

The Role of Malaysian Batik to Preserve Art and Heritage Identity

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Abstract:

Batik is classified as an art or craft product produced through variations of textile patterning techniques. Its development is in line with the era of modernization and is going through the process of contemporary revolution. The identity of Malaysian art and culture translated into pattern design highlights the uniqueness and great value of Malaysian art and heritage. Batik Malaysia is an industrial product that is the main source of economic growth and cultural proliferation for developed countries. However, Malaysian batik is seen to be facing challenges in showcasing Malaysian identity. The method of data collection and content analysis is used to identify the challenges of Malaysian batik and discuss the role of Malaysian batik in facing challenges to maintain artistic and cultural identity. The results of the discussion from the content analysis clarify the role of Malaysian batik in facing challenges in line with the development of national art and heritage through the commercialization of the unique value of Malaysian batik identity and further achieve the goal of supporting the requirements of the National Cultural Policy 2021 (Daken). This research is important from the point of view of formulating a strategy to develop the value of Malaysian art and heritage. The results of the discussion will be used as a reference for further research purposes.

Keywords —Batik, Art and Heritage, Pattern design, Identity, Craft

I. INTRODUCTION

The World-Asia Pacific Crafts Council (WCC-APR) has recognized Malaysian batik as one of the globally renowned local crafts. Referring to the DIKN's National Creative Industry Policy, textile arts, which are batik-based products, have been categorized under the Creative Industry of Cultural Arts. This industry is also one of the main sources of economic growth and cultural proliferation for developed countries. DIKN through its research on developed countries such as the United Kingdom, Singapore, South Korea, New Zealand, Australia, defines the creative industry in the context of Malaysia as the mobilization and production of

individual or group abilities and talents based on creativity, innovation and technology towards the acquisition of sources of economic success and high income for the country through emphasis on aspects of works and intellectual copyright in line with the culture and pure values of racial diversity in Malaysia. Clearly, it can be concluded that the creative industry is centered on art for the economy, that is, with the involvement of talented individuals, the corporate side that gives implications to the country in terms of income and the image of the country (National Creative Industry Policy). According to Noor Haslina (2017) the batik industry is not only valuable in the development of Malaysia's cultural heritage but is also an important

asset to Malaysia's economic development in the future through its contribution as a successful rural industry. The handicraft industry in Malaysia is one of the industries that contribute to the country's economic growth. The Malaysian handicraft industry is divided into five main areas, namely textiles, forest products, soil products, metal products and various crafts. This industry is categorized as a manufacturing category. Based on the craft entrepreneur registration records, most Malaysian handicraft industries/entrepreneurs belong to the SME and micro category (PerbadananKemajuanKraftangan Malaysia, 2020). The role of culture also affects the process of national development. The Malaysian personality needs to be nurtured as an effort towards increasing socio-economic and political development. The gathering and involvement of all levels of society needs to be integrated as a continuous process. (KKMM portal). According to Mohammad Haris Abd Azis, Cultural Officer of the Culture and Arts Center, Universiti Utara Malaysia. The manifestation of art and culture is an important element in revealing the civilization and fame of a country. The role of art and culture is very large in contributing to the development of society in creating a nation with an identity (Bernama, 2021). The National Cultural Policy (DAKEN) 2021 was launched by the Prime Minister of Malaysia as a guide and reference in planning the entire development of the country's art, culture and heritage. The implementation of art, culture and heritage in the future includes; High Value Culture, Community Harmony, Preservation and Conservation of Cultural Heritage, Development and Expansion of Culture, Empowerment of Culture, Generation of Cultural Economy and Cultural Excellence. According to YB Dato' Sri Hajah Nancy Shukri, Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture of Malaysia, DAKEN 2021 is implemented to realize the vision of making Malaysia a developed country with cultural wealth by its people as well as being able to preserve the preservation and conservation agenda of the country's art and heritage. According to Ismail Sabri Yaakob, The Prime Minister of Malaysia's Daken 2021 government is an effort to elevate and

dignify the nation's art, culture and heritage. He called on all Malaysian families to support this policy so that aspects of the country's art, culture and heritage continue to be preserved (Sinar, 2021). Heritage is related to something inherited by a person and a community group from previous generations. Heritage describes the memory of the entire life of a nation and further symbolizes its civilization. Heritage is generally divided into two categories, namely tangible heritage and intangible heritage. Batik is an artifact in the textile category and it belongs to tangible heritage that is portable, which is something that can be moved. Apart from that, there is another category of heritage known as cultural heritage and it can also be divided into two main categories namely tangible cultural heritage and intangible cultural heritage.

The definition of batik can be explained through the word batik which is said to be derived from two Indonesian Javanese words 'amba' and 'nitik' with the combined pronunciation of 'ambatik'. 'Amba' means to write while 'nitik' means to make a point. There are several views on the definition of batik and all of them clearly explain that the word batik comes from the Indonesian Javanese word. According to Sylvia Fraser, (1986) 'Ambatik' is a wide cloth with small dots on the surface. According to Eloise Piper (2001), batik comes from a Javanese word that means painting based on wax polish that uses traditional methods to produce pictorial writing or motifs that appear on the surface of textiles or fabrics. Their process of batik is a decorative form of textile produced through the clash between design and also knowledge of heritage, culture and aesthetic value. According to Zamrudin Abdullah (2019), the element of beauty or aesthetics is an important component in producing high-quality batik works. The effort of batik designers to creatively process ideas according to the aspirations of batik fans today needs to be emphasized in modern and contemporary batik designs. The role of batik designers is very large in preserving the economic development of the batik industry and even plays a role in dignifying the heritage of Malaysian batik art. According to Noor Haslina Mohamad Akhir (2015) good craftsmanship requires high skills or

expertise, hard work and patience in producing high quality kraft art in addition to being able to generate income for the craftsman himself. According to NazlinaShaari (2017), batik is the identity of a product that requires more intellectual input and multinational cultural input. In the production of extraordinary batik designs there should be a strong relationship between the batik designer, the environment, production and consumption. Therefore, in this sense, batik can meet quality standards and meet the demands of the global market. Cultural values and creative knowledge become very important in the production of batik which has a high value. Referring to Art Appreciation formalistic and iconographic aspects, they are the two main aspects to be questioned and as a pillar in the production of a work of art. A pattern design that is produced usually has two main elements, namely the motif and the meaning. Motif or batik pattern design is an image that is seen through the display of formalistic elements in the design artwork. Formalistic features include artistic elements and design principles. The elements of art consist of line, shape, tone, shape, space, composition, perspective, and colour. Production through a combination of art elements and design principles in a formalistic form is a form of design ideas that will produce motifs or pattern designs. The ability to analyse or recognize formalistic features will bring each designer closer to the question of iconography or the meaning of a pattern design produced.

II. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research uses a systematic literature review method with the aim of identifying and discussing the challenges of the batik Malaysia. The objectives of this research are as follows:

1. Identifying the challenges of Malaysian batik.
2. Discussing the role of Malaysian batik in facing challenges to maintain Malaysian batik identity

III. RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach which is the literature highlight method and the document content analysis method. Data collection through library reading includes making references from books, theses, journal articles, conference/seminar papers, internet searches and the like in either Malay or English. This approach is appropriate to obtain sufficient information and the literature search strategy is in reference to the research objective. This research focuses on the challenges of Malaysian batik in maintaining the identity of art and culture, therefore the keywords used are based on the research title. Literature search using databases such as google, google scholar, research gate and academia. Its use aims to facilitate the literature search in a more organized and systematic way. This research has set certain criteria as an instrument to facilitate literature search. The criteria is that the time period (year of research) must be in the range of 2015 to 2022. In addition, the determination of the selection of literature that must consist of articles, proceedings, books or theses. According to Xiao and Watson (2019), the same survey study in the form of criticism or critical that involves the comparison of a group of literature requires the establishment of a robust set of criteria.

IV. DISCUSSION ANALYSIS OF THE CHALLENGES AND ROLE OF MALAYSIAN BATIK

Noor Haslina (2015) in her study summarizes the challenges that will be faced by the batik industry in Malaysia. Looking at the situation where the competition between products from foreign countries and more modern ones is the main challenge of the country's batik industry. The lack of attention and action on this problem is seen to worsen the situation. In addition, the industry is seen to be only focused on modifying existing products whereas this action will result in a lack of demand and business performance will decline. Chief Executive Officer of Yayasan Budi Penyayang Malaysia, Datuk Leela Mohd Ali, despite various efforts to dignify the art of batik in Malaysia, the local batik industry is still seen as having difficulty penetrating the market and is

clearly still underdeveloped to reach the international level. The lack of creativity in producing innovative designs even fails to provide a touch of global standards (Halina Mohd Noor, 2018). The 2018 Crafts Annual Report said there was a 1.2% increase in craft sales from RM500.5 million in 2017 to RM506.5 million in 2018. This clearly reflects the development in the craft industry driven by Malaysian Crafts. In fact, based on the 2009-2018 Handicraft Report series, the Malaysian Craft market has increased every year. Referring to the 2018 market and sales performance, batik under the field of textile craft, is seen to be the biggest contributor to the sale of handicrafts. However, the effort to dignify this art has instead become quite difficult for the local batik industry when its achievements are now seen as increasingly worrying. The General Manager of Syarikat KaryanekaSdn.Bhd, Norizmah Mustafa (2019) said, Malaysian batik is beginning to be threatened and even the trend of copying batik from other countries has damaged the image and killed the true uniqueness of Malaysian batik.

The issue of plagiarism of batik designs or imitations is clearly a challenge and an obstacle, Fatihah A Latiff, Batik entrepreneur and designer of the Tinta Batik House brand explained that the challenges they had to overcome in the effort to dignify national batik when there are plagiarism products from China even had to compete with printed batik is not only from China but also from Indonesia that imitates original batik and is made into yard cloth. The saddest thing is that it gets support from a few people in Malaysia (MyMetro 2019). Entrepreneurs and designers need to use the channels that have been provided to help them achieve global competitiveness for products & services. In Malaysia, the Malaysian Standards Department (Standards Malaysia) has been established as the National Standards Body and the National Accreditation Body, giving full confidence to stakeholders, through reliable standardization and accreditation services for global competition. In addition, it also plays a role in providing standardization services under the Malaysian Standards Act 1996 (Act 549). Things like copying

and plagiarizing designs or batik products should be able to be controlled and overcome.

The problem of lack of interest among young people to work in the field of batik manufacturing is also a big challenge for the local batik industry. The role of industrialists is necessary to dispel the negative impression of young gologang who are qualified to work in this industry. That is, by providing a more conducive workplace, re-examining the wage payment to be in line with the minimum wage standard set by the government and according to the employee's qualification level. Apart from that, experienced designers in the industry also need to play a role in order to be a catalyst in attracting the interest of young people to venture into this field.

Next is the issue of popularizing Indonesian batik by young people is also a big challenge for the local batik industry. The General Manager of Noor Arfa Holdings SdnBhd, Wan Mohd Hafiz Wan Mohd Arifin in his statement is very upset when the younger generation is more interested in popularizing Indonesian batik and it is transmitted to the point that it becomes an indirect trend in the local batik industry becoming dimmer. Social media is now the main and most popular channel among young people (MyMetro, 2019). We cannot put the blame on them alone. The selfie, wefie, viral trend is a global trend and is very popular around the world. Young people are very passionate about highlighting something new and interesting, modern in line with the latest fashion trends

NormazWana Ismail (2019) summarizes that most batik entrepreneurs show interest in marketing and innovation. However, for marketing innovation, they still depend on marketing activities that have been set by the government. They also use less marketing and promotion channels, such as selling and advertising online through electronic media. For the most part, they only focus on common practices, such as direct sales to customers, wholesalers or retailers. In terms of the innovation process, PerbadananKemajuanKraftangan Malaysia and local batik entrepreneurs have tried to create new or better batik techniques in the process of painting, coloring up to the last process. Product innovation and organization, the role of batik

entrepreneurs and designers need to be increased by diversifying batik products in order to be able to compete with relatively modern and great products. They should also be willing to make changes in operational management through job specialization and better work procedures. To improve the performance and preserve Malaysian batik in the future, but to what extent are the involvement of local batik entrepreneurs and designers doing this innovation and what are the achievements of this effort. If you look at the efforts carried out, the batik industry in Malaysia should be able to compete and penetrate the international market. They should also be willing to make changes in operational management through job specialization and better work procedures. To improve the performance and preserve Malaysian batik in the future, but to what extent are the involvement of local batik entrepreneurs and designers doing this innovation and what are the achievements of this effort. If you look at the efforts carried out, the batik industry in Malaysia should be able to compete and penetrate the international market. They should also be willing to make changes in operational management through job specialization and better work procedures. To improve the performance and preserve Malaysian batik in the future, but to what extent are the involvement of local batik entrepreneurs and designers doing this innovation and what are the achievements of this effort. If you look at the efforts carried out, the batik industry in Malaysia should be able to compete and penetrate the international market.

It can be concluded that batik in Malaysia does not exhibit a special and specific Malaysian identity to be lived. The value of originality in motif pattern design is like being caught in the current of modernization. According to Ahmad Hakim Abdullah (2020), as a result of the research that has been conducted, Malaysian batik does not have a unique identity when compared to Indonesian batik. The latest pattern designs in local batik tulis such as organic (flora), fauna, and geometric motifs do not have a clear Malaysian identity. This problem also occurs in local block batik. The pattern design does not have a strong Malaysian identity but has special

uses such as medicine, ceremony, gift, symbol and decoration (Rabiatuadawiyah Mohd Kari, 2019). Problems reported by the local media related to the challenges faced in the local batik industry such as the dumping of batik-based textile products from foreign countries are seen as challenges and competition for local batik entrepreneurs. According to FatihafA Latif (2019), batik entrepreneurs and designers in Kelantan, face challenges in trying to advance their batik business when faced with the appearance of fake batik, especially from China and Indonesia. Local batik designers and producers should be more sensitive to this situation by highlighting more unique and fresh pattern designs and need to maintain Malaysian identity to compete with products from abroad. However, the opposite happens when there are batik designers who plagiarize motif designs from foreign batiks and include elements of those patterns in their batiks. The General Manager of Syarikat KaryanekaSdn.Bhd, Norizmah Mustafa (2019) expressed his disappointment when he saw that Malaysian batik was beginning to be threatened, even the trend of copying batik from other countries had damaged the image and destroyed the true uniqueness of Malaysian batik. The biggest impact on the community is the confusion to identify the authenticity of Malaysian batik. According to Hafiz Ithnin (2020), it is quite difficult to buy batik-motif clothes on media platforms that characterize Malaysian identity. Even for those who want to wear it to attend a crowded international conference, it is also wrong to determine the original Malaysian batik design with batik from Indonesia in particular. Therefore, they cannot raise the value of local culture in the eyes of foreign countries due to this confusion (Mymetro, August 2020). The lack of knowledge of appreciation in the elements of art and the principles in the design process causes a work of art not to reach a high-quality standard. The art and culture elements in the latest Malaysian batik designs that are identified will form a comprehensive knowledge through the appreciation of art in formalistic and iconographic aspects. The method of analysing or recognizing formalistic features will bring each designer closer to the question of iconography or the meaning of a pattern

design produced. The meaning of a pattern design is an interpretation based on what a designer sees. Interpretation is associated with the understanding of significant issues taken through customs, culture, beliefs, history, myths, legends, and so on. In other words, it will create a specific identity in design. Both elements of pattern design and the meaning of production are closely related in conveying the message of a batik art work. An artistic result arises from the expression or creative skills and imagination of a designer which is usually in a visual form (Zamrudin Abdullah, 2019). beliefs, history, myths, legends, etc. in other words it will create a specific identity in design. Both elements of pattern design and the meaning of production are closely related in conveying the message of a batik art work. An artistic result arises from the expression or creative skills and imagination of a designer which is usually in a visual form (Zamrudin Abdullah, 2019). beliefs, history, myths, legends, etc. in other words it will create a specific identity in design. Both elements of pattern design and the meaning of production are closely related in conveying the message of a batik art work. An artistic result arises from the expression or creative skills and imagination of a designer which is usually in a visual form (Zamrudin Abdullah, 2019). This happens due to a lack of understanding in translating traditional elements of local art and culture in batik pattern design. Malaysian identity is not prioritized in pattern design, instead only using ideas from imagination. So that they do not realize that it has an impact on the government's efforts in highlighting Malaysian identity in local craft products as well as having an impact on the income of the batik industry in Malaysia. The latest data on craft entrepreneurs released by the Malaysian Crafts Corporation (2020) shows that the majority of the batik industry throughout Malaysia falls under the B40 micro category with annual sales not exceeding RM300,000 and household incomes below RM4,360 (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2020). The role of the B40 micro industry together with batik designers and producers is very important in ensuring that the Malaysian batik industry can be advanced and remain competitive by emphasizing the quality in pattern design that is the identity of

Malaysia. Therefore, this research needs to be continued because it can shed new light on the Malaysian batik industry by uplifting Malaysian art and culture through batik pattern design. In fact, besides that, indirectly, it is also an effort to increase the income of B40 micro-entrepreneurs in the face of the IR4.0 industrial revolution. This research is seen to be able to realize the government's view of the craft industry in Malaysia. According to Mohamaddin bin Ketapi, former Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture (2021), in conjunction with Visit Malaysia 2020 (VM2020) Malaysian handicrafts are seen to always ensure the production of quality craft products that meet current trends and become an attraction for tourists to the country. New product designs produced using icons and motifs that are the identity of the state in Malaysia are very coincidental in attracting more consumers to culture the use of local craft products. Craft products produced become a symbol of attraction to be highlighted as the identity of the local community to domestic and international tourists. This can prove that the uniqueness and fine art of local craft products are comparable to craft products from abroad available in the market (Kraftangan Report, 2021).

V. CONCLUSIONS

The challenges faced by Malaysian batik need to be given due attention. It is very important in the effort to dignify art and heritage by highlighting a specific identity in pattern design and products. The issue of counterfeiting and counterfeit products from foreign countries should be addressed immediately and this problem should not continue to drag on. If the artistic identity and heritage of Malaysian batik is left alone, it will sink and lose its uniqueness behind the competition of batik products from abroad. Innovation and transformation of the current of modernization to meet the tastes of young people is necessary without leaving aside the original characteristics of Malaysian batik and maintaining the identity of Malaysia in the design of patterns and designs of new products produced. Entrepreneurs and batik designers need to have an understanding of intellectual property, ISO for batik patents produced

to avoid designs being imitated and plagiarized by irresponsible parties. The quality standards set by Perbadanan Kemajuan Kraftangan Malaysia also help in ensuring the quality of Malaysian batik authenticity. The government, interested organizations and important bodies in Malaysia and abroad are seen to give full support to the development of Malaysian batik. Its role continues to receive attention and under the National Creative Industries Policy it has also provided various initiatives to help develop this industry in order to achieve the goal of making the creative industry a dynamic sector that can increase its contribution to the country's GDP and further contribute to a high-income economy.

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