THE SUNDANESE AESTHETIC CONCEPT AND IDENTITY IN THE ORNAMENT OF WEST JAVA BATIK

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ABSTRACT

Batik has been studied in various aspects, but in the context of the Sundanese aesthetic concept and identity, it needs to be studied in-depth. If the batik is assessed through review of aesthetic values based on the values of the local culture and their human supporters, then consequently, in the case study of West Java Batiks have values of local wisdom of the Sundanese culture. Therefore, these Batiks can be positioned as a form of Sundanese culture in the presence of artifacts in the cultural historiography containing its aesthetic concept, especially in the constellation of batik world. The problem lies in: (a) The existence of a variety of visual-made batik cloth in the traditional of Sundanese batik region in West Java i.e.: Garut, Tasikmalaya, and Ciamis with its unidentified complete aesthetic concepts; and (b) There is wisdom in these batiks in the ornament, which is a form of visual adaptation of Sundanese society. This paper is a research aesthetic, applying aesthetic method with cultural adaptation strategy as approach in order to analyze the aesthetic elements in the visual batik ornaments that represents the given Sundanese aesthetic concepts. Then, directed to the Sundanese cultural aesthetic reflection as identity on the community of West Java. The result of the novelty in the form of: (a) Aesthetic concept in the batiks from West Java region i.e.: Garut Batik, Tasikmalaya Batik, and Ciamis Batik, which represents the concept of aesthetic existing of Sundanese society; and (b) The database of batik as cultural adaptation strategy of Sundanese culture.

Keywords: Aesthetic Concepts, Identity, Ornament, Sunda, West Java Batik.

1. INTRODUCTION

West Java Batik when examined through the study of aesthetic values is proven to own the local wisdom of values of Sundanese culture. The values included the aesthetic values of art (artistic) based on the local culture with the human supporters supporting them. With those considerations, local wisdom labelled here is interpreted as the wisdom of traditional cultures Sundanese tribe. The local wisdom is described the cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible. The entire proceeds of tribal culture is a figure of the identity of the owners (Sedyawati, 2006).[1]

Here the object of study is taken from the region of the Batik Center of West Java consisting of: Garut Batik, Tasik Batik, and Ciamis Batik which are related to the constellation of interconnection of intercultural in the sphere of art. The West Java Batik as an object of art in viewed as part of a functionally integrated phenomenon, culturally and spiritually supported by the Sundanese society. Therefore, it can be argued that Sundanese society, consciously or unconsciously, has developed the arts as an expression and a statement that stimulate aesthetic taste in line with the views, aspirations, needs, and ideas that have dominated and integrated with other aspects of culture (Rohidi, 2000).[2]

The development of West Java Batik, in this writing has been widening not only for development but also its dimension of meaning, principles, goals and especially for design aspects (aesthetics), and to the peak of that enriching the cultural influence in the heterogeneity of Indonesian culture in general. Also the West Java Batik has the characteristics in the dictums of aesthetics and identity that have embedded within the originality, values and local content of the Sundanese culture.
The problem lies in: (a) identification of the existence of the concept of aesthetic-made batik fabrics at the batik centers of traditional Sundanese in West Java, and (b) the shape of the relationship between identities with ornaments of batik fabrics that require explanation as a form of visual adaptation of society.

The result of the novelty in the form of: (a) Aesthetic concept in the batiks from West Java region i.e.: Garut Batik, Tasikmalaya Batik, and Ciamis Batik, which represents the concept of aesthetic existing of Sundanese society; and (b) Cultural adaptation strategy based on the relationship between identity with ornament batik fabrics that are a form of visual adaptation of the Sundanese society.

This paper is a research aesthetic, applying aesthetic method with cultural adaptation strategy as approach in order to analyze the aesthetical elements in the visual batik ornaments that represent the given Sundanese aesthetic concepts. Then, directed to the Sundanese cultural aesthetic reflection as identity on the society of West Java. The research also will be composed in the methods are applied in order to study the design objects, i.e.: historical observation of the work designs; and observation of design history (Sachari, 2003)[3]; and the development of West Java Batik, which is to be documented in the aesthetics domain aesthetic can be interpreted into as ornaments; and the approach of typological classification as a sub-part of the taxonomy related to the morphology of form study as well as synchronic approach (Walker, 1989).[4]

Batik has been studied in various aspects, but in the context of the Sundanese aesthetic concept and identity, it needs to be studied in-depth. If the batik is assessed through review of aesthetic values based on the values of the local culture and their human supporters, then consequently, in the case study of West Java Batiks have values of local wisdom of the Sundanese culture. Therefore, these Batiks can be positioned as a form of Sundanese culture in the presence of artifacts in the cultural historiography containing its aesthetic concept, especially in the constellation of batik world. And also about the things that correlate with the Sundanese identity, when viewed from the aesthetic aspect. It is expected to be found in the ornaments that represent the Sundanese aesthetic concept, as a reflection of an aesthetic identity of the Sundanese society.

2. WEST JAVA BATIK AND ITS SOCIETY

First of all, batik is a process of engraving textile using wax as resistant for the colour substance being applied to it. The process applies the cold dying technique and uses the canting technique or copper stamping. In the past, the stamping technique used to be excluded from the traditional dying batik technique. The stamped batik fabric is not reconsidered as batik (the original, in its old process of making one). But then, this view had changed; although this inclusive view occurred specially due to commercial consideration (Tirta, 2005).[5] Therefore if in the past batik is produced due to custom needs and internal culture, it is then produced for external market that makes batik as a commodity (Anas, 2010).[6] Attention is to be paid to those who attempt in the innovation perspective, those who are the penetrator of establishment. They investigate or explore the area of new approach at out of context, as cultural inheritance which must be put on standards (Anas, et al., 1997).[7]

Actualization of West Java Batik means if and when we people can learn the background of history, philosophy, symbols, techniques, expression and all creation aspects in order to obtain a spark of wisdom which is made beneficial for developing the human creativity at present, in creating the articulation of new symbols in accordance with the time (Widagdo, 1999).[8] A number of West Java Batik which have experienced the hetic ornamental development, are among others: (1) Garut Batik; (2) Tasikmalaya Batik; and (3) Ciamis Batik.

In relation to the West Java region i.e.: Garut, Tasikmalaya, and Ciamis, one should consider the existence of Sundanese society which is inherent to the area. Sundanese society, is a group of an ethnic of Indonesia who most of residents live in the place of West Java Province which is called the Sunda land. In its ideal description, the Sundanese society lives in a place which is often called as “Parahyangan” area, a place of prosperity, peacefulness with tolerant citizens, democratic in nature, polite, and welcoming people. Empiric reality shows that adaptability of Sundanese people is quite high. The Sundanese society is often described as a dynamic society and vast to adapt with changes. Viewed on its arts expression, the Sundanese society is melancholic as well as expressive (among others: “Cianjuransongs”) and also humorous. The societal relation to nature is very strong. They are not merely in their given
environment, rich and fertile, but also to interact to Sundanese society with environment—the they are grateful to nature, and make advantages of the
nature in order to live together harmoniously and increase prosperity. Attachment of Sundanese society to natural environment is evident, for illustration in their habit to produce, distribute, and consume the nature as fulfillment of individual, familiar, social and cultural needs (Rohidi, 2001).[9] And the term Sunda and West Java that refer to the meanings of culture, ethnic, geography, governmental administration, sociology and humaniora have entered the life of Indonesian society (Ekadjati, 2005).[10]

![Figure 1: The West Java Batik areas i.e.: (1) Samedang, (2) Garut, (3) Tasikmalaya, (4) Ciamis (Rosidi, et.al., 2000).][11][12]

Tasikmalaya Batik

Its began to develop since the presence of refugees from Central Java at the time of Diponegoro war. Tasikmalaya Batik has special color, it is blackish and this is due to the decayed of tarum indigofera leaves, another characteristics are classical abstract and realistic ornaments in the nongeometrical patterns, winged animals, flora and tumpal. Stylization is conducted at the various parts of a single object with addition of imaginary nuances. Tasikmalaya Batik is strengthened with simple isen-isen in forms of cecek and savut. The further development, application of bright colors such as: red, violet, yellow and green with the equal ornamental style which are equal with buketan (bouquet-like) of the Tasikmalaya embroidery in European style in various colors.

![Figure 2: Sapujagat / Bulu Hayam Geometric Ornament, Production : 2000, Cotton, Batik Tulis, 2.25 x 1.15 m, Collector: Komarudin Kudiya.][9]

Garut Batik

This variant of Batik in general is ornamented naturally, exposing flora and fauna of surrounding. Their main ornaments mostly, among others: lereng areuy (air root), lereng arben (strawberry), cupat manggu (mangosteen), kurung hayam (chicken cage), tiwu (broken sugarcane), and stone. Sartika (1988)[13] states that Garut Batik can be classified into two parts, based on the basic difference of the ornaments: geometrical and nongeometrical. Geometrical pattern contained in the ornaments of: lereng cerutu, batik kameli, tiwu, sidomukti kembang, sidomukti payung, lereng areuy kacang, etc. And the nongeometrical pattern contained in the ornaments: semen, pinggiran, lung-lungan, peksi, etc.

Ciamis Batik

Ciamis Batik is believed as having a strong influence from Banyumas and later it is called: Sarian Batik. This Batik generally adapts specific geometrical patterns of rereng / liris / parang in brown-black nuances. Sarian Batik which used to be on the direction of brown-black has then become
lustrous with additional bright colors such as: red, orange, yellow a little bit green and blue. This Ciamis Batik is influenced by Tasikmalaya Batik and Garut Batik and is less refined viewed from the quality of babaran since it is made simply, by applying two colors, and it uses a few isen-isen as ornamental form that exhibits the details of ornamental objects.

Based on description in the previous research about “The Mapping and Inventory of Batik Designs” (Sunarya, et.al., 2009)[14] as a part of development attempt of the tradition artifact based on local wisdom which is carried out in this research and some conclusion can be withdrawn. And then the production of traditional batik in the West Java island, especially some areas that belong to West Java region administration can be so traced and mapped, that some important findings are as follow: the following development indicates that inland West Java Batik (especially Tasikmalaya Batik, Garut Batik, and Ciamis Batik) have used mostly the nongeometrical ornaments by exposing flora and fauna on Garut Batik, as well as application of abstract–realistic shape in forms of winged animals and flora on Tasikmalaya Batik. This indicates that in accordance with the development, the producers of inland batik have attempted ‘adjustment’ on the motif application that has become a specialty and tradition to the existing batik (ornaments). Although this process of ‘adjustment’ is economically motivated in order to increase the consumers market segmentation, but then the process does not instantly occur. The process is also strengthened by the intention to develop visual identity as aesthetic of batik in general. And this is purposively exposed on the more-variou ornamental and color application on batik, be it for coastal as well as inland batik. Based on the visual specialty being exposed or applied on batik, West Java Batik can be mapped according to the ornamental schemes of geometrical and nongeometrical ornaments as well as the forms of abstract–realistic characteristics as follow:

3. IDENTITY

Let us have a look on identity first, which is concerning with how material is blueprinted to become cultural object that can be and put into usage by group, institution, and state in creating identity and communicated to public (Sparke, 2004).[16] Identity is a specific characteristic of personality. Someone or something is viewed as existence of the collection of qualities. The qualities that vibrate from someone or something is the existence of personality or identity (Sadali, 2000).[17] Furthermore, objects and environments can be used by people to construct a sense of who they are, to express their sense of identity. The construction of identity, however, goes much further than an expression of who someone is; it can be a deliberate attempt by individuals and organizations, even nations, to create a particular image and meaning intended to shape, even preempt, what others perceive and understand (Heskett, 2002).[18] At last, identities are conceptually more complex than they may at first appear. From one point of view, they define who somebody is in terms of a trait, which might be anything from, for instance, a physical feature of
the body, a belief, a genealogy or a cultural preference (During, 2005).[19] Conclusively, based on these theories, identity of the aesthetics elements of the West Java Batik can be regarded as cultural Sundanese identity in the aesthetics domain.

4. CONCLUSION

Having exposed the complete description, a conclusion can be drawn, as follow:

Linkage study of the aesthetic concept of Sundanese values – opening the discussion of aesthetics in general– which is regarded as integral to the concept of Western aesthetics and its development. The concept is described as among them– there are similarities term used as a form of (tangible, world stature : the empirical world, can be experienced, seen and always changing) and appearance (intangible, the world is not of bodily existence : the transcendental, the immaterial, the world and the origin of which remains unchanged, and called the world's idea).

The beauty means more than just aesthetic because it penetrated outlook on life. Because of this meaning, the beauty is not a subjective creation of specific individual, but an ontological reality. Referring to the discourse of the 'good' and 'beautiful' in art. This discourse is considered 'universal' is the departure of Western culture. Nevertheless, they are in fact related to the specific relativity of Sundanese culture which is a reflection of the Sundanese society (urang Sunda).

Aesthetic concepts in Sundanese culture traces its development and its aesthetic description as mentioned above. The Sundanese culture also contained a description of aesthetics in various forms and versions. Some statements are taken to be matching with the sense / meaning of aesthetics that has been understood, either implicitly or explicitly.

The Sundanese culture and Sundanese society (Sundanese people – to be locally specific, “urang Sunda”) has entered the lives of the Indonesian people which means the understanding of cultural, ethnic, geographic, administrative, social, and world knowledge of those Sundanese people. In another case, the term also refers to the human being of the Sundanese lineage, of Sundanese tradition which is called “urang Sunda”. There are two criteria commonly used to describe this “urang Sunda”, they are the social and cultural lineage.

Finally, the Sundanese values in the West Java Batik represented in ornaments can be defined as Sundanese identity. Also the development of West Java Batik spread widely to various meaning, dimensions, goals and the influence of modern culture can be classified into the aesthetics domain.

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