

The History of Laweyan Batik Village as the Oldest Batik Industry in Surakarta

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk: (1) mengetahui sejarah Kampung Batik Laweyan, (2) mengetahui perkembangan batik laweyan menjadi sentra industri batik, (3) mengetahui peran masyarakat dan pemerintah dalam mendukung eksistensi Kampung Batik Laweyan. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah metode historis dengan tahapan: (1) heuristik, (2) kritik sumber, (3) interpretasi, (4) historiografi. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa Kampung Batik Laweyan adalah salah satu kawasan budaya yang cukup terkenal di Surakarta. Kampung Batik Laweyan merupakan kawasan sentra industri batik yang unik, dan merupakan situs sejarah yang legendaris di Indonesia karena merupakan sentra industri batik tertua di Surakarta ini. Salah satu bukti yang menunjukkan bahwa batik laweyan merupakan batik tertua di Surakarta yaitu terdapat di batik Mahkota yang merupakan batik asli dari laweyan. Walau dalam perkembangannya Kampung Batik Laweyan mengalami pasang surut, Kampung Batik Laweyan tetap eksis hingga kini. Hal tersebut didukung dengan peran masyarakat dan instansi pemerintah sehingga warisan budaya yang ada tetap lestari.

Kata kunci: laweyan, batik, industri.

Abstract

This study aims to: (1) knowing the history of Laweyan Batik Village, (2) knowing the development of Laweyan Batik into a batik industry center, (3) knowing the role of the community and government in supporting the existence of Laweyan Batik Village. The research method used is the historical method with stages: (1) heuristics, (2) source criticism, (3) interpretation, (4) historiography. The results show that Laweyan Batik Village is one of the most famous cultural areas in Surakarta. Laweyan Batik Village is a unique batik industry center area, and is a legendary historical site in Indonesia because it is the oldest batik industry center in Surakarta. One of the evidences that show that laweyan batik is the oldest batik in Surakarta is found in Mahkota batik which is the original batik from laweyan. Although in its development Laweyan batik village experienced ups and downs, Laweyan Batik Village still exists until now. It is supported by the role of the community and government agencies so that the existing cultural heritage remains sustainable.

Keywords: laweyan, batik, industry.

INTRODUCTION

Laweyan is known as the oldest batik industry center in Surakarta (Rachmanto et al., 2020), it has been observed since the production of batik for the upper class and nobility of the Pajang Kingdom and the Surakarta Kingdom around the 1500s (Anisah & Dharma Tohjiwa, 2016). In the cultural heritage of Indonesia, Batik is

considered a high-quality art and is a part of ancient art forms. The history of batik in the city of Surakarta is connected with the Kasunanan Surakarta Palace and the Laweyan Village. Laweyan is one of the first batik industrial areas in Surakarta, and there are many batik patterns, with around 30 unique batik patterns from Surakarta.

According to Soedarmono (2006), since the early 15th century, the development of Laweyan began, which was a trading village and the center of the batik industry. The origin of batik in Laweyan began from the palace, namely King Pakubuwono II, and since then, the Laweyan community in making batik has still followed the same method as the palace, both in motif and pattern. Before Laweyan batik village was recognized as the oldest center of batik in Surakarta, it had a historical journey with the following periods: (1) During the economic crisis in 1977, (2) End of the New Order regime, (3) Post-crisis, (4) Reform era, (5) Declared as a batik industry center. (Majah, 2015b).

The etymology of the word "batik" consists of the words "amba" (to write) and "nitik" (dots), derived from the Javanese language, which combined means "writing with wax." The impression given is "someone is writing dots," which is done while batiking with dots along the edges. Another meaning of batik is the creation of dots on wax drops or cotton fabric. The author previously stated that the term "batik" should actually be written as "Bhatik". This refers to the use of "bhatik" as a combination of points, which was considered less appropriate (Ismail, 2017).

Discussing the history of batik in the city of Surakarta inevitably brings together the Kasunanan Surakarta Palace and

Laweyan Village. The conflict that led to a rift between the Surakarta Palace and the Ngayogyakarta Palace, caused by the Giyanti Agreement in 1755, serves as its basis. Consequently, the entire wardrobe or royal attire of the Mataram Kingdom was transferred to the Yogyakarta Palace. On the other hand, Pakubuwono II ordered all courtiers to create or design Gagrak Surakarta batik motifs. As a result of this command, the community seemed to compete in producing batik patterns, ultimately Various batik motifs emerged and subsequently gained popularity among the people. Pakubuwono II also established rules regarding the usage of batik fabrics permitted within the palace. There were several specific motifs allowed to be worn within the palace area. There are over 30 distinctive batik patterns of Surakarta, and the first batik industrial center in Surakarta is located in Laweyan (Anisah & Dharma Tohjiwa, 2016).

In historiography, there is research related to the history of Laweyan batik village that has been studied by other researchers. One such study is a thesis titled "The History of Traditional Batik Industry Development in Laweyan, Surakarta from 1965 to 2000" (Kusumawardani, 2006). The research described the history of batik development in Laweyan, Surakarta, from 1965 to 2000, as well as the factors influencing the growth of traditional batik industry activities in Laweyan Village. As

for research update in this study shows that Laweyan is indeed the oldest batik industry center in Surakarta. The urgency of this research is to describe and understand the local history of Laweyan batik village and its development into a center of batik industry, as well as to understand the roles of the community and government agencies in supporting the existence of Laweyan batik village.

METHOD

The research methodology used in this study is historical method (Wasino, 2020). According to Gottschalk (1975) the historical method involves the process of testing and analyzing historical records from the past. There are four stages in the historical method, one of which is: (a) Heuristics: This stage involves the search and collection of historical sources relevant to the research problem. These sources can include traces of the past, events, artifacts, and written documents (Notosusanto, 1971), (b) Source criticism or the process of obtaining authenticity and credibility of the data used (Pranoto, 2010). The way to do it is through two critiques. Criticism here involves an intellectual and rational process aligned with historical methodology to achieve objectivity in understanding an event, (c) Interpretation, the determination of interconnected meanings between acquired facts, aims to obtain a sequence of events that hold significance (Wardah,

2014), (d) Historiography is the manner of writing, reporting, or presenting the results of conducted historical research (Abdurahman, 1999).

Besides using literature sources, researchers also utilized sources from interviews and observations. Interviews and observations were conducted between September 2023 and November 2023 in Laweyan as the research object. The collection of sources through interviews aimed to understand the history and development of Laweyan Village with Mr. Muhammad Rizqi Darmawan (28), the manager of the Laweyan Batik Village Development Forum (FPKBL), on November 13, 2023, at Batik Toeli Laweyan. Mr. Tom Festarandi, as the chairman of the Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis), was interviewed on December 1, 2023, in Laweyan Village to gain insights into the history of Laweyan Batik Village and related evidence of events in Laweyan.

Additionally, direct interviews were conducted with Mr. Alfa Pabela Priyatmono (63), an architecture lecturer at Muhammadiyah University and a Laweyan history expert, on December 8, 2023, at Batik Mahkota Laweyan. Furthermore, Mr. Pandono (44), the owner of Pandono Abstract Batik Tulis, was interviewed on December 9, 2023, at Jl. Sentono RT 02 RW 02 Laweyan Surakarta to gather more information about the

history and evidence related to events in Laweyan.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The History of Laweyan Batik Village

According to Soedarmono (2006) Laweyan is a trading village and a center of the batik industry, which began to develop in the early 15th century. Then, in the early 20th century, this area reached its peak as a batik trading center. Laweyan, which was once a center of the thread industry with many cotton trees, later developed into a center of textile and clothing materials industries. Fabrics from weaving and clothing materials are called "lawe" (Putri, 2011) cited from (Majah, 2015b). Laweyan Village, before being declared as Laweyan Batik Village and the oldest batik industrial center in Surakarta, has a long history. Laweyan Village has existed since the Pajang Kingdom around the 1500s, where most of Laweyan's territory was originally a forest with mostly cotton trees.

According to Darmawan, 28, in an interview on November 13, 2023, "It all started because of economic factors that have become a priority for humans, as there are cause and effect factors. Laweyan Village has existed since the Pajang Kingdom around the 1500s. In the Pajang Kingdom, there was Laweyan village. Laweyan initially was not a rich cotton plantation/forest. Laweyan comes from the word 'lawe' which means cotton

and 'yan' is thread, so it is termed as a cotton or weaving village".

Pandono (44) stated in an interview on December 9, 2023, "The potential owned by Laweyan was then utilized by the community to make cloth based on cotton. According to Pandono, Laweyan comes from 'lawe' which means thread. In the past, we were spinning industry in 1800/1700, we were the thread industry".

Laweyan is famous for its batik village because most of the Laweyan community has been producing batik up to now. Batik production in Laweyan is the oldest in Surakarta (Rachmanto et al., 2020). In 1997, Laweyan was declared as a cultural heritage area, tourist destination, and the oldest batik center in Surakarta because it has existed before the 15th century (Anisah & Dharma Tohjiwa, 2016).

According to batik entrepreneur Pandono (44), in an interview on December 9, 2023, he said, "Yes, indeed, this village has been around since 1800. This village existed before the Solo Palace. This village has been here since the Pajang era. Pajang, Demak, Kudus, Kartasura, Surakarta, and then Yogyakarta. So, it's really ancient." In the past, village names were based on common practices, for example: (1) Mutihan Village, which was used to bleach cloth because it was originally grayish-brown, known as "mekao" in the cloth world, (2) Gajahan Village, which used to be an elephant arena during the kingdom

era, (3) Jayengan Village, because most of the people in the village made herbal drinks or water for events at the palace, (4) Laweyan Village, which comes from "lawe" meaning thread, which was originally a spinning industry.

Laweyan is indeed the oldest center or hub of batik in Surakarta, as evidenced by the presence of the oldest batik still in existence, namely Batik Mahkota 1800. The oldest batik existed before the Solo Palace in Yogyakarta, and Laweyan Village was already established almost simultaneously with the Pajang Kingdom. The Laweyan mosque, which was originally a temple, was converted into a mosque. The youngest batik outside Solo, Sragen, Masaran, and Pasar Kliwon markets. According to Alfa (63), the owner of the oldest batik in Surakarta, in an interview on December 8, he stated, "In Laweyan, it is the oldest batik in Surakarta. Young batiks outside Laweyan learn batik in Laweyan. When they can make batik, they start a batik business."



Picture 1. Evidence of Laweyan as the oldest batik.
(Source: Personal documentation dated November 18, 2023)

The Development of Laweyan Batik into a Batik Industry Center

In the history of Surakarta's development, Laweyan has played a significant role as an area known for producing hand-drawn, stamped, and printed batik. The origin of batik in Laweyan is from the palace, king Pakubuwono II. At first, batik in the royal/keraton sphere was just a side job for the royal princesses who would later be presented to their respective lovers, as the interests of the king's (clothing) and the court officials, Raja Pakubuwono II only appoints those who are fascist or skilled in batik who are specialized in the palace to produce batik cloth. Because the king and every keraton relative up to the head of Balang there needed batik cloth, the king also ordered the village heads to find areas that produce batik (Dinda, et.al, 2017).

Through the village head, the Laweyan area was finally acquired. Laweyan consists of the word Lawe (string), because in ancient times this area was the production site of woven fabrics, so the king appointed Laweyan and used as an area supplying batik fabrics. Initially, the Laweyan population produced batik through writing (only by hand, and similar motifs such as the motif of the palace, namely the motif of Ceplok, the motif of Parang, the motif of Limar, the motif of Semen, and the motif of Lunglungan). It is still wearing Javanese sog (plant natural dye) which takes a

very long time. Then, when the batik was finished, the batik was given to the palace, and other small remains were distributed outside, because the lower class could not afford the expensive batik cloth (Kusumandari, 2011).

The use of batik that can only be used among kings and royal nobles because batik has a special motif and is expensive, thus making the people unable to use it. Based on these limitations, Kyai Ageng Henis encouraged him to move, supported by at that time he was an upper class of the kingdom and a follower of the King who was also required to dress in batik at every activity, as well as at royal ritual events. He immediately took advantage of this valuable opportunity in an effort to develop his artistic potential through batik.

Batik was distributed for the first time by Kyai Ageng Henis, who loved art, as was the teaching of his teacher, Sunan Kalijaga. Kyai Ageng Henis began to be active in providing instruction on how to make batik. He worked on his batik at his own house in Laweyan as his fiefdom. Batik work originally carried out by the sons and courtiers, in the subsequent development of batik art was introduced and taught to the santri who studied to him. Until then, batik eventually began to become a rapid home industry activity, and was seriously managed by merchants to create extraordinary financial benefits.

It continued with the discovery of stamping tools around the beginning of the XVIII century that originated from tree slabs, but because they were easily decomposed, they were replaced with wood to make them more durable. As time went by, coupled with the rapid development of batik made one of Laweyan batik entrepreneurs, namely Bp. Cokro Sumarto, making copper-derived stamping equipment durable because wood-based stamping equipment is considered inefficient. The tool is called *canting cap* and the result is called *batik cap*. The tool was created to be able to produce large quantities in a fairly short tempo, but with these modern tools, Laweyan did not intend to leave written batik. Instead, it also produces batik writing, batik stamp and a mixture of batik stamp and batik writing. Until now, written batik and *cap batik* have developed side by side.

The success achieved in the economic sector has an impact on the predicate it bears. Therefore, Laweyan village is also iconic with the nickname of its hometown of batik merchants. So Laweyan, who in the past only produced woven fabrics, is now a batik producer. Also with the Laweyan community's social life pattern, known as a unit of a compact, creative, independent society, and has a high work ethic.

Laweyan in a period of economic crisis in 1997, in Laweyan, Batik

production declined after the 1970s due to the introduction of batik print technology from China so that batik entrepreneurs in Laweyan started to stop production as they lost the competition. In addition, it is due to the lack of regeneration of business successors in that year. Then, at the end of the new order, there was turmoil in various regions, one of which was Laweyan Surakarta. In 1997, there's many batik entrepreneurs were initially able to maintain their strength and eventually began to give up one by one because the economic crisis caused the price of batik raw materials to rise rapidly (Majah, 2015b).

After the crisis, the life of the laweyan people, the end of the New Order period gradually restored the economic glory of Laweyan people. The batik entrepreneurs who still survive have begun to increase their batik production, in addition to written batik and stamp batik also began to increase their batik stamp production. The end of the New Order period was followed by the Reformation period. The advent of the Reformation made it easier for Laweyan people to interact or socialize. They're starting to get on good terms with each other.

This was also inseparable from the similarities in their fate at the time, which felt similarly constrained by the New Order's reign (Majah, 2015b). In the end, since 2004, Laweyan has also declared his declaration that his area is a central

tourist environment or batik industry center.

The Participation of the Community and Government Institution in Supporting the Existence of the Laweyan Batik Village

a. The role of the Community

The role of the community or batik traders in supporting the existence of the Laweyan Batik village by not dropping between traders but helping each other. Kampung Batik Laweyan produces many types of batik making, such as Batik tulis, Batik Tulis Abstract, Batik Cap, Batik Printing, and many others. Batik entrepreneurs in Laweyan have their own characteristics, such as Batik Pando with Batik Tulis Abstrak, Batik Mahkota Laweyan with Batik Tulis and batik courses for tourists, Batik Mletik tulis and cap Yu Indah, and other Batik traders in the Laweyan area.

Between traders or craftsmen there is an unwritten agreement or based on a mutual agreement which if there are people who want to learn batik then it will be directed to Batik Mahkota or other Batik craftsmen who open the course, If tourists want to look for abstract written batik directed to Batik Pando or other Batik craftsmen who both produce abstract written batik, the point is between businessmen or Batik craftsmen helping each other and not knocking Pando down, (44) in an interview on December 9, 2023.

b. The role of the Government Institution

The role of the government institutions in supporting the existence of laweyan batik villages is carried out by: promoting laweyan as one of the tourist destinations in Surakarta, introducing laweyan to the wider community to increase visits, help socialization related to the history of lawyan so that the people participate with the government in contributing to the tourism sector, and play a role in providing business capital for the troubled community (Majah, 2015b).

According to Darmawan (28,) the management of FPKBL in an interview on November, 13 2023 "In addition to funding, the government also provides facilities rich in lighting infrastructure construction, leisure spaces rich in small yards in laweyan, small billboards (tourism information) to help promote tourism through social media. The promotion is like if there is a seminar helping in terms of sponsorship or what kind of event in Laweyan is being a sponsor".

CONCLUSION

Based on the things that have been explained, it was concluded that Laweyan is the oldest batik industrial center in Surakarta. Laweyan initially grew so rapidly, but gradually as time went by, there began to be a setback. The decline from the traditional batik industry in Laweyan Village, Surakarta, is due to a

number of factors, starting from the emergence of batik printing and large textile industries, then the role of cooperatives, and raw materials as well as workers. The peak was in 1997, there was an economic crisis and numerous riots that caused the economic condition of Laweyan batik entrepreneurs to completely collapse. However, with the end of the New Order period, Laweyan people's economic glory finally improved. Then starting in 2004, Laweyan also declared its area as the scope of the central tourist area of the batik industrial center. The community and the government have an important role in maintaining and supporting the existence of this Laweyan Surakarta batik village.

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