

An Introduction to the Process of Making the Indonesian Handmade Batik Lasem

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Abstract

Batik is an Indonesian pattern cloth made by drawing motifs and dyeing. Batik has appointed as an intangible culture by UNESCO in 2009. Batik in Indonesia is categorized as handmade and stamped according to the production process. Indonesian batik has different patterns and motifs depending on their origin. Batik Lasem is a handmade batik from Lasem of Central Java, Indonesia. Batik Lasem has unique charms and mostly bright colors because it is formed from the acculturation of Javanese and Chinese. Batik Lasem is mostly produced in Lasem and it is sold in offline and online shops. This is a report on a project on community services from a collaboration between the author and one of the batik shops in Lasem. The project is creating a tutorial to introduce the making of handmade batik. The main tool and ingredients needed for making handmade batik are fabric, canting, wax, and coloring matter. The tutorial contains an explanation of equipment, material, and step by step on making handmade batik. The output of this project is a video and module for learning on making handmade batik.

Keywords: handmade, batik, acculturation, culture, Lasem.

INTRODUCTION

Batik is a painted Indonesian cloth made by creating motifs onto a piece of fabric and then coloring. Indonesian batik is appointed as an intangible cultural heritage on 2 October 2009 by UNESCO (UNESCO, 2009). There are two ways of making Indonesian batik, i.e, handmade batik, and stamp batik. A handmade batik is created by drawing patterns using wax in a piece of fabric and then it is through several processes to produce the result. The stamp batik is made by stamping the fabric using stamp tools to create the batik patterns.

Lasem is a town on the northern coast of Central Java, Indonesia. Lasem is one of the tourist destinations and it offers cultural tourism. Lasem has a unique charm that is formed from the acculturation of Javanese and Chinese cultures. The uniqueness of Lasem is defined in the house's architecture, food, and batik. Batik from Lasem is popular to be called batik Lasem and it has motifs that are named laseman. The laseman motifs are mostly colorful (Suminto, 2015). Some of the motifs of batik Lasem i.e aseman, gunung ringgit, latohan, krecak, and bledak (Handhayani, 2016) (Handhayani et al., 2017) (Irawan et al., 2018) (Maghfiroh, 2020). The popular features of motifs in batik Lasem are a mythical bird called Hong and plants that are the form of mixed cultures of Javanese and Chinese (Afandi, 2014). Batik Lasem is a handmade batik and all the process of making this batik are done manually. The example of Batik Lasems is displayed in Figure 1. A piece of batik Lasem normally has a size of 240 cm x 115 cm. Batik Lasem can be used to make clothes.



Figure 1. The examples of batik Lasem



(a) Batik Lasem production



(b) Batik Lasem showroom

Figure 2. The atmosphere in the batik house

Batik Lasem is produced by home industries in Lasem and in cities nearby, e.g, Pancur, Pamotan, and Rembang. Batik Lasem is sold in offline and online shops. Figure 2 shows the atmosphere in the batik house. A batik house in Lasem usually has a home industry to produce the batik and a showroom for marketing. The number of batik industries in Lasem has increased

from 42 in 2012 to 120 in 2017 (Aza et al, 2019). Labor is one of the factors that affect the productivity of the batik business (Ristiani and Haryati, 2016).

METHOD

Batik education for the young generation, i.e, designing the batik motifs and coloring, has been successfully held in community service (Sulaiman, et al., 2022). This paper is a report on community service with a partner of a batik shop in Lasem of Central Java, Indonesia. This project has been held in 2022. The condition before this project has been held was the partner had no documentation on how to make a handmade batik. The skills of making handmade batik are usually taught hereditary in the batik artist's family.



Figure 3. A flowchart of the project

The project has several stages that are described in Figure 3. In the early step, the author and partner discuss the production, home industry, promotion, and marketing of batik Lasem. The author and partner analyze the problems in the handmade batik industry. One of the problems is the young generation's less interest in making batik. It might cause a decreasing the number of batik artists in the future. Based on the discussion results, the author and partner agreed to create a tutorial about an introduction to the process of making handmade batik. The goal of this project is to create a tutorial to introduce the process of making handmade batik to the people and it is expected to increase their interest in learning batik art. The tutorial contains an introduction to the tools, materials, and stages of making a simple handmade batik. The documentation of the process of making handmade batik is recorded as photos and videos. The last step is editing the video tutorial.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The tools to make a handmade batik are a pencil, a canting, aluminium pans, stoves, containers, gloves, and a desk. Any kind of flat desk is possible to use as a pad for drawing batik patterns. A particular desk for batik is made from glass and wood and it is equipped with a lamp. Patterns are drawn in fabric using a pencil. A canting is a tool a like pen to scratch liquid wax in the fabric. The anatomy of a traditional canting is described in Figure 4(a). A canting contains canting tip(s), a wax chamber, and a stem. The liquid wax is coming out from the canting tip. The number of canting tips is probably to be more than one. Figure 4(b) shows the different sizes of canting tips. The metals used for making canting are mostly copper or brass. Pans and stoves are used to heat up the wax and boil the batik. The containers and gloves are used in the coloring stage.

The materials are a piece of white fabric, wax, white candle, water, and fabric dye. White fabric for batik is usually cotton or silk. Malam is a kind of wax, and it acts as ink. Figure 5 shows the wax that is called *malam*. The wax needs to head up to make it liquid. The liquid wax is useful to cover the pattern in a piece of white fabric. Melting the solid wax need 10 - 15 minutes and the stove must stay on during the process of covering the patterns to maintain the wax keep liquid. The wax is melted in an aluminium pan.

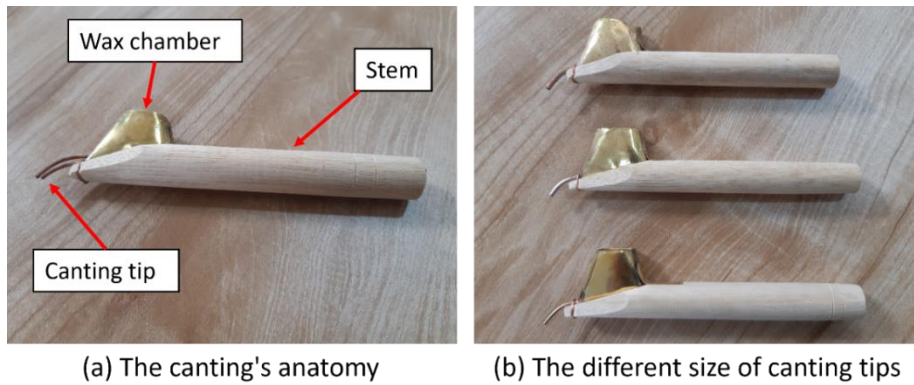


Figure 4. Traditional cantings

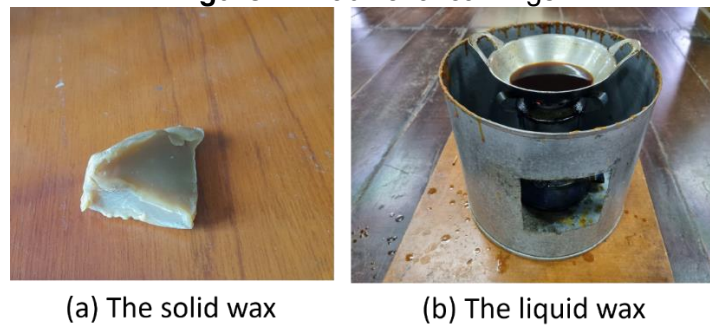


Figure 5. The solid and liquid wax

The first step of making handmade batik is drawing a sketch of patterns on the white fabric. For the beginner, it is easy to create a motif design and then copy the patterns. Figure 6(a) is an example of a motif design. Figure 6(b) shows a piece of white fabric that is made from cotton. The illustration of how to copy the motifs is displayed in Figure 6(c). A piece of fabric is put on top of a motif design than drawing the patterns using a pencil. Figure 6(d) shows a sketch of batik motifs.

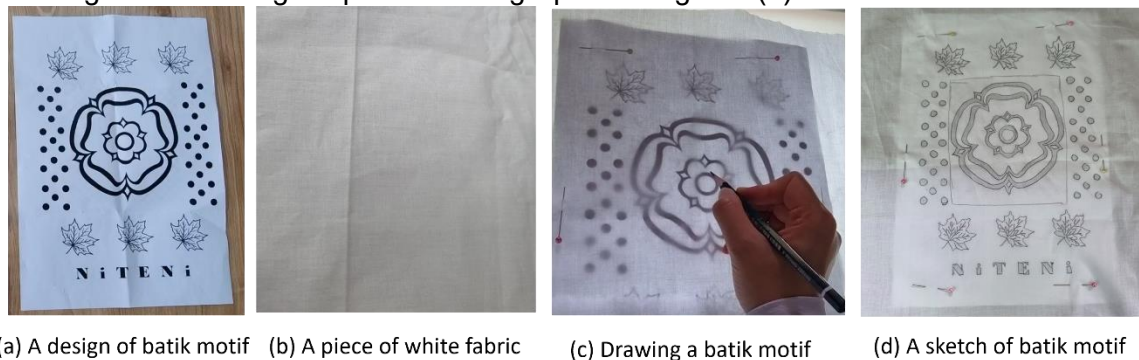


Figure 6. Drawing batik's patterns



Figure 7. Drawing the motifs using canting and liquid wax

The main step in making handmade batik is covering the sketch using liquid wax. Figure 7(a) shows the sketch is put on hoops to make it tight and easy to re-draw. In this step, it is used a canting. A canting works like a pen is used to put liquid wax on the pattern and the liquid wax acts as ink. Figure 7(b) illustrates how to fill up the canting. It needs to fill up the ink chamber to half. Figure 7(c) shows how to clean the canting from the liquid by rubbing it 3 - 4 times. It prevents the liquid wax drop in unwanted places. Figure 7(d) shows how to cover the pattern using liquid wax. This step needs skill and patience to produce a tidy batik raw. Figure 8 shows the patterns that are covered by liquid wax. Covering patterns using liquid wax must be done on both sides of the fabric. After all the patterns are covered by wax, the next step is coloring. The preliminary step before coloring is creating the border by coating the border areas using a melting white candle. Figure 9(a) shows how to melt the white candle by boiling it and Figure 9(b) describes how to create borders by smearing the liquid of a white candle in that area.

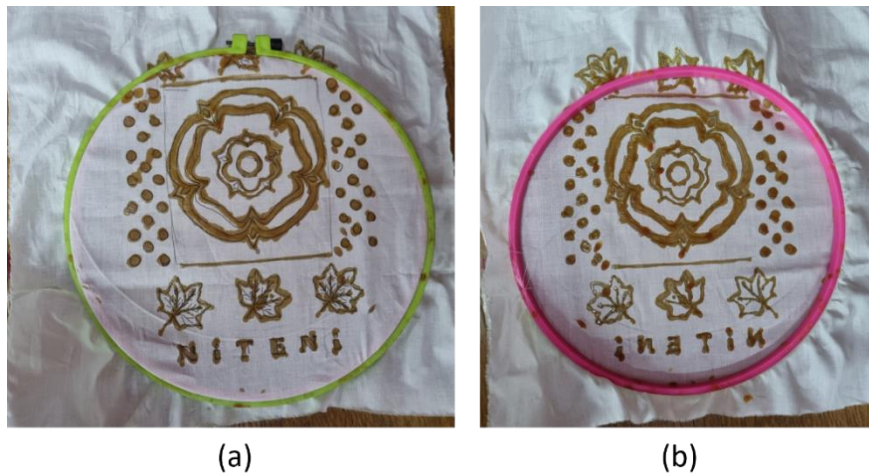


Figure 8. The batik patterns that are covered using liquid wax on both sides



Figure 9. Creating the borders



Figure 10. Coloring

In the coloring stage, it needs color ingredients. Two kinds of fabric dyes are artificial color and natural color. The natural colors are made from mixed of several plants. Figure 10 shows some stages in the coloring step. Figure 10(a) shows a raw batik washed using tap water at room temperature. The area covered by the white candle is squeezed to crush the candle and create random patterns. Figure 10(b) shows the raw batik is rinsed in the naphthol liquid to glue the color. The raw batik is then soaked in the color liquid, and is displayed in Figure 10(c). It only needs a few seconds if this is used artificial color. Coloring using natural ingredients possible to takes longer. After the coloring step, the batik is boiled to remove the wax and which is described in Figure 10(d). Boiling the batik is finished after the wax is removed from the fabric. Figure 10(e) shows the batik is washed using tap water at room temperature. The batik is dried under the sunshine and is illustrated in Figure 10(f). Drying handmade batik must be done manually. The examples of handmade batik produced from this experiment are displayed in Figure 11. The excellence of handmade batik is the motifs appear back and forth. Handmade batik is a masterpiece. The exact matching handmade batik probably does not exist even though they are created from the same design because the production is done manually. Unlike machines, a manual process has a high probability of being different from one another.



(a)

(b)

Figure 11. The examples of handmade batik

The output of this project is a video and a module for making handmade batik. The video is edited using the Openshot video editor and the module is created as a pdf file. The Openshot video editor is an open-source software for editing video that is available for Windows, Mac, and Linux (OpenShot Studios, 2023). Figure 12 shows the editing video using the Openshot video editor. The video and module are then distributed to the participants of the batik training. The video and module are also beneficial as tools to promote and introduce batik art to tourists.

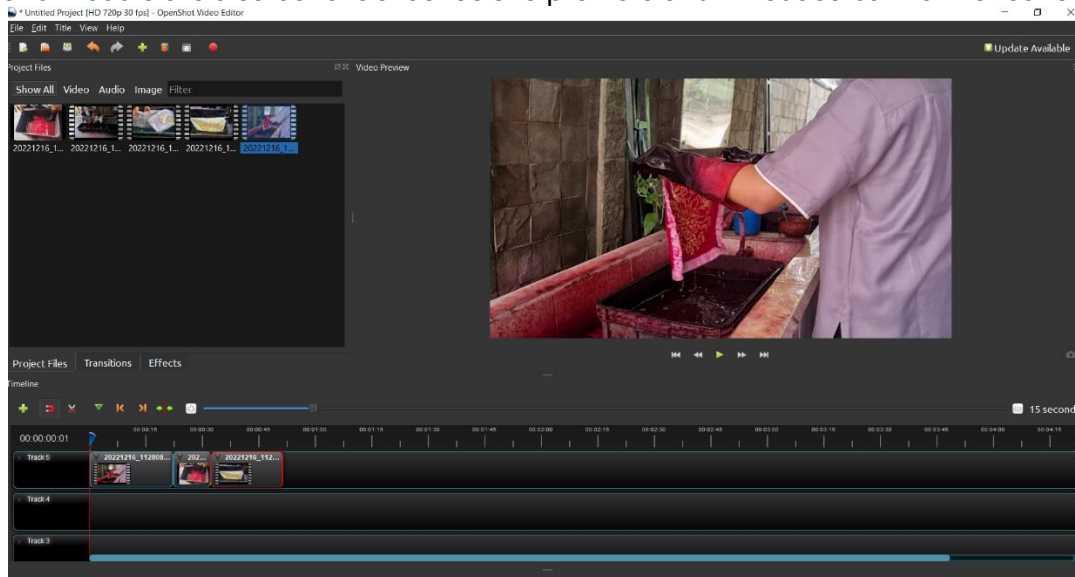


Figure 12. Video editing

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, handmade batik is a craft made by drawing patterns on a piece of fabric and it needs several steps e.g covering the patterns using liquid wax, coloring, boiling, and drying. Fabric, canting, wax, and coloring matter are the main tool and ingredients for making handmade batik. All the processes of making handmade batik are done manually. A video tutorial of making handmade is edited using Openshot video editor. A module for making handmade batik is created as a pdf file. The tutorial on making handmade batik is useful for batik houses as training materials for the internship. The other advantage of the tutorial is useful to spread batik art, help people to understand the batik process, and probably increase their interest in learning batik art and promoting handmade batik to tourists.

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