

THE SHIFT IN MEANING OF BATIK KAUMAN PATTERNS

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Abstract

Batik is one of Indonesia's cultural artifacts that has a long history. The patterns in Batik each have meaning and are based on a certain philosophy. It thrived in the island of Java, particularly in islamic kingdoms such as Yogyakarta, Solo and Pekalongan. The center of production of Batik is in Kampung Kauman, located within the Kraton. In the beginning, Batik was made by the wives of *abdi dalem* kraton as a side work, but then it grew and it contributed economically. Historically, Batik can only be used by members of the royal family. But because of the changes in the nature of power and politics, resulting in the shift of norms on various aspects of life, Batik usage has also changed. The issue on hand is how to conserve, appreciate and further develop this heritage, in spite of globalization and modernization in all aspects of life. It is the hope that Batik can remain to be part of the heritage that reflects the richness of Indonesia's culture.

1. Introduction

Batik is a textile unique to Indonesia and is a product of the nation's cultural heritage. The production technique behind batik is old and there is no conclusive evidence that pinpoint the very origin of it. The word Batik in Javanese means 'to write'. There are views that Batik in Java can be traced from Sumeria and brought in by Indian merchants around 6th or 7th century CE. Batik is a pictorial art form made in a fabric with specific 'resist' technique that uses candle-like material or 'malam', and 'canting' as the drawing instrument. Batik in Indonesia has passed a very long time as a masterpiece, going through various times from the pre-historic era to the era of globalization. And today is one of Indonesia's unifying identities, and on October 2, 2009 by UNESCO it was recognized and designated as a world heritage. Batik in Java was originally all hand made, until around the 1920s when 'printed' batik started to be developed. Starting from the Majapahit-era, Batik then spread to other parts of Java. Initially the production of Batik was also limited within Kraton, and the areas surrounding Kraton known as Kampung Kauman.

2. Kampung Batik Kauman

Kampung Kauman is known as a muslim settlement because the residents are *Abdi Dalem* of Kraton which responsible for, among other things, the upkeep of the Kraton mosque. From a historical perspective, the presence of Kampung Kauman can not be separated from the influence of the Kraton itself. Across Java, in almost every area where there are Kraton there are also settlements that are called Kauman, such as Kauman Yogyakarta, Kauman Surakarta, Kauman Pekalongan, Kauman Kudus and Kauman Semarang. Kampung Kauman that are particularly known as a center of Batik are Kauman Solo, Kauman Yogyakarta and Kauman Pekalongan.



Figure 1. The atmosphere of a Kauman settlements

Source : Cama, 2012

Batik Kauman started around the 1880s and grew into prominence around 1930s. In the beginning, the production of Batik was only side work of the wives of *Abdi Dalem*. But it then continued to grow and contribute economically to the welfare of the residents. As a result of the success, fancy houses known as '*gedhong*' houses owned by Batik producers started to show up. These houses are bigger and more luxurious, based on the Indisch style which function both as home and center of Batik production.

3. Batik Kauman

Batik Kauman generally uses classic patterns that are based on 'Pakem' or Kraton's standard; It is, therefore, often represents patterns that are used by the royal family, also known as 'larangan' patterns. It is called 'larangan' which means 'prohibited' because it was supposed to be used only by the royal family and not by commoners. Every pattern has a specific shape and its own underlying philosophy, with each area having their own specific twist on the basic shapes.

3.1. The Patterns of Batik Kauman Yogyakarta

Batik Kauman in the Yogyakarta Kraton has a unique characteristic, with white as a base and large geometrical patterns interspersed with the pattern of Parang and Nitik.



Figure 2. Parang and Ceplok patterns in Batik.

Source: Supriono, 2016

Parang pattern is one of the dominant patterns, with clear cut lines that are arranged parallel in a diagonal fashion. Initially this pattern is only used by the king and his family and is not allowed to be used by commoners. It is therefore a part of 'batik larangan'. Another pattern is 'motif ceplok' which consist of repeated geometrical design, such as rounded roses or small stars; this pattern is usually used for ceremonies or weddings.

3.2. The Patterns of Batik Kauman Solo

Batik Kauman in Solo is similar in motif and meaning with the one in Yogyakarta, with difference in a darker background colour and smaller or smoother motif with more varieties. Batik Kauman Solo can be divided into two categories

1. 'Larangan' motif; used for ritual ceremonies and important events in the kraton. The example of this motif are *parang rusak*, *sidomukti*, *wahyu tumurun*, *kawung*, *truntum*, *udan liris* and others.
2. Daily motif; used for daily activities. The examples of this motif are *lung-lungan*, *kantil* and others.

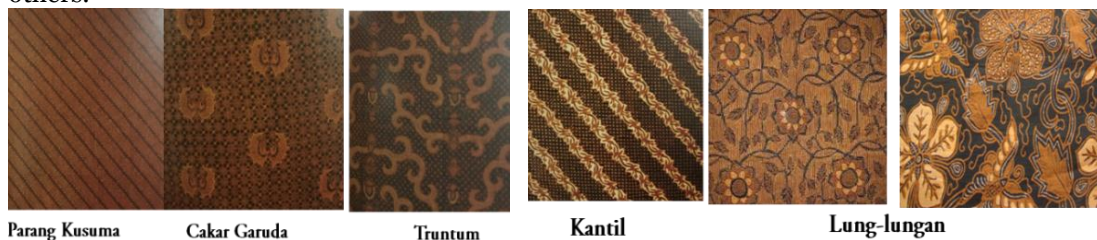


Figure 3. Batik Kauman Solo with 'larangan' motif and daily motif

Source: Atmojo, 2009

3.3. The Patterns of Batik Kauman Pekalongan

Kampung Batik Kauman Pekalongan is the oldest center of Batik in Pekalongan, producing batik with motif that was influenced by both Arab and Indian traders called *Jlamprang*. There is also another motif called *Liong* that was influenced by Chinese traders.



Figure 4. Batik Kauman Pekalongan with Jlamprang and Liong motif

Source: Supriono, 2016

Batik Pekalongan has a characteristic that varies from each sheet. The common theme is that it is dominated by brighter colours and wide-ranging of patterns. This is influenced by the many cultures of foreign traders in Pekalongan that made it more varied.



Figure 5. The evolution of of Batik Kauman Pekalongan

Source: Supriono 2016

Batik Kauman in the beginning only used by the royal family and on events that are hosted by the Kraton, such as the event of *jumenengen raja*, royal wedding, by *abdi dalem* and by the Kraton dancers.



Figure 6. Batik used by the Kraton family on various Kraton event, with batik only used as lower garments (*sinjang*).

Source: from several source, 2020

4. The Contemporary Shift in the meaning of Batik Kauman patterns

According Trihatmodjo in his dissertation (2010: 90-107), from the establishment of Kauman Yogyakarta to today, the settlements had gone through four phases of socio-cultural and political changes, namely the period of *abdi dalem*, the period of batik handle, the period of Muhammadiyah, and the period of educational and tourism city.

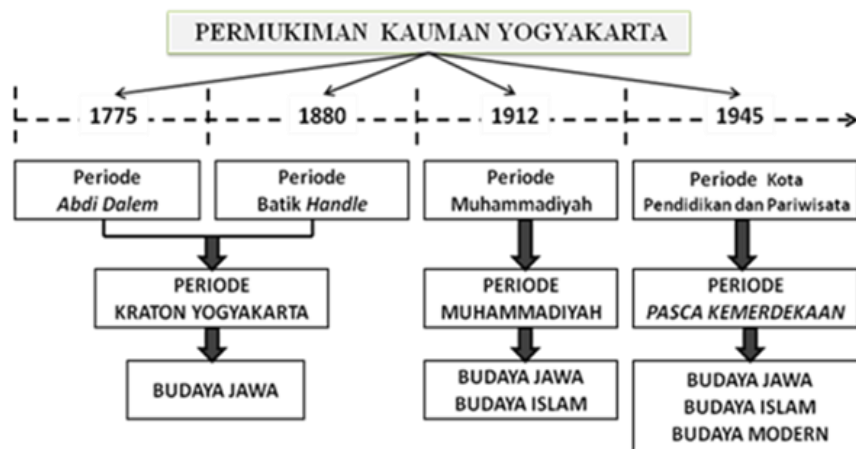


Figure 7. The phases of socio-cultural changes in Kauman Yogyakarta settlements and the cultural aspects affected

Source: Triatmodjo, 2010 and Cama, 2015

The schematic diagram above illustrates the changes in power and politics, from a kingdom with power concentrated in a king, to the Indonesian Republic where the king no longer has full power towards his subjects. This also shifted the social life and how the people view their own society. Rules from the kingdom no longer have the power of law because the king no longer has legal power. In regards to the pattern of batik, there is also a shift towards a more loose and free usage. There are no more restrictions in usage of batik patterns, and everyone can use any today. On the other hand, technically there are also unlimited manufacturing processes. Initially using astringent techniques with hot wax and *canting* then developed using a brush. The coloring is no longer with the water immersion system, but can use an air-brush or *colet* (dabbing) technique. These various techniques have resulted in the emergence of various new effects and textures in modern batik motifs.



Figure 8. The meaning of batik today is more free and no longer bounded by 'pakem' or the rules of kraton

Resource : from several source, 2020

As seen from the illustration above, batik *larangan* is still favoured because its unique motif and colour exudes luxury and elegance. Its meaning and usage has shifted along with society, but its distinction is not bound by time.

Conclusion

Batik is an Indonesian cultural heritage that needs to be preserved. Batik has a long history in Java and has gone through various evolutions in process and patterns that reflect the cultural influence of the area in which it is made. This is also the case with Batik Kauman. The shift in power and politics also influenced the underlying meaning and the usage of the fabric. Batik is no longer used only as a lower garment, but also can be used as blouses, shirts, pants and others. Even though today Batik has various colours and patterns, batik Kraton with its specific motif and colour theme remains to be favoured.

Acknowledgement

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