditional ceremony, arts, marriages, and others.

Arabic letters become the characteristic of batik besurek motif. Arabic letters painted in batik motifs are not letters that form together to string meaningful words and certainly those are not a series of words arranged grammatically. Here are the examples of Arabic letters in batik besurek.



However there are also batik besurek motifs with abstract calligraphy which can be read and contain a highly deep meaning (Linda Haryono, without th). Furthermore if it is seen at first glance this abstract calligraphy is indeed difficult to read. That is due to the arrangement of letters is separated from each other and its location is separated. The following ornaments when observed can be read as "*Muhammadarrosulullah*".



The original motif of the batik Besurek fabric that was known since hundreds of years ago is a bald arabic letter pattern. Some fabrics, especially for traditional ceremonies, this cloth is indeed inscribed with Arabic letters that can be read, for this type of cloth it should not be used carelessly.

In its development, batik besurek motifs, Arabic letters or Arabic letters resembled are combined with other motifs in the various flora and fauna found in the Bengkulu environment. Various flora found in batik besurek including: *pohon hayat* (hayat tree), *bunga rafflesia* (rafflesia flowers), jasmine flowers, *relung paku*, *bunga cengkeh* (clove flowers), *bunga cempaka* (cempaka flowers) and so on. The naming of the batik Bengkulu motif in accordance with the painting contained in the motif. If in the motif

there is “*surek*” and rafflesia flowers, it is called *besurek motif* with rafflesia. Along with the development of the era, as batik Jambi, batik Bengkulu will also develop with increasingly rich motifs.

C. The Concept of Islam in Malay Batik

The Islamic concept appears in several aspects of Malay batik, especially Jambi and Bengkulu. The motifs that adorn batik are clearly showing Islamic values. Arabic calligraphy as a batik motif that appears earlier than other motives shows the existence of Islamic values in Malay batik. Calligraphy is something that can be legible and unreadable. Calligraphy on fabric motifs that can be read is found in batik Jambi and Bengkulu, which are used as traditional clothes. The use of calligraphy as decoration is a form of disclosure of Islamic values. For example, cloth with calligraphy motifs with the words *laailahailla'llah* in Arabic letters is used to cover the coffin that has several functions, including: 1) as a reminder to the living about the coming of death, 2) as a consolation for the family that just happened is the will of Allah, 3) as a form of da'wah to convey the thought of Islam and introduce the procedures of Islam in caring for corpse (Nanang, 2016) and so on. Fabrics with calligraphy motifs that are used in other traditional ceremonies also indicate the expression of Islamic values. Fabrics with calligraphy motifs used for circumcision clothing both in Jambi and Bengkulu, are as means of introducing and instilling Islamic values in children.

Batik with calligraphy motif, especially in Bengkulu, is not only for traditional clothes but also for everyday wear. The development of the use of calligraphy motifs is accompanied by the modification of calligraphy. Calligraphy motifs for customary purposes are calligraphy that can be read and their meaning can be understood, while calligraphy motifs for everyday clothes cannot be read because the letters are not arranged into words and grammatical sentences. Calligraphy that cannot be read on the *Besurek Bengkulu* cloth is also a form of respect for the Qur'an. In Islam, Al-Qur'an is a holy book that has rules in treating it. In the Qur'an there is a verse in which the translation is: Surely the Qur'an is a greatly noble reading, in a preserved book, not touching it except those who are purified, derived from rabb al-'alamin (QS. Al-Waqi 'ah: 77-80).

The Qur'an as a holy book must be treated well. Some priests, or scholars, believe that the verses of the Qur'an should not be taken to dirty places (toilets / rooms), should not be thrown away, should not be overtaken by other objects. The Qur'an must always be prioritized and above (Akbar, 2015). According to the priests, the calligraphy of the Qur'an verses is actually prohibited by the four main schools in Islam. Installing calligraphy that contains verses in the Qur'an or praise for Allah, with any model, can be a cause of insult to the name of Allah or the verse of the Qur'an. The priests or scholars from various schools forbade the setting of the Qur'an verses or the words of the remembrance or the name of Allah, so as not to be displayed on the wall (Nanang, 2016).

Based on the views of some scholars, the form of calligraphy *besurek* cloth which is not in the form of a verse taken from the Qur'an are act of caution. If a cloth transcribed the verse al-Qur'an used for sleep, the verse can be overlaid. If the calligraphy batik clothes are dirty it will be mixed with other dirty clothes. The use of calligraphy with the verses of the Qur'an causes difficulties in maintaining its purity. This is different if what is written in batik *Besurek* is calligraphy but cannot be read and has no meaning. Due the writing is not a verse taken from Qur'an, it does not matter if batik clothes are dirty, crushed, or mixed with other dirty clothes. Calligraphy on batik *besurek* shows caution in treating the Qur'an. Although calligraphy on *besurek* cloth cannot be read, it can be a mean of spreading Islam.

In addition to calligraphy motifs, animal motifs in Malay batik are also influenced by Islam. Animal motifs in batik motifs are not clearly drawn in accordance with the original. Animal pictures in Malay batik motifs are distilled so that the shape of the animal does not look as clear as a living animal. This is also related to the prohibition in Islam which is not to draw living things. Through this distillation, the figure of an animal in a batik motif becomes blurred.

The concept of Islam contained in Malay batik is not only from the motive aspect but also the meaning contained in batik motifs reflects Islamic values. Batik *Besurek motif* which forms a combination of calligraphy and other motifs: *pohon hayat* (hayat tree) with calligraphy. *Besurek motifs* combined with motifs of flora, fauna and the surrounding nature mean that everything in the universe is the creation of the One Almighty God and all the events that have taken place also the nature that has been outlined by the Creator. Meanwhile, the calligraphy motif that is an element in batik *besurek* is an Islamic element that reminds the people of Bengkulu who are Muslims that Islam is a monotheistic religion that rules Muslims to be devoted to Allah SWT (Linda Haryono, 2017).

Some motives that those philosophical meanings have been known by the Malay society are *durian pecah* (broken durian motifs), *tampuk manggis* (mangosteen motifs), *kapal sanggat* (sangat boats), *kuau berhias* (ornamental kuau motifs), cucumber seeds and so on. Broken durian motifs in the form of split durian paintings but the base of the stem is still linked. The each of two durian skin paintings have meaning. The first part of the durian skin symbolically means the foundation of faith and piety while the other half means knowledge and technology. Linking the durian hemisphere to this stem symbolically means that faith and piety also knowledge and technology cannot be separated. Overall the meaning of the broken durian motif is that all work must be based on faith and piety also supported by science and technology. The meaning of the broken durian motif shows that the people

of Jambi uphold the values of faith and piety. This kind of value, of course, cannot be separated from the religious society of Jambi. Broken durian motif also means that we should always remember, be vigilant and be able to keep something that is good so that it will not be damaged. This is as an analogy of durian fruit that is famously delicious, that something as delicious as it is if it is damaged will not be valuable anymore.

The *tampuk manggis* motif depicts the cross section of the mangosteen peel in the middle. This painting shows the outer skin, flesh of the skin and the contents of the fruit as a whole. Mangosteen skin color, skin flesh, and the contents are different. The skin color and flesh of the skin are deep red while the contents are white. The *tampuk manggis* motif symbolically implies that the goodness of manners and kindness cannot be seen from the outside skin alone, judging someone not only from the outside, for example from the clothes worn and appearance. The motive for the mangosteen's appearance. It also means that there is consistency between physically and mentally. This is illustrated by the amount of mangosteen fruit content which is the same as the number of petals on the mangosteen fruit. If the number of petals in the crossing is five, the contents also amount to five. What he stamped must be in harmony with what was hidden in his or her heart. Someone must say honestly, not hypocritically. The *tampuk manggis* motif is also associated with Islamic teachings, especially with the five pillars of Islam. The number of petals on the mangosteen used in batik motifs in principle amount to five according to the pillars of Islam although in practice sometimes more than five.

The *kapal senggal* (senggal ship) motif is in the form of a painting of a ship caught in something while sailing, which resulted in a disrupted journey and even stopped unable to continue the journey. This motif symbolically implies that one must be careful in carrying out a job so that it can solve properly and there are no obstacles. One must understand, be obey and be aware of the dangers that threaten his or her so that they do not get an accident. Thus the job works well. The *kapal senggal* (senggal ship) motif is also interpreted as a leader in carrying out his duties as a leader must be careful of temptations, tests, and challenges that come in turn. A leader is like driving a ship that is sailing in the ocean, he must be wary of tides, waves, storms, and typhoons that are likely to hit him. If he or she is not careful and alert, it will run aground in the middle of the road. The *kapal senggal* (senggal ship) motif is also meant that people in living this life must have goals or ideals. People do not have a purpose in their lives like a hooked ship so that it does not arrive at its destination.

Batik motifs with *kuao berhias* (ornamented kuao) depicts a kuao bird in a mirror and flapping its wings. Kuao birds are beautiful birds and Jambi is one of its habitats. This ornamented kuao motif symbolically implies that one must know himself and always introspect. Humans who know themselves, know the nature of themselves, understand their strengths and weaknesses, will be able to put themselves well. By knowing yourself someone will be able to cover up the shortcomings and improve also utilize the advantages they have. Meanwhile the *hias pucuk rebung* (ornamented bamboo shoots) motif in semiotic means that one must have the ability to adjust and can do something useful. Like a bamboo tree, while still young (bamboo shoots) it can be used for vegetables. If it is old it can be used as a building material or make useful equipment.

The cucumber seed ornamental motifs in batik Jambi symbolize the existence of regeneration which is expected to continue and improve existing life. Cucumber seeds also symbolize fertility and prosperity. In many batik fabrics this variety functions as a filler in the background or *isen-isen*. However in Jambi this ornamental variety is highlighted as the main ornamental variety. Meanwhile the variety of ornamental pauh flower reflects the hope of abundant fertility, health, wealth and fortune. Variety of decorative tawig or tawig motif is a motif taken from the architectural ornaments that exist in the Jambi stage house. This ornament reflects the characters that are simple, egalitarian, open to things outside their environment, but careful in responding to things from outside. The *merak ngeram* (brooding peacock) motif describes that the responsibility, sacrifice and affection of a mother towards her children is profound. Therefore a child must respect his parents and obey their orders.

The meaning of the Malay batik motif involves various aspects, from the aspect of understanding the nature of human, the simplicity of attitude, caution in acting, honesty, responsibility, not being fascinated with outward forms, life that is physically and spiritually prosperous and so on. The meaning contained in the batik motif is a form of mirrors of Islamic concepts in Malay society. Jambi society considers it is important for someone to understand the nature of themselves. This good self-understanding can make someone put themselves well, can maintain good relationships with God, can look after good relations with others, can do things according to their own abilities, can improve their abilities and so on. In doing something the Jambi society is not only based on knowledge and technological capabilities but must also be based on faith and piety. This shows that the Malay community is a religious society and Islam is an important basis for the creation of Malay culture.

IV. CONCLUSION

Malay batik as one aspect of Malay culture cannot be separated from Islam. Al-Qur'an and As-Sunah become sources of Malay culture. The concept of Islam in Malay batik is not only reflected in batik motifs but also the content of meaning contained in a batik motif. Both legible and unreadable calligraphy batik motifs show respect for the Qur'an in a different way. Islamic values also seem to color the philosophical meaning contained in batik motifs.

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