Representation of the greatness of Kambang Putih Seaport in the past on Ganggeng motif

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Abstract. In the 11th century, precisely in the kingdom of Kahuripan under the reign of King Airlangga (1019-1041), Tuban in East Java – Indonesia had a port called Kambang Putih. This port played an ancient international trading port that has the role to connect the western and eastern parts of the world. The greatness of the port gradually faded away, and its location has now turned into a recreational area known as Pantai Boom. For the people of Tuban, the great history of Kambang Putih port still leaves a pride that is manifested in the form of Ganggeng batik motif, especially inspired by seaweed plants. This motif is one of the classic motifs which until now still continues to be used by batik artisans. Furthermore, in order to keep up with the times, this batik motif has also started to be created by utilizing the role of technology in the form of design software. Through a review of various data sources including scientific literature, interviews with experts, and communication with traditional batik artisans, it was expected to be able to reopen the knowledge of the history of the greatness of the Indonesian sea, especially in Tuban so as to encourage various efforts to preserve and maintain the tradition. In addition, the study came down to mention the efforts to preserve the tradition of batik belonged to the community of Tuban by encouraging initiatives in creating motifs with inspiration from their maritime potential.

1. Introduction

The history of Tuban is often mentioned starting from the era of the Majapahit kingdom, which was around 1215 Çaka or 1293 AD. However, some other historical sources prefer to tell the history of Tuban starting from the period of the Kahuripan kingdom. This period was estimated to occur in 1044 – 1055. At that time, the name of Tuban was still Kambang Putih, located in the north coast or Pantai Utara (Pantura) of Java Island in Indonesia. The government was led by King Airlangga [1].

It is known that Tuban had been a relatively bustling port city since the beginning of the 11th century. There were already two big ports then, namely Hujung Galuh port and Kambang Putih port. Tuban was already busy with foreign ships pulling up at the port. During the reign of King Airlangga, there was also an expansion of trading in order to strengthen the economy of the Kahuripan kingdom by improving the flow of the Brantas river to become a very important trade traffic channel. Merchant ships anchored at the port of Hujung Galuh for inter-island traffic, while the port for international traffic was directed to Kambang Putih (now called Boom) located in Tuban [2].

Kambang Putih port area was linked with hinterlands by regular roads and traffic. Moreover, the bustling of the Kambang Putih port was due to the availability of quite a lot of fresh water sources near the port [3], as quoted from Achjadi "On the beach, there are freshwater pools that the water can be brought (to the ships) ... the water is drinkable .... Until now the well is still there" [1]. Even now, the
objective fact shows that about a hundred meters to the west of the pier there is the ancient *Srumbung* well which is still serving as a source of fresh water.

Until the Majapahit kingdom period, the condition of the Kambang Putih port in Tuban still had a phase of having an important role as an international port as stated in a Chinese book, written by Ying-Yai-Sheng-Lan, about the General Account of the Shores of the Ocean by a Chinese named Ma-Huan in 1416 AD, who after sailing on a small ship as far as 70 or 80 Li (about 250 km) finally arrived in Majapahit by pulling over at a very crowded port called Kambang Putih. He said at that time traders still anchored at the port of Kambang Putih and it was busy. Even in the vicinity of the port, some of the traders ended up choosing to settle, namely Islamic (Arabian) traders from the west, and Chinese merchant groups from the east, who came from Canton, Chang-Chou and Ghu'an-Chou [3].

The last source used as a starting point describe the conditions in Tuban during Mataram's rule which was around 1598-1599. It was said that even though Tuban was still developing with its inhabitants who called its king as the ruling king in Java, the role of the Kambang Putih port as an international port itself slowly began to decline. This was generally due to the non-functioning power of the Tuban port for international traffic for its role being transferred to other regions. The existence of Tuban as an important port had gradually faded and continued to decline [4]. Data on this matter quoted in the note are explained as follows:

"Tome Pires' visit to Java in 1599 provided information that opened this veil ... merchant ships in the 16th century preferred Gresik to Tuban, either because of declining port facilities, because of sludge making the port shallow, or perhaps because of the high customs system that made traders not meeting the expected profits".

It was then that the glory of the Kambang Putih port ended. Now, remnants of the glory of this port can still be found in Tuban, but was renamed as Boom port, as shown in Figure 1. The port is now used by the local community as a port for small boats and is also used as a tourist attraction

![Figure 1. Current boom port (Source: Author Documentation)](image)

2. Ganggeng Batik Motif as a Representation of The Glory of The Kambang Putih Port

The unique batik motifs of Tuban are expression of traditional society in interpreting the values and meanings which are the philosophy of their lives, with the five senses having an important role in selecting the objects that inspire them [5].

The theories that are around now about the origins of the variety of motifs of the Tuban community, are: 1) introduced by foreign traders who bring their respective cultures when entering Indonesia through international trade, 2) because of the stimulation in the form of objects from the surrounding environment that are responded to by the five senses, then influenced by traditional knowledge, behavior and beliefs, and 3) the collaboration between the first and the second theories that the motifs are present as a form of creative creation of the Tuban community in response to the environment, as well as being
influenced by cultural acculturation that enters Tuban and gives effect to the visual characteristics of the motifs [6].

The characteristics of other gedog batik styles is in the details which are called coblosan and ren-ren, as illustrated in Figure 2. Coblosan is a detail on batik fabric in the shape of small fine dots. As the name suggests, this effect is obtained by stabbing the fabric that is covered in wax (malam) with a pointed object that resembles a needle. Ren-ren is a style of drawing motifs done by the Tuban community by adding repeated straight lines resembling fine combs placed on the edges of the main motif's outline [7].

![Figure 2](image)

**Figure 2.** Ren-ren (a) and Coblosan (b) [5]

The unique traditional batik motifs of Tuban are known to be quite numerous and each motif contains its own meaning and philosophy especially for the Tuban community itself. Oral tradition was used for examining the motifs' meaning, form, naming, and origin through batik artisans who still survive today. Among the many unique motifs in Tuban, one of the classic motifs that has a very large role in shaping the identity of the Tuban community is the Ganggeng motif [6], as shown in Figure 3.

![Figure 3](image)

**Figure 3.** Ganggeng batik motif [8]

Ganggeng motif is inspired from algae plants that sway in the ocean. This motif is created because every day the Tuban community is accustomed to seeing this plant around their environment. Most of the people of Tuban believe that the ganggeng motif itself is a type of seaweed. Given that the Tuban region is a Java seacoast region, the daily activities of the Tuban community itself are very close to the sea. The Tuban community choose the ganggeng motif as a reference to the greatness of the Tuban sea in the past as one of the largest international ports in Indonesia. Thus, this motif is politically related to
the history of Tuban which at the same time can be a factor of pride that encourages people in Tuban to love their homeland, so they patriotically have the desire to defend and protect it [6].

The role of this beautiful ganggeng batik motif is very important for the Tuban community that this motif is imbued with a variety of deep philosophical meanings which symbolize unity. These meanings are reflected in the form of continuous and unbroken ganggeng motif like the interpersonal relationship that should always be intertwined without interruption. In addition, the Tuban community is united in their pride in the greatness of its history and cannot defile it with evil acts.

3. The Development of Ganggeng Batik Motif
The development of traditional batik motifs in Tuban is the emergence of various creative motifs. For the Tuban community, the existence of batik creations is not considered a threat to the preservation of local traditions. The Tuban community acknowledge it as an effort to maintain the existence of batik for the Tuban community itself in meeting market needs.

![Figure 4](image-url) Fractal elements in batik modules: module is made with JBatik (a), floral motif consists of a repetition of the petal module shape (b), motif composition is by repetition / precipitation (c)

The application of jBatik technology for the inspiration of ganggeng batik motif that have been carried out in Tuban is presented in Table 1 as follows.

**Table 1.** The application of design techniques in developing traditional batik motifs of Tuban using jBatik software

| Original Shape | JBatik Redesign | Technique | Results |
|----------------|-----------------|-----------|--------|
| ![Original Image](image-url) | ![Redesigned Image](image-url) | **Repeat** | ![Result Image](image-url) |
| ![Original Image](image-url) | ![Redesigned Image](image-url) | **Add** | ![Result Image](image-url) |
Facing the era of modernization, *ganggeng* motif is also experienced the development of more modern forms of creation. One of which involves the role of technology in the form of jBatik software to create motifs in order to be able to show new looks while still carrying a strong spirit of identity. The use of this technology is only for creating a variety of shapes and compositions of new motifs based on *ganggeng* motif, but the workmanship of the batik itself is still conducted handmade by the local artisans in Tuban [9].

The concept of fractal batik is to create motifs by doing self-similarity (similarity to the shape of itself). This means that there is a detailed geometry on a smaller scale [10]. To simplify, this concept can be explained through the following Figure 4.

### 4. Conclusions

Batik fabric with *ganggeng* motif is not only a piece of fabric whose function is limited to mere clothing products. For the Tuban community, it is also political as a form of representation of their pride in the greatness of the Kambang Putih port in the historical map. In order to maintain the existence of this *ganggeng* motif, the Tuban community has been open to innovation in order to preserve the batik traditions of the Tuban community by encouraging initiatives in creating motif creations with inspiration from their maritime potential. One of the developments they have done is to create batik motifs by maintaining the inspiration of the *ganggeng* motif itself which is redesigned using the role of jBatik software to create a representation of new shapes and compositions without losing its original identity.

Visually, the results of the fabric motif development with *ganggeng* as the inspiration show that the visual characteristics of the *ganggeng* motif are very strong and dominant so the results of its development cannot be separated from the shadows of the visual characteristics of the original *ganggeng* motif. It is inseparable from the mentality of the artisans in Tuban who, although they have shown an attitude of acceptance towards innovation, they still have a strong tendency towards the original image of the *ganggeng* motif. It is a good thing since the Tuban community naturally has their own protection in controlling the shapes of identity in the motifs, so they do not disappear.

In addition, by choosing to develop motifs based on the inspiring *ganggeng* motif which is a representation of the great history of the Kambang Putih port, it proves that the Tuban community still has a great concern to preserve the existence of this motif in the present and in the future.

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