

## Teaching Virtuous Values and the Implementation of New Strategies for the Sustainability of Batik in Girilayu, Karanganyar Regency, Indonesia

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**ABSTRACT :** Batik is a technique of decorating cloth with motifs containing philosophical meaning using a tool called canting like a pen to engrave a kind of ink from liquid wax. This study aimed to determine the methods used by batik artisans in Girilayu to survive and continue the tradition. The research method used was qualitative with observations and interviews to collect the data and followed with literature studies to complete the data which couldn't be reached by observation and interviews. The study found that in addition to practicality and modernization reasons, there are spaces or gaps that unknowingly become the cause of the declining interest from the younger generation to continue batik as a hereditary tradition. Some efforts to teach the virtues of life guidelines inherited by KGPAA Mangkunagara I through Mbok Semok batik motif. Moreover, open collaboration as a new strategy to expand batik products marketing by establishing collaboration with national fashion designers has succeeded in making batik tradition in Girilayu survive and increase the interest of the younger generation to learn and to continue family batik business and eventually to preserve batik tradition.

**KEYWORDS** - Batik, Survive, Sustainability, Virtuous Values, New Strategy.

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### I. INTRODUCTION

The declining interest of the next generation to continue the hereditary traditions essentially in art and culture as the community local wisdom has led to a crisis [1] [2]. Tradition is close to details, complicated, and a long process. This is perceived as impractical and becomes the main reason for the younger generation to be unwilling to learn and to continue the tradition [3]. The conveniences offered by technology and alternatives in various ways have spoiled the present generation. The character of today's young generation, popularly known as millennials (millennial generation), tends to prefer practicality and speed as the simplicity of technology has been developing very rapidly [4]. The negative effects which emerge include the declining interest from this generation to study tradition. These continuation or succession crisis and declining interest have been experienced by batik artisans in the last decade [5]. They find it difficult to invite and get the younger generation even their own children to like and totally learn about batik [6] [7]. The young generation reasons that learning batik does not only know about the process of making batik using canting until the final stage, but they also have to know about the meaning and its function, so they are unwilling to learn batik seriously [8]. Moreover, batik is rarely used in important ceremonies today and is still considered a traditional cloth which is less practical to wear [9]. The market of batik cloth is also limited to domestic and foreign cloth fans which are dominated by Indonesian citizens living in foreign countries [10] [11]. Authentic batik clothes made through traditional processes are expensive. Consequently, the sales rate is low. Indonesian people are commonly at the lower middle economic level who cannot afford to buy batik cloth made with the traditional process. In addition, the existence of batik motifs made with manual printing processes or digital machines has made further distances of people's purchasing power from authentic batik due to the fact that batik printed clothes are much cheaper and have various variants [12].

In around 1975 large batik companies started to produce batik-patterned cloth with printing process. At the beginning, the goal of these companies to make printed textile with batik motifs was to provide a choice for the community with middle and lower economic class so that they could be stylish by wearing batik [13]. The goal was successful as the people's purchasing power has increased considerably. These companies have a business goal of selling goods and making as much profit as possible, but they forget to educate the consumers by giving socialization that their products are fake; and they should educate people to still buy or have at least one authentic batik cloth in their fashion collections as a form of support for the sustainability of batik in Indonesia

[14]. People unfortunately have only acknowledged that textile with printed batik motifs is the original batik. The government's efforts to provide support for traditional batik artisans have been carried out by issuing policies regarding the use of batik as official uniforms for governmental offices, agencies and schools. This policy is considered successful because batik is now often worn as a uniform and even as a dress code in various formal and national events [15]. In fact, however, these government's efforts still can't increase the income of traditional batik artisans, since what the community buys and wears is batik printed textiles; even uniforms for the government offices and agencies nationally called KORPRI batik are made with a printing process, which is actually not worthy to be named batik.

The problem of decreasing people's purchasing power on batik products has caused some implications in the declining interest of the younger generation to learn and continue their family batik business [16]. They think that batik business is not financially promising due to the fact that it takes a long process, requires large capital, has long turnover, and only meets limited consumers [17]. Several well-known family batik businesses have been experiencing a regeneration crisis, including the batik artisans in Girilayu village, Karanganyar Regency, Central Java province, Indonesia [18]. The urging regeneration crisis has become a main mutual concern of batik artisans group in Girilayu. They agreed to create new teaching methods and strategies to attract the interest of the younger generation. In five years since 2016, their efforts have been paid off as the initiation of young generation starts to emerge for learning batik and helping family business. These new teaching and strategies have become the urgency of this study. Previous studies mostly focused on the causes of the declining interest of the younger generation to study batik and the background of the decreasing people's interest to buy authentic batik [19] [20]. The lack of previous studies examining the novelty of efforts to overcome the regeneration crisis has become the main reason why the regeneration crisis topic deserves to be investigated. The aim of this study was to find out the description of the teaching methods and the new strategies applied in the research area so these efforts successfully prevent the batik artisans in Girilayu from regeneration crisis [21]. The benefits of the results of this study are expected to be used as a model and adapted by other tradition actors who are experiencing similar problems.

## **II. METHODS**

This research method used in this study was descriptive qualitative [22]. The purpose of this method is to present the data completely and easily understood by other parties from various multi-disciplines [23]. The data were collected through three activities, i.e. observation, interviews, and literature study [24]. Observations were conducted by directly visiting batik workshops that spread across five hamlets in Girilayu Village. Furthermore, observations were carried out by directly studying the process of making batik activities, the atmosphere of making batik process, the interaction among batik artisans, and the creations of the artisans in making various motifs and products derived from batik cloth [25]. Observations were also done to obtain initial research data, i.e. mapping the problems and the achievements as the solutions made by the batik artisans in Girilayu. Various problems were found in this stage. Then, the researchers classified the problems to determine the urgency level. Furthermore, after obtaining the level of urgency, the study was continued by focusing on the problem and making plans and research schedules. Following being well structured, the researchers conducted coordination with and socialization to the batik artisans group in Girilayu regarding research activities and the data collection process [26]. This step ought to be done to obtain permission and approval from the artisans as well as the local community leaders regarding the research process [27]. Interviews were conducted in several stages with an open interview character and tiered according to the role or the position of the informants with the questions about the sustainability of batik in Girilayu [28].

Literature study concerning the efforts of batik artisans in Girilayu to maintain a sustainable tradition was conducted to strengthen the research data [29] [30]. The entire research was carried out in stages manner over a period of three years. This study on teaching and new strategies topics was carried out in the 3rd year in two semesters [31]. Literature and references were used to strengthen the data obtained from observations and interviews. The literature was derived from social, educational, economic, and tourism studies which lead to a support system for the sustainability of batik tradition in Girilayu [32]. The selection of Girilayu Village in Matesih Subdistrict, Karanganyar Regency, Central Java, Indonesia as the location of this study is based on the results of initial observations and surveys [33]. The problem found is that the decreasing interest of the younger generation to continue and to learn batik has resulted in a crisis of tradition sustainability and family batik business [34]. This problem occurs in various batik centers in Indonesia. As a consequence, the selection of Girilayu is considered as a representative location. The community of batik artisans in Girilayu formed an association called "Paguyuban Sekar Arum". This association has a goal to be a means of strengthening and

developing batik business by establishing collaboration in terms of production, development, capital, promotion, marketing, and all activities related to batik [35]. Data triangulation was carried out to confirm the validity and scientific accountability [36]. Data analysis was conducted by employing a design sociology study which focuses on the phenomena and the efforts influenced by a design work so that it forms a situation change by using the right approach according to the character of the community [37] [38].

### **III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The crisis of declining interest of the younger generation to continue the tradition must be resolved immediately [39]. Tradition is the wealth of a country and it serves as evidence of a complex cultural process which runs very well [40]. Indonesia is a country rich in traditions as mentioned in its motto "Unity in Diversity". If the traditions fall and stop one by one, the beauty of culture will become a historical record and diversity will turn into uniformity. Batik artisans in Girilayu are aware of this issue and are trying their best to preserve the good values contained by adjusting to the current postmodern conditions [41]. The younger generation who continue the batik tradition is categorized as a millennial generation whose a critical mindset. They are willing to be involved if there is a logical explanation and the benefits that can be obtained by learning to make batik and continuing batik business in Girilayu which has been carried out through the generations [42]. Girilayu is a village in Matesih subdistrict, Karanganyar Regency, Central Java Province, Indonesia. In addition, Girilayu is recorded in history as a part of Pura Mangkunagaran (a small splinter [of the Islamic Mataram Kingdom) territory. The fertile region of Girilayu has caused it to be chosen as the location for coffee, tea, cocoa, and clove plantations as the main commodity and the source of income for this Kadipaten or Pura Mangkunagaran (autonomous administrative area under the kingdom) [43]. Girilayu was a guerrilla hideout and solitude location for KGPAA Mangkunagara I whom at that time was entitled of Raden Mas Said or Prince Samber Nyawa during the war against the VOC in around 1742-1755 until the event of Giyanti Agreement in 1755 [44].

Batik artisans grouping in Paguyuban Sekar Arum agreed to introduce the fighting spirit of KGPAA Mangkunagara I as their ancestors. This spirit is embodied in the values of virtues contained in the teachings of Tri Dharma in Mbok Semok batik motif, a batik motif design which is rich in the noble philosophy of Tri Dharma teachings [45]. The deep and meaningful meaning as a way of life in the Tri Dharma teachings is the background for the three principles of virtue which were officially adopted by the government of Karanganyar Regency as a motto and education for the entire community. The three guidelines contain the meaning of patience, loyalty, and courage in taking any actions to guard what has been inherited, to defend the country with courage, and to always stand firmly in the truth. Mbok Semok batik motif is able to arouse the curiosity of the younger generation in Girilayu to further know about the meaningful life guidelines and batik [46]. Batik lessons they are interested are not only in painting using canting and making beautiful motifs, but also in learning all things in everyday life associated with batik. These include the knowledge that batik is able to change their perspective regarding respecting the process, persistence, loving tradition, giving them a source of income, and having a better future opportunity [47]. The rise of the younger generation interest is not achieved in days, it takes months and even years instead [48]. Senior batik artisans in Girilayu set an example with their productivity and active participation in various events about batik which are held independently, by stakeholders, special institutions, and the government.

The stage of teaching the virtues of the Tri Dharma through Mbok Semok batik motif is a special approach which is reckoned with great consideration. Millennial generation has a critical and logical character. They tend to ignore and leave any concept, particularly tradition sustainability, which cannot be explained and accepted by their logical and critical reason. Artisans group create special stimulation by involving the young generation in almost every batik activity and event, such as training, socialization, festivals, exhibitions, discussions, etc. Their role is simple and the artisans ensure that the young generation witnesses every process of the event from planning, preparation, implementation, and evaluation [49]. By conducting their role, the young generation knows that batik has the potential to be combined with other attractions or activities to produce an attractive entertainment. Batik is not merely painting the cloth using canting but also a lesson for perseverance, trust, respect to other people, cooperation, and sacrifice. These virtues are reflected in the activities of batik management and marketing. The new strategy adopted by batik artisans who initially only worked as canting artisans was to synergize with fashion designers [50]. They dare to learn to raise the standard of product quality according to the designers' request and directions. Moreover, they also establish some cooperation with prospective fashion designers who are still high school students and university students. These batik artisans are willing to help the young prospective designers realize the designs of their final projects for instance. They

indirectly build discussions and learn from each other to create novelties to eventually maintain the sustainability of batik in Girilayu [51].

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The success of the efforts done by batik artisans' group, Paguyuban Sekar Arum, in Girilayu to attract the interest of the younger generation is considered as a great achievement. The existence of batik in Girilayu has changed the life and the economy of Girilayu community. Most Girilayu community works in the plantation and agricultural sectors relying on their income from harvesting and selling crops. Their position in batik business is only as *canting* workers with small fee. They have been brave enough to get out of their comfort zone by establishing a new independent business with limited capital. Batik teaches them to be patient and diligent. Their loyalty to hold on to tradition and to make batik cloth with hand-written process is an evidence of the Tri Dharma teachings which are applied in their daily lives. The theory of design sociology study is appropriate to be used for examining this problem because it has a significantly relevant approach for observing the phenomena and social interactions of the actors of visual tradition, i.e. batik. The finding of this study covers design as a social stimulation. The design of *Mbok Semok* batik motif functions as a stimulant for the millennial young generation in Girilayu to learn batik and all the things related to batik business. The virtues in the Tri Dharma teachings of KGPAA Mangkunagara I are contextual, relevant to the demands of the current times, and flexible. Accordingly, the teachings can easily adapt to the character of millennial society. The sustainability of batik in Girilayu can be maintained by establishing synergy and cooperation of various parties. In addition, fashion for batik artisans in Girilayu is an effective new strategy to develop batik as its derivative products and to expand consumers. Processing authentic hand-written batik into fashion can also reach the middle to lower economic class market. In accordance, the long-term impact, i.e. increase in sales and the use of authentic hand-written batik, gradually develops. At last, concerns and worry about the crisis of batik artisans regeneration will not occur due to the application of the virtues of ancestral teachings and new strategies to maintain the sustainability of batik tradition.

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