Identity Exhibition in Batik Motifs of Ebeg and Pataruman

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Abstract
As an intangible cultural heritage acknowledged by UNESCO on October 2, 2009, batik has to be preserved as well as developed in Indonesia. Consequently, most cities in Indonesia have designed their batik motifs exhibiting their identities with cultural and natural excellence. This article discusses how Banjar City in West Java, Indonesia, is exhibiting its identity through batik motifs of Ebeg and Pataruman. Ebeg motif is derived from Ebeg dance, a traditional dance popular in the east border of West Java, posing transcendental values with specific rituals before the performance. The other motif, Pataruman, is derived from tarum plants whose leaves serve as natural indigo color. Being the iconic motifs of Banjar batik, the Ebeg motif exhibits the identity of Banjar as a city of religious people believing in the almighty power as well as acknowledging different human powers. As exhibited by the tarum plant, the motif Pataruman denotes the identity of Banjar city as a city prepared to provide other regions with mutual benefits.

Keywords
batik, Banjar City, Ebeg, identity, Indonesia, motif, Pataruman, West Java

Introduction
Batik is Indonesia’s traditional practice of dying a piece of cloth through wax resistance method. It is a work of art and an ethnological object known as traditional art (Aragon, 2012), having inspired the designs and techniques of African wax print fabric (Secomb, 2013). According to its history, batik was originally an art form of Javanese royalty. However, some would argue that batik was also popular among the people not only the royals because of the craftsmanship required in the process. Making batik requires a canting, and only with the right amount of skill could a woman do that. It also denotes an accomplishment in cookery and housewifery arts to Central Javanese women. Being acknowledged as one of the world’s intangible cultural heritage by UNESCO on October 2, 2009, Indonesian batik has seen its vast development in several regions in Indonesia, particularly in Java. Through a piece of batik cloth, cultural meanings are delivered and preserved. Through visibility and touch, batik also conveys cultural meanings passed down from generation to generation (Yunus & Tulasi, 2012). For the Javanese batik containing ornamental visuals depicting the life saying and values represents cultural identity (Tresnadi & Sachari, 2015). Batik also contains “social and cultural as well as economic values that maintain the dignity of a nation” (Steelyana, 2012, p. 116).

A significant account on the history of batik in Indonesia was made by G. R Rouffaer, Dr. H. H. Juynboll, S. M. Pleyte, and J. E. under the Dutch colonial government in Indonesia who studied batik, particularly in Java in around 1900. Groot (2015) stated that batik was the most fashionable of all Indonesian craft techniques between about 1895 and 1930. In Java and nearby, Madura batik emerged as one of the great art forms of Asia (Elliott, 2004). The development of batik was influenced by the three religions in Java, namely Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam. Buddhism and Hinduism emphasized the “liberation of the soul from mortal ties as the ultimate purpose of life” (Elliott, 2004, p. 24). She further adds that batik elements were found in both Buddhist and temples in Indonesia such as in the relief of Borobudur temple with the motif of the lotus. In Hindu temples, the motif of the interlocking and intersecting circular designs were found. As of Islam, the motif of batik underwent major changes.

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New shapes were introduced such as calligraphy as Islam prohibits motifs depicting human beings.

Gittinger (1989) states that most batik motifs of Central Java bear symbolic meaning. The meaning is related to the culture where the batik is created and produced. Waworuntu (n.d.) mentions that cultural meaning is expressed through motifs, colors, and the name given to the cloth. She further adds some meaning of Javanese batik motif such as Parang motif (Figure 1), previously worn by noblemen. This motif consists of arranged diagonal lines in the shape of letter S with different interpretations. The word parang is believed to derive from the word pereng/lereng “steep slope,” commonly found on the south coast of Java island. Sultan Agung, the third king of Mataram kingdom, interprets the sharp formation of rocks as a symbol of a sharp mind. Another meaning of Parang motif is the “continuous struggle for the truth” and being a good example for others (Waworuntu, n.d.). However, a different meaning with interpretation emerges as the word parang may mean a machete or knife. In a wedding, the bride and groom are not to wear Parang motif as it is a common belief of the Javanese that it might destroy the newlyweds’ life.

As other sign systems, clothing is also in relation to other sign systems. In a particular culture, the clothes worn are dependent on religious ceremonies or other rituals. The specific use signals the values conveying specific messages (Danesi, 2004; Feinberg, Mataro, & Burroughs, 1992). Therefore, clothing and fashion are combination of various signs with specific meanings.

Fashion is an existing style or specific way of dressing bearing macro clothing fitting with age, gender, class, and so on (Danesi, 2004). According to history, clothing, especially suit in Britain, started with two major groups: the Cavaliers who were the followers of King Charles I, and the Puritans who were the followers of Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658). Oliver Cromwell was a military, political, and religious figure who won the Britain Civil War (1642-1649). The Cavaliers who were royals wore colorful clothes; however, the Puritans wore simple white or dark clothes. The clothes worn by the Puritans showed simplicity, calmness, and strong morale.

Fashion code also builds ideological statements as shown by the hippies in 1960s to exhibit love and freedom. Another example is leather jackets and boots worn by motorbike riders to show persistence. The examples clearly communicate something. Fashion causes a style to rapidly change due to specific reasons such as historical, psychological, or sociological reasons.

The flourish of batik in Indonesia, in particular in Java, declined in 1970s for some reasons; among others were the breakdown of a feudal society and the fact that Javanese women sought other careers. The competition of Indonesian batiks with those from Malaysia and Singapore also played a role in the decline (Elliott, 2004). Hence, historical and sociological aspects of what batik communicates gradually change. When in the beginning batik, depicted in particular motifs, served as the identity of the royals, later on it has evolved into a medium to showcase one’s regional identity as what Banjar batik promotes. Modern artisans of batik, thus, have more freedom in exhibiting their ideas into batik motifs.

Identity

There are several views on identity related to ethnicity and national identity. Tilaar (2007) mentions four concepts of identity as follows.

1. Identity means identical with others. Individual similarity shows the same identity in a particular group as to be accepted in a group with a particular identity, the individual will follow the habits conducted by others at a period of time. However, differences do not directly isolate an individual from its group.
2. Identity means to be oneself. It means a human as an individual has unique things. As an independent individual, a human being can do many things to fill and give meanings to his or her life.
3. Identity means identical with an idea. This concept differs from the previous two concepts in terms of one’s existence as an individual in a bigger group. The nulling concept of individual values is derived due to his or her bounded transcendental ideas. To be identical with an idea; however, the idea should come from his or her own idea.
4. Identity means a realistic individual living with other individuals. As a social creature, a human as an individual is always in contact with others to live together. The togetherness exhibits individual and group identity, both in natural or cultural environments.

The intercultural interaction, the local culture and the global culture, in several steps directly or indirectly causes cultural competitiveness resulting in the fading or
disappearance of a culture. Local cultural resistance comes as an opposition to global culture (Efianingrum, 2011). It denotes the importance of acknowledgment that cultural resistance is a very specific form of oppositionists’ activities (Ibrahim, 1997).

**Method**

A qualitative method is the nature of the research. In qualitative method, meanings are constructed in the society in which we grow up. Societal values are of development of historical and cultural notions. Hence, in qualitative method, researchers seek to understand the context and gather information possibly serving as data. The researcher collects the data personally with full understanding of the social and cultural values attached to it. It is a descriptive research with an interview technique. Deriving meanings is, therefore, an active process arising from interaction in a community (Creswell, 2009). Processes in a qualitative research are inductive in nature.

To obtain comprehensive data, several procedures were undertaken. First of all, library research on batik, in relation to background, meaning, and values was conducted. It was an important step in building a research framework on batik. Second, a site visit was paid to Banjar City to obtain batik cloth of Banjar that served as the visual description of the iconic motifs of Ebeg and Pataruman. This batik cloth was purchased from a local craft person. The photographs of the Banjar batik were from the batik cloth previously purchased. Third, the researcher conducted an interview with the vice head of Dewan Kerajinan Nasional dan Daerah (Regional and National Craftsmanship Body) of Banjar City, West Java, Indonesia. Fourth, the analysis of the batik motif was carried out with some reference to other batik motifs already established in Java. As Banjar batik is of relatively new emergence, the icon in the motifs is closely related to Banjar’s potentials.

**Results and Discussion**

Banjar lies at the far end of West Java Province. The north border is Cisaga District, Cilacap Regency. The east border is Lakbok District, Ciamis Regency, and Wanareja District, Cilacap Regency; while the borders of the south part are Cimaragas District, Ciamis Regency; Pamarican District, Ciamis Regency; Purwodadi District, Ciamis Regency; and Lakbok District, Ciamis Regency. The west border is Cimaragas District and Cijeunjing District, Ciamis Regency.

Banjar batik was launched on January 11, 2012, by the mayor of Banjar City based on the designs of the winners of batik motif design contest. The two motifs representing Banjar City are Ebeg and Pataruman. Both motifs which exclude depiction of human beings symbolize Islamic values.

Batik becomes a commodity when the purchaser values its use (Haug, 1987). Values in batik motifs are socially and culturally shaped. Regarding the batik motifs of Ebeg and Pataruman, the identity of Banjar people living geographically in the border of West Java and Central Java is exhibited. Thus, identity of Banjar City is manifested in the traditional dance of Ebeg filled with religious beliefs. Pataruman motif, which is based on tarum plants frequently spotted in Banjar, also enhances the identity of Banjar City being a city with potential natural resources.

The consumption of batik Banjar is first driven by the regulation of the local government due to the relatively current launch. The regulation has made possible the use of batik Banjar—with Ebeg and Pataruman motifs—as the uniform for Banjar City governmental officers. The development of new batik motif as in Banjar is a mission Indonesia has to undertake in preserving batik as a cultural heritage. It also serves as a means to promote the identity of a city or region.

**Ebeg**

The motif of Ebeg in batik of Banjar is inspired by one traditional art of Banjar City that flourishes in the border of Priangan (West Java) and Banyumas (Central Java) called Ebeg or Kuda Lumping. It is a dance using horse-like properties made of bamboo ridden by a dancer who may be in entranced (Yudosaputro, 1983). During the performance, traditional musical instruments used are gong, kenong, kendang, and slompret.

Ebeg is a dance that has been popular since Hindu kingdoms in Indonesia. During the era, a dance was an important element in spiritual rituals performed by communities to communicate with the spirit of the ancestors. It was common then that the dance was also full of magical powers. Therefore, during its performance up to now, magical power is one of the main attractions in the dance. It is occasionally that spectators are attracted to the dancer who is possessed by the spirit of the ancestor due to his illogical deeds during the dance such as immune to an enemy’s attacks or hard blows, sharp weapons scratches, or even swallowing glass and razor blades.

In Ebeg dance, two other characters accompanying the main character of the horse are a barong and a bore. A barong is a lion-like creature with scary face and wild, fierce eyes. In the dance, this character performs movements signaling that he is a person in power with characteristics of selfishness and arrogance. Another character, a boar, is a nocturnal animal that forage for food in the evening with its careless movements. This denotes selfishness and greed. In conjunction with the main character of a horse, this dance exemplifies how the good-spirited creature fights the bad ones.
Despite its creepy attraction, the dance poses some important values to the community. In the performance, one dancer is possessed by good spirit and the other dancer by evil spirit. They fight. The characteristics of good spirit and evil spirit manifested in the dancers symbolize characteristics of human beings. Good human beings possess good characteristics such as patience, modesty, and care. For those with evil spirit, the characteristics owned may be realized in greed, arrogance, and selfishness.

The community who knows this traditional dance gives a specific meaning to it. The possessed spirit is understood as a mighty power beyond human’s control. The brain given to humans has enabled human beings to do their best in life. What happens in the world is because of God’s blessings. Therefore, human beings develop their beliefs toward almighty powers (God’s power). People also believe that each human being is endowed with different powers. In addition to God’s power over human beings, the people also believe in another world besides the world they live in right now.

Pertinent to color meaning, Deribere in Caivano (1998) states that meanings are often assigned to colors independently of the object in which the color is seen. An example of this is the colors of green meaning safety, red meaning danger, and yellow means be careful, which have the same meaning in traffic lights. However, in a football match, these colors convey different meanings. A yellow card means admonition (warning, be careful), while a red one means stop playing, out of match. In industrial architecture, there is an established code for security colors: green means safety, associated with the rectangular shape; yellow means possible danger, precaution, associated with the triangular shape; red means stop, prohibition, imminent danger, associated with the circular shape, or fire-prevention materials, with the shape of the material.

Arbitrariness of color symbols in color meanings is the case of black and white associated with birth and death. In Western culture, the pairs are: white is birth, baptism, and black is death. But, as Arnhem (1987) notes, white has a double and opposite meaning, the purity and innocence of the beginning of life on one hand and the emptiness of death on the other hand. Lack of hue means lack of life. In oriental cultures, white means death.

In spite of the different cultural meanings of colors, the color of black in the horse property of Ebeg dance symbolizes evil rather than death, in opposition to white, which symbolizes purity. Red is a color with high visibility showing intense emotion, which can enhance human metabolism, increases respiration rate, and raises blood pressure. Red means excitement, strength, sex, passion, speed, and danger (Cerrato, 2012). Since red is the color of fire and blood, it is associated with energy, war, danger, strength, power, and determination. Red also signals passion, desire, and love. Red denotes courage as shown in flags (Cerrato, 2012). The red color in the horse, thus, means courage and power signaling that the dance is full of power. Another color in the dance property is white. Cerrato (2012) states that white is associated with light, goodness, innocence, and purity. It means safety, purity, and cleanliness. In the horse property, it means purity of the mind and heart. With all of the colors in the horse property of Ebeg dance, the dance symbolizes power and courage, possessed by evil spirit, but with purity of the mind and heart, the evil power is turned into courage and purity. It is, therefore, a symbol of how the mind can control the body.

Ebeg dance exhibits scenes of cavalry that occasionally involves trance (Figure 2). Based on history, it is believed to be a fight against colonialism of the Dutch under the reign of Prince Diponegoro. The dance represents heroism and military as cavalry troop. It displays rhythmic, dynamic, and aggressive movements. Verses during the dance are suggestions on human beings to conduct good deeds and remember the God. Specific rituals are also performed such as a ritual to prevent rain from falling as before the performance of Ebeg dance, bright weather is required for the success of the outdoor performance.

With regard to the Ebeg dance that is depicted as one iconic motif of Banjar batik, Ebeg motif is a simplified form with dark blue, indigo, white, and red in color. The motif has been skillfully designed with the combination of tarum leaves in indigo color. Indigo in the motif is derived from the color of tarum leaves yielding indigo color. Indigo is a powerful color related to the right side of the brain (Cerrato, 2012). He further adds that indigo conveys integrity and deep sincerity and stimulates creativity and intuition. Physiologically it helps broaden the mind and free from fear and inhibitions.

The motif of Ebeg in Banjar batik cloth is depicted with tarum leaves in blue as shown in Figure 3. White line of the Ebeg denotes positive meanings such as hygiene, sterility, clarity, purity, cleanliness, simplicity, sophistication, and efficiency. A negative meaning of coldness in white color is balanced by the blue color of tarum leaves casting a state of serenity and calmness. In spite of a small depiction of red
In a flower accompanying the Ebeg motif, it has the meaning of energy and courage enhancing the motif visualization.

Batik motif of Ebeg signals the meaning of Ebeg dance depicting almighty power over humans. It acknowledges that human beings have both good and bad characters; however, the good ones overpower bad characters. The motif also serves as an appreciation of a local dance popular in the city that differs Banjar from other cities in West Java claiming that the local values of good virtues of humanity is highly preserved and maintained in Banjar.

Pataruman

The second motif of Banjar batik motif is Pataruman (Figure 4). Pataruman is etymologically derived from pa-, tarum, and –an. Pa- means creativity; tarum is tarum plants (or leaves), and –an means good and many. It is said that tarum (Indigofera inctoria) plant that grows in Banjar is different from tarum plants in other areas. Tarum plant that grows in Banjar is a plant spreading with small flowers. Tarum is a Sundanese name for violet or indigo. The Javanese call this as tom. Tarum plant is a plant that is creeping with small flowers. This plant produces natural blue color or indigo (Chanayath, Lhieochaiphant, & Phutrakul, 2002). Indigo, the color produced by tarum leaves, is the common color in batik. This color signifies prestige. The plant is generally believed to originate in West Java as exhibited in the name of Ci Tarum, Taruma Kingdom, Banjar Pataruman, and Tarumajaya.

With regard to clothing coloring process using tarum leaves, the color first appear is dark green. It is until the cloth gets dry that indigo color emerges. During East Indies colonialism era in Indonesia, tarum was one commodity used as a basic color material. Because of its significant economic value, it became one of the main plants cultivated during forced cultivation era.

The Benefits of Tarum Leaves

Tarum leaves contain chemical substances such as alkaloid, flavonoid, polyphenol, and saponin. Alkaloids have been used as painkillers, stimulants, or hallucinogens (Schmeller & Wink, 1998). Flavonoids act in plants as antioxidants, antimicrobials, photoreceptors, visual attractors, feeding repellants, and for light screening. Many studies have suggested that flavonoids exhibit biological activities, including antiallergenic, antiviral, antiinflammatory, and vasodilating actions; it is believed to be able to cure syphilis, epilepsy, ascariasis, gastric cancer, and to alleviate depression (Narendera, Khaliqa, Puri, & Chander, 2006; Pietta, 2000). Saponin is also found in the flowers of tarum plants. Saponins have been used to treat diabetes, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol (Astu, Sakinah, Andayni, & Risch, 2011). Besides its health benefits, tarum leaves are also known to blacken and fertilize the hair. In the past, parents would rub the tarum oil onto the hair as natural black color and fertilizer.

Figure 4 shows the motif of Pataruman in Banjar batik portraying blue tarum leaves and small red flowers. Similar to the Ebeg motif, the Pataruman motif is visualized in white color.
line denoting purity and simplicity; however, it is balanced by the dominant blue color of tarum leaves conveying the meanings of calmness and serenity that soothe the mind. Small red flowers of tarum in the motif evince positive meanings of red, that is, courage, strength, warmth, energy, and excitement harmonizing serenity and calmness within the blue color dominance. Colorful visualization in this batik motif is the result of the color of tarum flowers with the colors of other elements, that is, the leaves and the stem, as well as the indigo background.

The motif of Pataruman batik in Banjar has flourished so as to result in various developments. The basic color, originally indigo or dark blue, develops into more colors in line with consumers’ desires. However, the main pattern of tarum is still maintained. Some modifications may involve some peripheral elements.

With the various benefits of tarum plant, the reason of being an iconic batik motif is comprehensible. It signals that tarum plant is important for humans, particularly for Banjar City residents, and as an identity denoting a different yet powerful city. Banjar, as benefits of tarum plant have demonstrated, expects to be a city giving mutual benefits to other governmental cities regionally as well as nationwide. Understanding the batik motifs corroborates the diversity of regional identities in Indonesia due to the requirement for understanding other batik motifs.

Conclusion

Identity can be exhibited through batik motif. As Ebeg and Pataruman motifs have shown, the identity of Banjar City, Indonesia, is reflected. The two motifs signal the cultural values of the people of Banjar City as a heterogenous and creative community. The motif of Ebeg displays religious values of the people in the belief of the almighty power over humans. Pataruman motif expresses the identity of Banjar city as a city prepared to provide other regions with mutual benefits as exhibited by the tarum plant. With regard to the history of batik, the motifs of Ebeg and Pataruman are apparently an influence of Islam which prohibits the human depiction in textile motifs. The identity of Banjar City is celebrated through Ebeg and Pataruman which are expected to stand out among other batik motifs having already existed in West Java.

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