

Aesthetic Values of *Cocohan* or *Coblosan* Motifs on Tuban Gedhog Handmade Batik

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Abstract: This paper discusses about the relationship between the cosmological view of society and aesthetic values of “*Cocohan* or *Coblosan*” motif on Tuban Gedhog handmade batik. “*Cocohan* or *Coblosan*” motif is one of the typical characteristics of traditional handmade batik that is different from the other handmade batiks in Indonesia. The produced colorful dots on the background of Gedhog handmade batik cloth from coloring process by means of punching the waxed cloth on Gedhog handmade batik motif is related to the cosmological view of society in Kerek district, Tuban regency. This study uses ethnography method in order to know the cosmological view of society and visual morphology method in order to reveal the aesthetic values on Gedhog handmade batik through visual elements in the form of motif and motif background. The finding of this study can explain that *Cocohan* or *Coblosan* motif on Gedhog handmade batik is only found in motifs having plant stilation element not in geometric ones. The aesthetic values on Gedhog handmade batik with “*Cocohan* or *Coblosan*” background have meaning related to the cosmological concept of human being life cycle from birth to death or to the end of life.

1 INTRODUCTION

Gedhog handmade Batik is made traditionally on Gedhog woven cloth, a woven cloth made by women of Kerek area, Tuban Regency, starting from *ngantih* (spinning cotton) into *lawe* (thread) then stringing thread using traditional loom into rough textured woven cloth. The produced Gedhog woven cloth will be motif or plain. A motif woven is made with pattern that may guide the *Pembatik* (maker of batik) to arrange batik motif consisting of *cecekan* (dots) using geometric composition to compose *Satriyan*, *KijingMiring*, *Cuken*, or *Krompol* motifs. Such woven motif can be vertical and horizontal pinstripe or the meeting of both lines to be *KedeleKecer*, *JanganMenir*, *Tutul* Bang motifs or parallel lines in the form of *Galaran*, *UlerGaling* motifs and other various motifs.

Plain Gedhog woven or without motif is used by *Pembatik* to make various typical motifs of Gedhog batik having geometric pattern or flora and fauna motif. Generally, Gedhog handmade uses the background (basic color) of *putihan* (whitish pattern), *biruan* (bluish pattern), *laseman* (yellowish brown pattern), *bang biron* (red and blue patterns), *bang*

tegeran (red pattern) or *irengan* (blackish pattern) (Djumena, 2005: 5). On *putihan*, *biron*, *laseman*, *bang biron*, *bang tegeran* patterns with flora and fauna motif we can find *Cocohan* or *Coblosan* motif (colored fine dots), while *irengan* pattern is usually used for geometric motif. This *Cocohan* or *Coblosan* is one of the differentiators of various motifs of batik from other regions.

The process of making batik using *Cocohan* or *Coblosan* technique is relatively complicated than the other general techniques of making Batik. The proses of *mencocoh* or *mencoblos* (punching) is the technique of making batik by punching the covered batik cloth (a cloth covered by *lilin batik*/ wax) using thorn or needle on the whole surface of cloth in order to allow the color entered into punched cloth at the time of coloring process. The colored dots from *Cocohan* or *Coblosan* (punching) which is integrated with *ren-renan* (sharp pointed leave or thorny) motif and Hong bird, *Sri Gunting* bird, *Emprit* bird motif or stilation of other flora and fauna add the exotism on Gedhog handmade batik).

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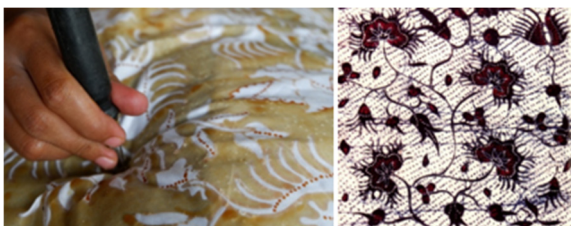


Figure 1: The process of punching (*mencocoh* or *mencoblos*) and Gedhog batik with *Cocohan* or *Coblosan* of *bangrod* pattern (Source of document: Bramantijo, 2018).

Some motifs of Gedhog handmade batik using *Cocohan* or *Coblosan* (punching) as the background of motifs are *Gedhang Secengkeh*, *Kembang Kluwih*, *Kembang Waluh*, *Ganggeng*, and *Kolorambat*. The traditional cloth motifs of Gedhog handmade batik generally is related to the tradition of Kerek people as agricultural society. According to Sutarto (2008: 1), on agricultural – traditional society that can be found in the most of Indonesian people, tradition and myth will dominantly take part of their daily life. Their traditional ceremonies or art products have the relationship with the success of harvest and the worship of some supernatural powers. The kind of agricultural art showing grateful upon good and abundant harvest will be in the form of flora and fauna, season and water, threat and protection from various supernatural powers to be believed to bring prosperity or destruction to the farmer's life.

The weaving tradition using Gedhog loom and making batik on woven cloth have been existed for a long time ago for Kerek people in Tuban Regency. From generation to generation Gedhog handmade batik cloth is taken as important component to perform various ritual ceremonies which is deemed as sacred by local society, such as customary activities of the birth, marriage and also the death in undergoing the life cycle. Woven cloth and Batik cloth according to Kerek people's view have relationship with cosmological view of society of such cloth maker (Heringa, 2010).

2 METHODOLOGY

This study is conducted to reveal the relationship of aesthetic values of *Cocohan* or *Coblosan* (punching) motif on Gedhog handmade batik according to the cosmological view of society of creator and user of Gedhog handmade batik in Kerek, Tuban Regency. This study is ethnographic meaning that the researchers interact directly with the object and subject of research, conduct observation, interview,

take a note and make documentation to the society social interaction, thoughts and its cultural behavior. According to Putra (2010), Morphology method can be interpreted as a method to see the form and structure of an object or in other descriptive, morphology is a composition and relationship between parts of an object. In this study, visual morphology method is used to explain the meaning contained in Gedhog handmade batik cloth through research to the visual elements owned, such as: motif, decoration, composition and color.

3 FINDING AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Cotton and NiniThowok Myth

People in Kerek area has tradition of weaving and making batik for a long time ago. The skill of weaving using Gedhog loom and making batik on rough textured Gedhog woven cloth becomes an activity for Kerek's women in spending their time when they don't go to the farm or at the time of waiting for planting season. The life of Kerek people is very depended to the farming activities by planting corn, peanut and cotton. The rainfall in Kerek area is relatively low, so the rice plant can only be planted on one season, at the time of rainy season.

The work of processing soil in the farm will be the responsibility of a man, and the woman will assist when they are needed. The tradition of weaving and making batik is very closely related to the agricultural life of Kerek people, especially planting cotton. Cotton is a vital material to make *lawe* (woven thread), so cotton plant is special treated, starting from processing the soil, planting and harvesting cotton. There are two types of cotton produced by Kerek area, white cotton and brown cotton. The two types of this cotton will be processed by Kerek's women to be thread as the material of weaving.

Planting cotton is an important part of Kerek's people tradition, moreover it is covered by myths that are told from generation to generation. Planting cotton is mainly performed by a man, starting from processing the field of cotton up to harvesting. The characteristic of field land in Kerek area is not loose soil, it is clay mixed, so it will be hard in dry season and clayey in rainy season. Cotton plant is planted in the beginning of dry season, when the soil in the field is quite hard and clayey. The cotton seed is inserted into the hole with 6-8 cm deep, the result of *Naju* process (making the hole by plugging in pointed wooden stick). *Naju* is conducted by a man, since plugging in pointed wooden stick in the soil needs a

strong power. Then the cotton seed is inserted to the hole with 1 or 2 step of a man or it is known as *icir*. Inserting the cotton seed to the hole is also conducted by a man, sometimes by a woman, further the land is covered by loose soil mixed with manure, the process of covering is known as *hurug*.



Figure 2: The process of *Naju* before inserting the cotton seed into the land (Source of document: Bramantijo, 2019).

Land is identical with a woman and wooden stick called as *taju* is identical with a man. *Naju* and *icir* are the responsibility of a man. Punching the hole in the land by *taju* is a symbol of *lumpang* and *alu* (Javanese pestle). Punching the hole in the land by plugging in *taju* is like to start the ritual of fertility. Planting cotton is a tradition symbolizing ritual of fertility cycle (the meeting between man and woman). Punching the holes in the land through *Naju* process is believed by older *Pembatik* (the informant of study) is closely related to *Cocohan* or *Coblosan* (colored fine dots) on the background (basic color) and *Gedhog Batik* pattern of *corakputihan* (whitish pattern), *corakbiron* (bluish pattern), *corak bang biron* (red and blue patterns), and *corak bang tegeran* (red pattern). *Cocohan* or *Coblosan* (red, blue or blackish blue dots) on *Gedhog Batik* background have philosophy meaning based on *Gedhog Batik* allotment in Kerek's people tradition, namely device in tradition of birth, marriage and death.

For Kerek's people, cotton as clothing material in the form of woven and batik has important role to the ritual tradition and myths of Kerek's people life. There is a legend in Kerek's people told by their ancestor that Kerek has very wide field of cotton, white cotton is seen glittering likes the sky in the

night decorated by stars. When the full moon, in the surface of the moon there is an old lady, namely *NiniThowok* (a sunken eye and cheek old lady) working with her spinning tool. *NiniThowok* twisted her spinning tool gently and sent the spinned cotton thread to the earth in the form of moonlight

NiniThowok that is also called as *NiniDhiwut* or frizzy hair grandma is described as dissident and disobedient figures. Therefore, the corpse of *NiniThowok* is unaccepted to be buried in the earth and needs *jambe tree* (*Areca catechu*), the wood of which can be used as a material of certain part of spinning tool. Further, it is told that *NiniDhiwut* flew fastly shouting to call the moon. It is believed up to the present time that *NiniThowok* still live in the moon and maintain her cotton field in the sky. *NiniThowok* is called "the moonlight" and it is believed as guiding and protecting spirit for Kerek's people when they find difficulty in spinning. So that before spinning, Kerek's women in the past time made gift to her as a part of Hindu-Javanese ritual known as *BagendoNgalih* or "Your Majesty changed form" (Heringa, 2010: 40).

According to Soedarso (1991: 35) for traditional farmer, soil fertility is not adequate achieved by improving the new agricultural system, but by invisible powers. Therefore, it can be interpreted that agricultural people in order to fertile their rice field, besides making an effort by logical methods, making contact with supranatural powers (*adikodrati*) in the form of ceremony or salvation is required. The meaning of the legend of *NiniThowok* becomes the idea of cloth system creation in Kerek area. This does not stand alone, but constitute a part of the very complex systems that is related each other to many aspects of life in society

3.2 *Cocohan* or *Coblosan* Patern and Motif on *Gedhog* Handmade Batik in Ritual Tradition

Gedhog handmade Batik cloth with *Cocohan* or *Coblosan* motif all this time becomes an important competent of performing ritual ceremony that is sacred by Kerek's people, such as ritual of birth, marriage and death. The relationship of *Gedhog* woven batik cloth and ritual tradition of Kerek's people can be seen through the events as here under.

On Birth ritual, the baby is usually wrapped by *putihanGedhog* cloth with blue flora and fauna *Cocohan* or *Coblosan* motif, it is believed that the birth of baby in the world is in a holy condition, and based on the faith of Kerek's people, white symbolizes birth and holy.



Figure 3: Putihan pattern Batik with KembangWaluh motif dark blue *Cocohan* or *Coblosan* colour background (Source of documentation: Bramantijo, 2016).

On marriage ritual, Gedhog woven cloth and Gedhog batik is used as the dowry, the use of Gedhog woven batik has criteria as follows:

(i) on the ceiling (the upper part) of aisle is installed *lelangit* cloth with *Rengganis* motif dominated with *cecekan* (dots) and *kitiran* patterns (white stripe forming rotating propeller) and *biron* (bluish background) meaning angel in heaven. This cloth symbolizes a permit request to the ancestors (Heringa, 2010: 57).

(ii) At the time of sacred marriage ritual procession, the bride and bridegroom wear Gedhog batik cloth with *Ganggeng* motif symbolizing unity. It is interpreted by Kerek's people that the couple will be united in a married life forever.

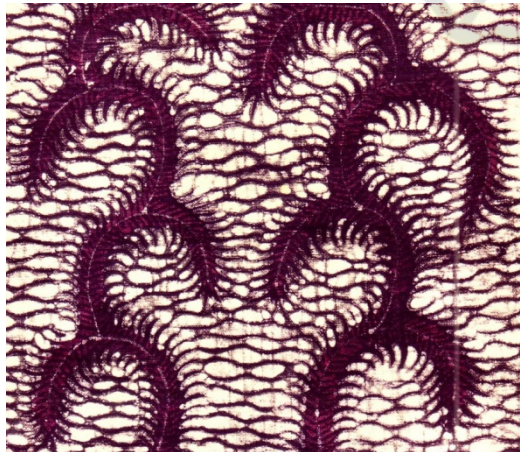


Figure 4: *Ganggeng* motif with *ungon* (purple) pattern of blue *Cocohan* or *Coblosan* (Source of documentation: Bramantijo, 2016).

Further, after performing *Salinan* (changing the cloth) ceremony, the bride and bridegroom will seat on the aisle and meet the guets, in this procession, the

couple wears *lasemanbatik* cloth with *bang tegeran* (red pattern)color combination and blooming flowers and opned flew away birds. This motif symbolizes that after a marriage, a woman will become the new family member of a man and enter to the man's house (Heringa, 2010: 54).The bridegroom wears *kelambirasukan* constituting formal wear with *BolongBuntuPotongInten* motif symbolizing honor and majesty, *gringsing* trousers with *KembangManggar* motif (*gringsing* in Javanese means fight the disease) that is interpreted by Kerek's people as protection for the user. Overall, this suit is symbolized as couple's loyalty in undergoing the lifecycle (Heringa, 2010:57).

Death is a very sacred ritual for Kerek's people. Woven batik cloth with *irengan* (dark blue) pattern and geometric motif is worn by almost all the Kerek's people, which is related to the end of lifecycle by society and located in the north. The clothes are dipped in the mud for the last time as analoque of planting the human body in the land.



Figure 5: *Pipitan* pattern batik with dark blue *Cocohan* or *Coblosan* background and *AsemLondo* motif to cover the corpse casket. (Source of documentation: Bramantijo, 2017).

The corpse will be covered with Gedhog batik cloth with *irengan* (blakish) motif before the procession of bathing and shrouding. 4 clothes will be stacked on

the casket, then 3 different colorsayut cloth (*bagrod*, *pipitan*, and *irengan*) will be put in different directions on the previous cloth. After completing buried ceremony, the cloth will be brought home to be saved as a heirloom that will be given to the female child as the marriage gift, therefore such cloth will be owned from generation to generation (Heringa, 2010: 68).

3.3 Aesthetic Value on Gedhog Handmade Batik and Cosmological Concept for Kerek's People

The beauty of Gedhog handmade batik is not only seen from the pattern and motif composition spreading in sheet of cloth materially, but also from the full philosophy meaning. According to Heringa, (2010: 42) the developed Gedhog woven and batik in Kerek area have aesthetic values which is related to the cosmological view of Lifecycle. From the aspect of visual morphology, Gedhog batik is an artefact in a culture which each element represents the value and meaning of a culture through visual as presented. An aesthetic value of this Gedhog batik from Kerek by Heringa (2010; 43) is also illustrated having relation with the concept of wind direction that is believed that the age of human being and his life is like cycle moving clockwise, with North symbolizes a complete, East symbolizes a hope of fertility. Using such criteria, a woman expecting her first child will wrap her body tightly with white *bengkung* in order to have power to protect her child when reaching seven month pregnancy, and to support the mother's back because it is wrapped tigly from the hip up to chest, like a corset. When the baby was born, he/ she will be wrapped with whitish Gedhog batik cloth. White color based on their knowledge symbolizes the beginning of life where human is born in a clean and holy condition.

When a girl reaching *akilbalik* age, an age that is deemed ready to be married off by old people will announce her status by wearing *sayut* cloth with bright red pattern and fine red dots *Cocohan* or *Coblosan* background. This stage is symbolized with East direction. At the time of marriage, the bride will wear *lurikkembangan* or batik with red *Ganggeng*(algae/ seaweed) on the white surface. For a married woman but having no children yet will wear *jarit* bluish background (*biron*) and red sayut pattern. When becoming a mother, a woman will wear blue red pattern scarf with blue *Cocohan* or *Coblosan* background symbolizing two descendants who live side by side (Ciptandi, et al., 2016: 270-271). The color of red and blue is believed as a color

symbolizing fertility and life. This stage is symbolized by South direction. The pattern of red and blue with dark blue *Cocohan* or *Coblosan* background symbolizes the age and unfertile age, it is symbolized by West direction. In the end of life, a woman will wear blakish cloth with geometric motifs as a symbol of the end of life cycle, it is symbolized by North direction.

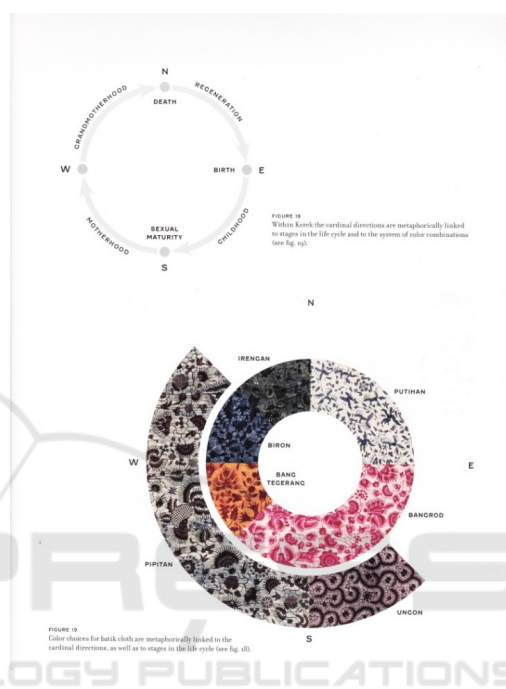


Figure 6: The Cosmological concept of Lifecycle of Kerek's people (The source of document: Heringa, "NinikTowok's Spinning Wheel", 2010: 43)

The cosmological concept on birth, marriage and death and aesthetic values on Gedhog batik as expressed on pattern and motif is a visual reference, the meaning of which has been interpreted firmly and performed by Kerek's people in the past covered by myths to preserve its existence. Even though the use of Gedhog batik and woven cloth is more flexible in accordance with the need of clothing of the user, the Kerek's people use this Gedhog batik cloth as the important part of ritual process that is still being preserved.

4 CONCLUSIONS

Gedhog handmade batik is an artefact of traditional culture covered by cosmological view and aesthetic values. Starting from the process of planting cotton as the main material of making *lawe* (thread), creating

pattern and motif up to the use are close related to the myths and ritual tradition of its society. Gedhog hand writing batik is a reference and expression of cosmological concept and firm aesthetic for Kerek's people in the past, as well as the typical identity that must be preserved so the agricultural life's view can be maintained. Gedhog batik with *Cocohan* or *Coblosan* background is one of the elements in cosmological concept that is expressed on a sheet of cloth, the existence of which is started to be forgotten because of the efficiency factor of production process, therefore it must be preserved as the integral part of Gedhog handmade batik motif.

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