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Batik Discharge Method is Keeping Traditional Batik Sarongs Alive

Nikfarhana Zuhir¹, Rafeah Legino^{2*}

* Corresponding Author

¹ Postgraduate Research Student, College of Creative Arts, Universiti Teknologi MARA Shah Alam 40450 Selangor Malaysia

² Formgiving Research Group, College of Creative Arts, Universiti Teknologi MARA Shah Alam 40450 Selangor Malaysia

nickana1994@gmail.com, rafeahl@uitm.edu.my
Tel: +60173680870

Abstract

This project was partly the outcome of a visit to East Coast batik makers, specifically in Kelantan and Terengganu. There was a lot of activity there due to the visit to the Ayu Fashion Batik workshop in Tumpat, Kelantan. The observation at the session helped contribute to a better knowledge of the process of methodical batik discharge. An interview with the owner of a batik producer provides a more in-depth explanation of the process, which reveals that this approach was relatively based on an experiment in the batik technique to vary the batik sarong and maintain and keep the tradition.

Keywords: Batik Technique, Discharge, Dyeing Process, Traditional Batik Sarong

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1.0 Introduction

The main goal of this study was to show that the discharge batik technique is one of the new ways to make batik sarongs for the Malaysian market. The reader should bear in mind that the study is based on the process of batik discharge technique in traditional batik sarong cloth that batik makers have used from the east coast states in Malaysia, which are Kelantan and Terengganu only. Referring to Embong (2012), Terengganu has a reputation for producing high-quality sarongs. In the meantime, Kelantan manufacturers became experts at making batik yardage, especially using the discharge method. Sapiai et al. (2021) say that there has been a lot of innovation in batik pattern design in Malaysia and around the world, whether in pattern design, manufacturing techniques, or product production. This scenario arises as a result of changing societal tastes, which necessitates pattern design innovation so that batik remains a relevant fashion used in tandem over time, whether as fashion, soft packaging products, interior decoration, or batik-based handicraft products. The two aspects that distinguish batik are its variety of designs, and its manufacturing procedures. The term "variety pattern" refers to the motifs used in batik. "Manufacturing procedures," on the other hand, refer to the steps of dyeing fabric and making a wax-based resistance. Therefore, this study discusses the manufacturing process that involves the discharge process technique on sarong batik fabric.

2.0 Literature Review

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The literature review is derived from various sources in recent and previous data. The categorisation of related literature is concentrated on the history of batik, where the origin is discovered and discussed. The traditional technique of batik is still sustained, but when the technology of material was introduced, the batik makers also took part in exploring the possible technique. The batik makers passionately conducted an experiment in their workshop, where the medium of batik was added and introduced the use of dyeing of sodium hydrosulphite (bleach agent). This technique is also made for batik sarong.

2.1 History of Batik

The history of batik, where it deals with its origin, is still uncertain. Sathiyaroopa (2020), said " Batik" comes from a Javanese word that means wax writing. The old design method is made by holding the woven fabric using liquid wax, rice, paste, and some other non-water-soluble materials. The fabric is then dipped in dye or painted. Batik is known to have existed for over 35,000 years and is used mostly among the Austronesian people living in Southeast Asia. Meanwhile, Kerlogue (2004) stated that batik is the most well-known textile form in Indonesia. Batik, in its most basic form, is cloth decorated by drawing lines in wax to protect parts of the undyed fabric from colouring in the dyebath. This type of cloth has a strong royal connection. Kerlogue and Pospisilova (2021) said that the batik of Java holds a special place in museum textile collections, and various aspects of batik art have been extensively discussed. However, the batik products between Indonesia and Malaysia have differences. The statement by Ismail and Yajid (2021) showed that Malaysia's batik sector is heavily dependent on the appreciation of history and culture, both of which have been pushed to the edges by the fast pace of time. Razali et al. (2021) declared that batik is a textile art or craft created using several textile design techniques. According to the World-Asia Pacific Craft Council, Batik is among the most well-known local crafts in the world. Malaysia's batik industry faces competition from cheaper and more contemporary external products. Blockmakers must be aware of the culture and society of batik.

Generally, Malaysian batik manufacturing is dominated by two techniques: hand-drawn batik, also known as batik tjanting, and stamp batik, also known as batik block (Hamid, 2022). The design of batik can mean a lot of different things. It can be formal or show the community's traditional worldview and social culture. In order to keep the history and reputation of batik at a high level (Abdullah, 2019), people are making modern batik designs. Malaysia's batik industry has faced numerous competitions, not only from other batik producers but also from different types of clothes in terms of style, design, and textiles. A large amount of batik from Indonesia and China entered Malaysia, endangering the local industry (Tahir & Mahadi, 2021).

2.2 The Expansion of the Batik Technique

Batik sarong is a traditional textile industry still produced in the Malaysian states of Terengganu and Kelantan on the East Coast. Referred to by Zuhir et al. (2022), a batik sarong is a piece of fabric two meters long and dyed using the batik method to create a cylindrical tube shape that reaches from the wearer's waist to the heel. Women in the past wore batik sarongs everywhere they went. It was acknowledged as proper attire when attending special events rather than just at home (Razali, 2022). Batik sarong competes with mass-produced global fashion products. Because of that, sarong designs are usually decorated with various motifs and form various techniques or patterns to remain intact and attract the interest of today's customers (Roslan et al., 2018).

Batik block is one of the traditional processes of making batik sarong cloth. In Malaysia, batik is produced with various designs on the block and stamped into the fabric. East Coast batik makers were the first to use wax in the application procedure in the 1920s. The first step in manufacturing batik stamps is to taste a natural black dye with woodblock nest carvings. It is often known as Batik Cap or Batik Terap on the East Coast. The traditional batik block is a national treasure in Malaysia, but it is going out of style quickly, especially on the east coast. Batik block production is decreasing as younger generations lose interest in the craft. (Naser et al., 2021). According to Lias et al. (2020), the originality of the batik pattern can be seen in its use of general repetition, vertical stripes, and horizontal stripes. Based on Khwansuwan (2021), it is explained that the batik block process refers to the use of blocks made from metal, wood, or ropes that are dipped into hot melted candles. Then, they were immediately stamped on the fabric. The fabric is repeatedly dyed 3 to 4 times in cold dyeing. The discharge technique is one of the dyeing methods applied in conjunction with the batik block process.

The discharge technique removes dyes by destroying or altering dye with various chemicals or bleaches such as chlorine or hydrosulphite (Ab Kadir, 2006). This process is known as the relief, extract, bleaching or reverse dyeing technique. As stated by Noviyanti (2019), the bleaching batik technique is an innovation by replacing the colouring process on batik with the bleaching technique, which has its own aesthetic and unique value. Yunus also agreed with this statement (2012), saying that the waxing and dyeing process, as well as the final images, can be altered by adjusting the colour selection and sequence, utilising the discharge method of removing colour with an acid bleach or applying some colours by hand. Moawaed's (2022) research on discharged printing revealed that a stripping chemical known as sodium hyposulfite is used to remove colours from cloth. The most fundamental discharge approach is minimisation. Several printers use the phrases "reducing agent" and "discharging agent" interchangeably. In addition to discharge techniques, there are several techniques commonly used by batik makers in the production of batik sarong fabric in the Malaysian market, such as cracker, marble and overlap techniques. As mentioned by Hussin (2020), Stamp batik, hand-drawn batik, screening batik, marbling, tie and dye, and discharge are some of the other techniques that can be used in batik. Crackling is another technique that can achieve exciting textures and patterns by letting the wax cool apply to the fabric and then crumpling the batik. While based on the study of Hafiza et al. (2021), the marbling technique is the fabrication of block batik using wax and the design of marbling patterns through the use of reactive dyes, which are Remazol dyes mixed with alginate, which acts as dye movement control agent.

3.0 Methodology

The review of related literature was defined from the most recent and previous compilation that links with the technique used in the production of batik sarongs. The study was conducted as a field visit to the Ayu Fashion Batik workshop in Tumpat, Kelantan. Data for this study were gathered via interviews using an open-ended questionnaire with the owners of batik makers, observation, and digital documentation. The location of this research was determined by purposive method, i.e., based on specific criteria or considerations in accordance with the purposes of the activity's implementation.

4.0 Results and Discussion

The analysis and results section discusses the batik discharge process, the examples and experiments that have been done, and practice based on review and referral from batik makers.



Fig. 1: The traditional batik sarong (Discharge Technique)
(Sources: Nikfarhana Zuhir, 2022)

Figure 1 displays an example of the batik sarong discharge technique as a sample of batik sarong cloth from the batik Ayu Fashion company. If you look at the line of the motif pattern, which is a unique part of the fabric, you can tell that this method was used. The colour of the motif wax line is much darker than the background colour compared to the traditional technique, in which the line would be lighter than the colour of the background. The line is dark brown, while the background is soft brown. All this happens because of the discharge technique. The following paragraph will go over an explanation of the batik discharge technique.

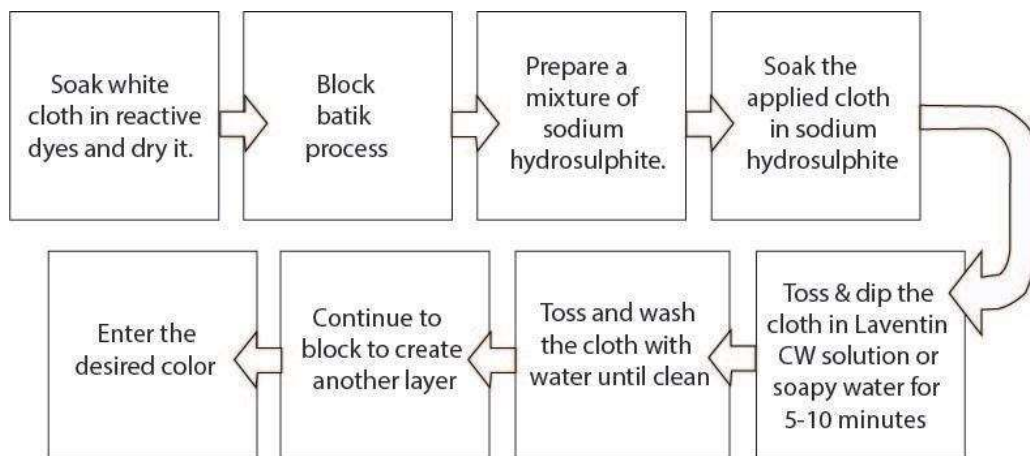


Fig. 2: The process of the batik discharge technique

The diagram (Fig.2) shows the process of the batik discharge technique. The first step of the discharge technique is to colour the background. The white cloth will be soaked in reactive dye and dry the fabric before continuing with the next step. Usually, the Remazol

colour will be used most of the time. This technique contrasts with the traditional method, which would stamp the block first, followed by the dyeing process. The process is set up in reverse order. The second step after colouring the background is the block batik process. The blocks with motif designs made from metal are dipped into the hot wax. Then they immediately stamped on the fabric.

The sodium hydrosulphite mixture is then prepared, and the applied cloth is soaked in sodium hydrosulphite. The goal of fabric soaking is to bleach the colour that has previously been applied to the cloth. A bleaching chemical used in this method is sodium hydrosulphite. After the soaking process in the solution is completed, toss and soak the cloth in the Laventin CW solution or soapy water for 5 to 10 minutes. The purpose of this is to neutralise the acid. The process was repeated by thoroughly rinsing the cloth in water until the colour was gone and the water turned clear. After the fabric is completely dried, continue stamping the motif into the fabric for the second layer. The procedure for this phase is the same as the second stamping step: enter the desired colour on the fabric layer. The chosen colour is brighter than the one previously used. This will be the new background colour. The last step is colour fixing, which is the same procedure all batik processing undergoes.



Fig. 3: Experimenting with the batik discharge technique.
(Sources: Nikfarhana Zuhir, 2022)

The process of the discharge technique is the same as block batik, but the differences are enhanced to explore the batik dyeing technique. Most batik makers use different types of creativity to share innovation and exploration of the batik medium and represent their own product identity. They use different recipes, which are sometimes too secret to share. They only share general processes but not the detailed explanations to explore the technique. In this case, I also explored different alternatives, and finally, the attempt at discharge technique could form a batik discharge character that can be seen in Figure 3 above. In this experiment, I changed sodium hydrosulphite and used Clorox bleach, which functions as the bleaching agent and a hand-drawn batik process rather than a batik block.

5.0 Conclusion

In conclusion, although the origin of the discharge technique is unknown, it can be seen in batik production in Malaysia, Indonesia, and Thailand. The discharge technique is a technique that has long been used in the production of batik in Malaysia, but it has been abandoned due to the complexity of manufacturing. The process is not as simple as standard techniques. The application of the discharge technique on a batik sarong results in a garment with a higher aesthetic and artistic value. If this process is established and widely used, it will be good and can be our identity for batik sarongs of Malaysian design. These objectives can also be theoretically and practically realised in the curricula of art and design courses in higher education institutions. Those who make batik will have more options available if these batik production methods are developed.

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