

Batik, Enggak Cuma Seragam Sekolah

Sewaktu negeri tetangga mengklaim batik sebagai busana khas bangsa itu, sebagian dari kita meradang. Kita enggak rela batik diambil alih "kepemilikannya" oleh bangsa lain. Tetapi, jujur saja, selama ini sudahkah batik menjadi bagian dari busana kita sehari-hari? Adakah batik cuma berhenti sebagai salah satu seragam yang (karena peraturan sekolah) harus dipakai sekali seminggu?

Belakangan ini batik lagi booming. Tengoklah dari mal sampai pasar tradisional, batik dalam berbagai desain baju dipakai banyak orang, dari anak-anak sampai orang tua. Berbagai kegiatan sekolah pun sering mencantumkan batik sebagai salah satu baju "wajib".

Kalau biasanya hanya toko tertentu yang menjual batik, sekarang nyaris di setiap mal, pasar, bahkan di emperan pedagang kaki lima batik "merajai". Sepotong baju batik di pusat perbelanjaan seperti ITC di Jakarta bisa didapat dengan harga mulai Rp 50.000.

Penikmat batik tinggal menyesuaikan model baju, bahan, dan corak yang diinginkan, dengan kemampuan kocek. Batik enggak lagi (semoga bukan cuma musiman ya) sekadar baju yang dipakai buat kondangan atau demi Hari Kartini setiap tanggal 21 April itu. Batik jadi fashion yang kudu lu ikutin, biar enggak ketinggalan mode gitu...

Sekalian juga, biar semua orang tahu kalau kita doyan batik! Kita enggak cuma bisa cuap-cuap atau ngamuk kala batik diklaim milik bangsa lain. Sebab, kita memang menghargai, menggunakannya, dan udah menjadikan batik sebagai gaya hidup sehari-hari.

Selembaar kain

Memang sih selama ini sebagian dari abu-abuers juga suka pakai batik untuk pesta atau buat acara tertentu. Misalnya nih, enggak jarang kan abu-abuers pakai kebaya model encim dipadu dengan kain batik. Biar baju model itu udah dikenal dari zaman dulu kala, tetapi enggak ngerasa mendadak jadi tua atau jadul banget kan waktu lu makai?

Apalagi sekarang, duh duh duh... batik tuh enggak lagi sekadar selembaar kain buat dipakai bareng kebaya. Mau batik yang berkesan klasik, lusuh, atau justru berwarna-warni dengan banyak tebaran motif bunga seperti batik pesisiran, juga ada.

Modelnya? Hmm, kalau lu rajin jalan-jalan ke mal aja, pasti bisa lihat betapa beragam batik itu, dan betapa batik bisa menyesuaikan diri dengan tren masa kini.

Batik memang fleksibel, enggak hanya karena motifnya terbuka buat segala desain, tetapi bahan ini pun cocok buat segala bentuk baju. Batik yang dijahit dalam bentuk blus atau rok yang cenderung mini asyik dan matching aja buat model empire, baby doll, blus, atau rok balon dan berlengan balon sekalipun. Paduannya juga gampang, bisa pakai celana skinny, legging, atau stocking.

Buat kerahnya? Ini pun banyak banget variasinya, dari bentuk bulat, kotak, sampai peter-pan biasa maupun diberi kerut-merut sekalipun, bisa masuk dengan batik. Bahkan, biar pun sekarang lagi musim busana yang bervolume, kalau kamu masih pengen pakai baju pas badan pun tetap oke dengan batik.

Dine Ewantara, pemilik batik berlabel Kenes, bercerita, masih banyak kok abu-abuers yang suka model baju sackdress, berlengan setali, atau backless. Dia memadukan batik dengan bordir sebagai aksen. Untuk baju produknya Dine memasang harga Rp 300.000-Rp 900.000 per potong.

Sementara Josephine yang produknya bernama Josephine juga memilih batik bercorak dan berwarna "asli" seperti coklat muda dan coklat tua. Model bajunya dia pilih yang "tahan segala cuaca", seperti semi-blazer atau model kimono lengkap dengan obinya. Harganya? Berkisar dari Rp 500.000 sampai Rp 1,5 juta.

Keabisan stok

Ujiek Mudhofar, pemilik batik berlabel Rima, berkisah, stok baju bermodel rimpel di atas perut (seperti baju hamil), atau yang bertali di dada maupun di pinggang laris manis. Dia sering kali sampai keabisan stok.

"Penjahit saya kewalahan membuat stok. Sekarang, kami fokus dulu pada pesanan jahitan dari pelanggan," ujarnya.

Ujiek memang menyediakan bermacam-macam kain batik yang bisa dipilih. Pembeli pun bebas memilih model baju untuk dijahitkan di tempatnya. Batik yang banyak dipilih orang untuk baju berharga sekitar Rp 125.000-Rp 250.000 per lembar.

"Alhamdulillah, satu orang bisa beli 8 sampai 12 kain batik buat dijahit. Biasanya, baju itu ya buat anak-anak dan orangtuanya," tambah Ujiek yang menjanjikan baju selesai dijahit minimal tiga hari dan maksimal 14 hari itu.

Hmm, buat meyakinkan kalau batik itu lagi ngetren, bisa dilihat antara lain dari omzetnya. Dalam sebulan, Josephine misalnya, bisa meraup pendapatan sekitar Rp 40 juta. Sementara pemilik label batik lain bercerita, kalau biasanya sebulan omzetnya Rp 50 juta-Rp 60 juta, sejak sekitar awal 2008 ini naik sampai Rp 100 jutaan.

Hmm, terbukti kan kalau batik itu memang bisa jadi "gue banget". Makanya, jangan sampai enggak ada batik di lemari baju lu duung. Batik yang bukan cuma baju seragam sekolah lho... (DOE/CP)



Batik Jadi Tren Mode

Diminati Warga Palembang karena Harganya Terjangkau



KOMPAS/BONI DWI PRAMUDYANTO /
Sebagian masyarakat Palembang tidak lagi bergantung pada kain songket dalam menghadiri kegiatan resmi dan bernuansa budaya. Akulturasi budaya berpakaian mulai muncul, salah satunya ditandai maraknya pemasaran kain batik dari Pekalongan dan Solo, Jawa Tengah, Jumat (16/5).

Palembang, Kompas - Warga Palembang mulai beradaptasi dengan kain batik asal Pulau Jawa. Hal itu terlihat dari maraknya peredaran batik di pasar lokal Palembang. Bahkan pedagang merasakan peningkatan omzet penjualan karena penggemar kain batik di Palembang terus bertambah.

Pemantauan Kompas, Jumat (16/5), menunjukkan, peredaran kain batik di Palembang sudah cukup luas, mulai dari pasar tradisional, di sejumlah rumah toko (ruko), hingga ke stan-stan berbagai pameran.

Berdasarkan informasi yang diperoleh dari sejumlah pelaku usaha juga menunjukkan bahwa geliat di sektor perdagangan pakaian jadi tradisional tersebut selama ini masih didominasi oleh produk batik jenis cap dan tulis asal Kota Pekalongan, Jawa Tengah. Sebagian kecil pakaian batik lainnya disuplai oleh produsen batik asal Kota Solo (Jawa Tengah) dan Yogyakarta (DIY).

Menurut Hanafiah (34), pedagang batik asal Palembang, sebagian masyarakat Palembang mulai melirik pakaian batik dan di sisi lain tidak lagi terlalu bergantung pada kain songket dalam menghadiri atau melakukan berbagai kegiatan formal dan adat. Hanafiah mulai memanfaatkan fenomena tersebut dengan mencoba berdagang batik sejak tiga tahun silam.

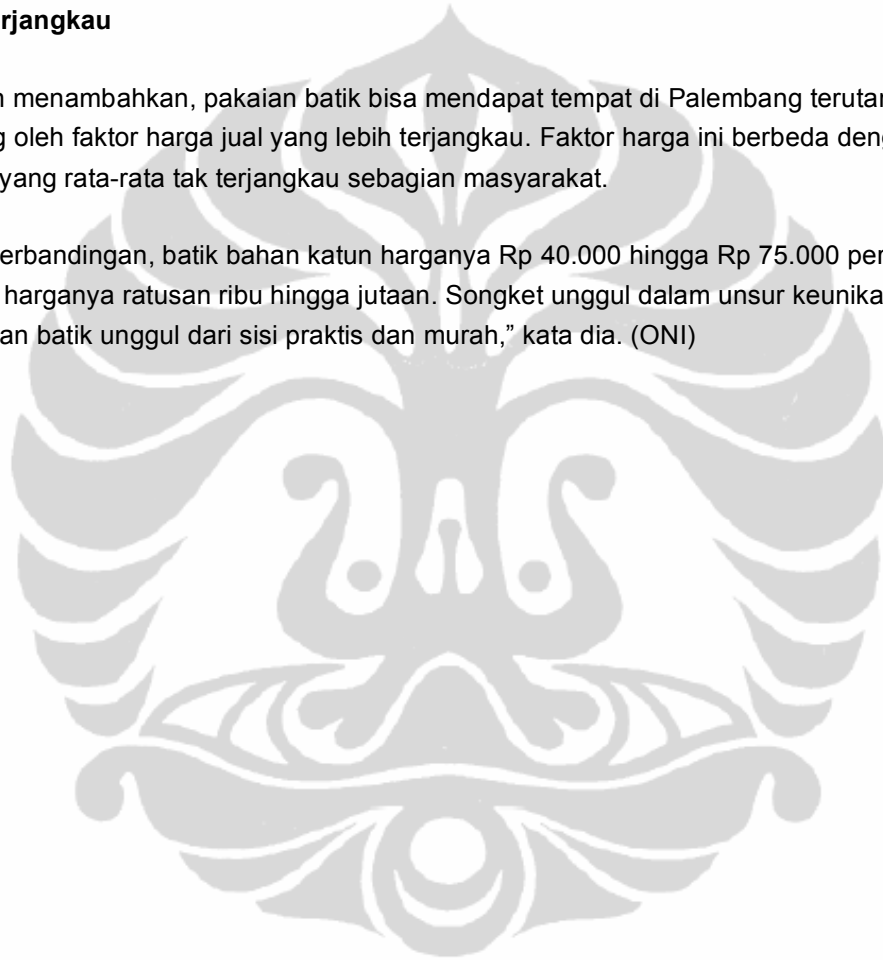
Harundang (43), warga Kelurahan Dempo, mengaku kenal baju batik pertama kali pada empat tahun silam. Saat itu, anak lelakinya yang bekerja di Semarang pulang ke Palembang membawa oleh-oleh baju batik dari Pekalongan.

"Setelah dipakai, baju batik ternyata sangat nyaman. Mulai saat itu, saya kerap menggunakan batik dalam acara resepsi pernikahan atau kegiatan budaya lainnya," kata Harundang.

Lebih terjangkau

Hanafiah menambahkan, pakaian batik bisa mendapat tempat di Palembang terutama didukung oleh faktor harga jual yang lebih terjangkau. Faktor harga ini berbeda dengan kain songket yang rata-rata tak terjangkau sebagian masyarakat.

"Untuk perbandingan, batik bahan katun harganya Rp 40.000 hingga Rp 75.000 per potong. Songket harganya ratusan ribu hingga jutaan. Songket unggul dalam unsur keunikan, sedangkan batik unggul dari sisi praktis dan murah," kata dia. (ONI)



Bangkitnya Batik Nasional

Beberapa tahun lalu, perancang Edward Hutabarat pernah diledek karena terlalu berambisi mengutak-atik batik untuk karyanya. Toh, Edo--sapaan akrabnya--bergeming dan tetap menekuni batik. "Sekarang saya bersukacita, batik nasional bangkit, berada di deretan dunia mode Indonesia dan mancanegara," bisiknya di sela-sela peragaan "Upperground" yang digelarnya dua pekan lalu di Taman Sriwedari, Hotel Sultan, Jakarta.

Pada 2006, Edo penuh percaya diri mengenalkan Part One sebagai rangkaian produk gaya hidup yang terinspirasi oleh berbagai etnis Indonesia yang pengerjaannya sangat profesional oleh para seniman di berbagai wilayah.

"Saat itu saya memakai katun sebagai materi yang saya kombinasikan dengan semua kekayaan bumi pertiwi, seperti bebatuan, aneka tanduk, perak, dan lainnya," kata Edo, yang merancang karyanya menjadi busana santai, berlibur, baju sehari-hari, dan busana pesta. Mengenai pengerjaannya, semua seniman serta perajin batik dan kain dari Laweyan di Solo, Lasem, Pekalongan, Cirebon, Bukittinggi di Sumatera Barat; perajin perak di Bali dan Sumba; sampai penganyam rotan di Kalimantan.

Edo pantas berbangga hati. Langkahnya menampilkan batik katun menjadi rancangan berdaya pakai tinggi bagi masyarakat urban atau kehidupan kosmopolitan sontak diikuti produsen garmen dan usaha kecil menengah yang giat mengembangkan batik nasional. "Pokoknya, inspirasi saya selalu mengerjakan sesuatu yang baru. Ketika mendirikan Part One, saya punya obsesi untuk the next part tidak berhenti di satu titik, tapi selanjutnya tanpa batas."

Pada peragaan ini, Edo memang masih menampilkan Part One yang memakai batik. Hanya, busana itu kini menggunakan materi sutra yang ditenun dengan alat tenun konvensional, bukan mesin. Perancang kelahiran 31 Agustus 1957 ini mengemas batik menjadi tiga hal, yaitu identitas bangsa, sumber kehidupan meliputi air, tanah, udara dan angin, serta devisa atau sumber pariwisata untuk meningkatkan perekonomian bangsa.

"Mumpung masih hangat, tapi saya ingin menciptakan sesuatu yang baru. Batik is not yesterday or today, batik is tomorrow, the next, next, dan seterusnya. Jadi, jangan hangat-hangat tahi ayam. Muncul mengikuti tren, lalu hilang seperti angin," ujarnya panjang lebar.

Edo mengibaratkan kebangkitan batik nasional harus terus menggema dan membahana, jangan hilang di tengah jalan seperti ingar-bingar pesta yang usai begitu saja. Dijelaskannya, keunggulan batik sangat digemari lantaran kekhasannya pada unsur be your self alias apa adanya.

Bagi dia, batik bermakna sifat kesederhanaan, sisi kualitas, serta identitas negeri. Yang harus dibenahi supaya batik bisa bersanding elegan bersama aneka kain mancanegara sekelas Christian Dior, Giorgio Armani, Louis Vuiton, atau lainnya adalah batik harus berunsur global, modern, dan dikenakan para kaum borjuis dalam dan luar negeri.

Dia melihat batik sebagai seni masa lalu yang akan selalu relevan menghadapi perjalanan waktu. Karena itu, menurut dia, di tengah globalisasi, kita harus memiliki identitas seperti batik.

"Namun, pengerjaannya harus modern seiring dengan arus globalisasi, sehingga mampu berkembang dan diterima selera internasional," ujar Edo, yang memakai motif batiknya dalam sentuhan modernisasi serta tuntutan globalisasi masa kini. Dia menghadirkan paduan motif-motif pesisir dan klasik menjadi bentuk busana modern, seperti gaun mini, atasan halter, celana balon, bolero batik, rok mini dan gaun terbuka bermotif polkadot.

"Batik bukan sebuah kelawasan atau masa lalu. Batik adalah bangkit mengikuti relevansi dan perkembangan waktu di masa mendatang," ucap perancang yang dikenal piawai menyulap kekayaan kain lokal selain batik. Dia pernah membuat songket, ulos, tenun ikat, dan batik besurek Jambi menjadi busana siap pakai masa kini nan trendi. **HADRIANI P**



Batik Tengah Mencapai Titik Puncak



MI/ROMMY PUJIANTO

JAKARTA--MI: Dewan Pembina Yayasan Batik Indonesia (YBI) Joop Ave mengatakan penggunaan batik sebagai pakaian di Indonesia tengah mencapai puncak kejayaannya saat ini.

"Saya juga tidak tahu kenapa. Sekarang, bukan tahun ini, tapi sekarang, batik sebagai busana, sedang mencapai puncak," ujarnya di sela-sela peresmian kepengurusan baru YBI, di Depperin, Jakarta, Jumat.

Ia mengatakan meningkatnya penggunaan batik sebagai busana itu merupakan salah satu bentuk keberhasilan semua pihak mendorong seni tekstil tradisional khas Indonesia itu.

"Kita harus berterima kasih kepada Malaysia, yang mengklaim batik sebagai miliknya, sehingga ada upaya kuat dari masyarakat kita untuk menunjukkan batik milik kita," ujar mantan Menteri Budaya dan Pariwisata itu.

Ia menilai mewabahnya pemakaian batik sebagai busana juga tidak lepas dari desain yang dikembangkan para pengusaha batik, sehingga batik sebagai busana mengikuti mode terkini, seperti busana batik dibuat dengan mode *babydool* yang kini tengah menjadi tren busana wanita.

"YBI hanya membantu. Tapi saya betul-betul puas," ujarnya melihat semakin banyaknya batik diperdagangkan sebagai busana, tidak hanya di grosir seperti ITC, tapi juga di pusat perbelanjaan mewah seperti Pacific Place yang ada di Kawasan Pusat Bisnis Sudirman (SCBD), Jakarta.'

Bahkan pemakaian batik sebagai busana, saat ini, kata dia, tidak hanya digunakan oleh orang tua, namun juga anak muda dengan desain yang kasual.

Hal senada dikemukakan pengusaha batik Santosa Doellah. Ia mengatakan permintaan batik sebagai busana terus meningkat tahun ini, tidak hanya pada pakaian orang tua, tapi juga anak-anak dan remaja.

"Permintaan busana batik jauh lebih bagus tahun ini, mudah-mudahan peningkatannya tetap berlanjut," ujar pemilik butik batik Dinar Hadi itu.

Ia mengatakan pada tahun 2000-an, pihaknya telah mengembangkan busana batik kasual dengan membidik kalangan muda, dan menggandeng para perancang busana untuk masuk ke segmen tersebut, seperti Prajudi dan Studio One.

Sementara itu kepengurusan YBI periode 2008-2013 kembali dipimpin oleh Jutin Ginanjar Kartasmita dibantu Murniati Widodo sebagai wakil ketua. Pada kepengurusan baru itu, juga ada dewan pakar yang antara lain adalah Ratu Hemas dan Iwan Tirta.

Sebelumnya, Wakil Ketua Umum Kadin Indonesia Bidang Industri, Teknologi, dan Kelautan, Rachmat Gobel mengatakan batik sebagai salah satu produk industri kreatif berbasis budaya asli Indonesia harus didorong menjadi ikon produk kreatif Indonesia di pasar global.

Ia mengatakan momentum orang terkaya di dunia, seperti Bill Gates, menggunakan batik saat memberikan "kuliah" di Indonesia beberapa waktu lalu bisa dijadikan promosi menembus pasar internasional yang lebih luas. (Ant/OL-2)



Imitations overwhelm Jambi batik makers

Jon Afrizal , The Jakarta Post , Jambi

Many batik makers in Jambi city feel they have been disadvantaged by Javanese producers who make imitations of local batik motifs and sell them for less than the originals.

Local batik producer Ida Maryanti said producers in Java had copied many Jambi batik designs and mass-produced them.

"We don't know what else we can do," Ida said recently.

Ida and a number of other batik makers in Jambi city could not reduce their sale prices because they had to buy materials (including silk cloth, wax and dyes) from Java, which increased their production costs, Ida said.

"Batik craftsmen are only skilled at creating batik but not at marketing," she said.

Ida said batik producers in Jambi city could only afford to buy raw materials in small amounts, which increased their production costs. Entrepreneurs in batik production centers in Java, she said, could afford to buy materials in bulk, and sell at cheaper prices.

She also said wages could have an impact on sale prices. Batik makers in Jambi city earn between Rp 3,000 (about 30 US cents) and Rp 7,000 per meter, while those in batik production centers in Java usually earn less.

Consequently, Jambi batik costs more. A hand-drawn batik costs around Rp 200,000 per meter, whereas a printed one sells for Rp 100,000 per meter (both on silk cloth).

Ida employs three workers, but now has less orders due to the influx of Javanese batik in the market.

A piece of hand-drawn batik measuring 2.5 meters long and 115 cm wide takes two days to finish, whereas a printed one takes much less time, Ida said.

Ida now uses a different approach by selling ready-made batik clothes and products. She sells cotton batik dresses for around Rp 150,000 and a silk ones for Rp 350,000.

"I only make a 10 percent profit from the sale," she said.

Ida uses five rolls of cloth a month, with each roll containing 46 meters of fabric 115 cm wide, and costing around Rp 96,000 (for cotton).

Other materials include 100 kg of wax (Rp 16,000 per kg) and 10 kg of dyes (priced between Rp 15,000 and Rp 80,000 per kg).

To attract buyers, Ida not only produces Jambiyang batik motifs such as Kapal Sanggat and Durian Pecah, but also her own new designs such as Panah Kubu, Resam and Encong Kerinci.

Jambi Industrial and Trade office head Hasan Basri said Jambi's batik industry had been hard-hit by imitations. In response to this problem his office had registered as many as 95 traditional batik motifs with the intellectual property rights office. So far, it has approved 19 motifs while the remainder are still in the progress.

In relation to the improvement of product quality, Hasan said, some 400 batik makers in Jambi city had been attending classes to improve their skills, from drawing to dyeing, and also in business management.

Batik entrepreneurs also received loan assistance from state-owned companies such as Pertamina, each getting between Rp 5 million and Rp 50 million, with an interest rate of 6 percent and to be repaid in installments over three years.

"We hope batik entrepreneurs can manage their businesses better, without feeling too worried about capital," he said.

He said his office would help batik makers to promote their products outside the province at particular events, such as the Cultural Product Exhibition.

GKBI Protes Batik Cina ke Indonesia

JAKARTA -- Gabungan Koperasi Batik Indonesia (GKBI) memprotes masuknya produk tekstil batik dari Cina ke pasar dalam negeri. Pemerintah diminta membuat larangan bagi produk batik luar negeri merambah pasar domestik, seperti yang dilakukan pemerintah Malaysia.

"Kami akan usulkan ke Departemen Perdagangan agar stop masuknya batik Cina," kata Presiden Direktur GKBI Noorbasha Djunaed setelah bertemu dengan Wakil Presiden Jusuf Kalla di Kantor Wakil Presiden kemarin.

Saat ini, dia melanjutkan, produk batik dari Cina menguasai sekitar 5 persen pasar Indonesia sehingga mengancam batik dalam negeri. Noorbasha menduga contoh produk itu dibawa oleh pengusaha Cina dari Indonesia untuk diproduksi di Negeri Tirai Bambu tersebut dengan biaya produksi yang lebih murah.

Selama ini produk batik Indonesia tidak bisa masuk ke Malaysia karena pemerintah setempat melarang masuknya batik dari luar negeri. Ekspor batik Indonesia, kata dia, hanya dilakukan dalam bentuk motif tekstil. Biasanya, batik dijual di butik-butik. Kerja sama perdagangan batik itu pun dilakukan tanpa L/C. "Batik itu pakaian musim panas. Orang asing melihat batik hanya sebagai motif, bukan budaya," ujar Noorbasha.

Pasar batik terbesar hingga kini masih di dalam negeri. Apalagi beberapa waktu belakangan motif batik menjadi tren di dunia *fashion* domestik. Motif batik lebih banyak digunakan sebagai kombinasi untuk pakaian perempuan. "Akhir-akhir ini memang ada tren batik untuk orang muda," katanya.

Nilai ekspor tekstil berupa kain mori, menurut catatan GKBI, senilai Rp 1,2 triliun. Nilai ekspor tekstil itu diperkirakan bakal naik 5-10 persen dalam satu hingga dua tahun mendatang. Menurut Noorbasha, GKBI memiliki 40 koperasi primer di Surabaya, Pekalongan, Yogyakarta, Solo, Tulung Agung, dan Padang dengan total anggota 8.000 orang. Sejak 1990-an, GKBI selalu membagikan dividen yang nilainya mencapai Rp 3 miliar.

Sekretaris Jenderal Asosiasi Pertekstilan Indonesia Ernovian G. Ismy meminta pemerintah menaikkan bea masuk impor untuk pakaian jadi guna melindungi produksi tekstil dalam negeri. Angka 15 persen untuk bea masuk impor pakaian jadi dianggap terlalu rendah. Dia membandingkan dengan bea masuk impor untuk pakaian jadi berdasarkan standar Organisasi Perdagangan Dunia (WTO) sebesar 36 persen. Menurut dia, bea masuk yang rendah menjadi peluang membanjirnya produk-produk impor tekstil luar negeri. **KURNIASIH BUDI | NIEKE INDRIETTA**

Batik's popularity soars

Indah Setiawati , The Jakarta Post , Jakarta



SOLD OUT: Shoppers look at batik blouses at a stall at Tanah Abang market in Central Jakarta. Batik sellers have enjoyed booming business with the recent popularity of the fabric. (JP/Indah Setiawati)

Step into any shopping center in any corner of the city and you'll see plenty of children, teenagers and young and old women wearing stylish batik.

"I have never liked batik as much as I do now," Ana Astuti, a shopper at Plaza Semanggi, South Jakarta, told *The Jakarta Post* on Saturday, when she was hunting for batik dresses with her twin sister, Ani Astuti.

Ana and Ani said they had hardly spared a glance for the centuries-old batik motifs until various designs and patterns of the country's traditional clothes hit Jakarta's shopping centers.

"I used to associate batik with civil servants and elderly women because of its old and boring designs. But in recent months, I have spent heaps of money on trendy and interesting batik clothes," Ana said.

She said wearing batik was not merely a dress code for formal events anymore. Rather, it has become a new fashion trend.

Ana and Ani are like thousands of Indonesians whose pride in wearing batik is growing, thanks to the ongoing efforts of fashion designers such as Edward Hutabarat and Iwan Tirta in promoting the country's most famous art.

The batik designers and their signature works are a major influence for home industry producers in batik towns such as Cirebon in West Java, Yogyakarta, Surakarta and Pekalongan in Central Java, and Madura in East Java.

And batik is proving to be for everyone.

Many batik manufacturers make printed batik -- the lowest grade of batik, which is produced by machines -- providing affordable yet fashionable batik outfits for people on low incomes.

Encouragement from stylish high-profile figures such as Sandiaga S. Uno, the Association of Young Indonesia Entrepreneurs chairman who always wears batik, has also helped boost the popularity of exclusive pieces of batik *tulis* (traditional hand-drawn batik made using a *canting* or copper vessel with a spout-like nib).

"Batik *tulis* has its own market. People who become accustomed to wearing this masterpiece of batik will never turn to the printed or stamped types," model-cum-designer Ratih Sanggarwati said Sunday.

Ratih -- best known by her nickname Ratih Sang -- said she was happy to see people's increasing enthusiasm for batik and hoped the interest would not disappear quickly.

The price of batik depends not only on how it is produced, but also on the fabrics -- whether silk, cotton or unbleached cotton.

Machine-printed batik tends to be cheaper than batik *cap* (hand-blocked batik made by using a copper stamp). Batik *kombinasi*, a combination of batik *cap* and batik *tulis*, is more expensive.

Batik *tulis*, which requires a combination of artistic expertise and patience to produce the intricate designs, is the most expensive.

Price list:

- *) Batik *cap* and batik *tulis* blouses and dresses in Ratih Sang Collection: Rp 125,000 (US\$13.5) to Rp 700,000
- *) Batik blouses in Batik Keris boutiques: starting from Rp 200,000
- *) Batik blouses in Dinar Hadi boutiques: starting from Rp 300,000
- *) Batik *cap* and batik *tulis* (including silk) blouses and dresses in Kisoan Harto boutique in Pondok Indah Mall: Rp 400,000 to Rp 1.7 million
- *) Machine-printed batik blouses and dresses on the first floor of Plaza Semanggi : Rp 35,000 to Rp 100,000
- *) Machine-printed batik blouses and dresses on the first floor of Tanah Abang Market : Rp 40,000 to Rp 125,000

By The Way: Batik, a symbol of Javanese domination?

Sun, 11/23/2008 10:32 AM | Headlines

Sri Muljani Indrawati and Mari Elka Pangestu are the icons of Indonesian batik. The two women in President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's cabinet can be seen sporting batik dresses perhaps more often than any other public figures.

The two look elegant and comfortable as they go about the business of managing the country's economy.

Batik is experiencing somewhat of a resurgent lately, with more and more people wearing the designs regularly, even to work. In the past, batik was generally reserved for special occasions, such as wedding ceremonies; most men for example would keep just two or three in their wardrobe.

Today, government agencies, state enterprises and an increasing number of private companies, make Friday "batik day" or "casual wear" day. The batik industry has responded to this by introducing more creative designs and motifs.

Short-sleeve batik shirts, long dismissed as too casual, are now in vogue even for office attire.

Personally, this is important for me. I am one of the few Indonesians who have never felt comfortable wearing batik. And if you don't feel comfortable in something, you just don't look good in it. Thankfully, a short sleeve batik shirt is not as torturous as the long ones.

I felt somewhat unpatriotic at times whenever the nation gets up in arms at Malaysia for promoting their own batik styles, and more recently at China, which has flooded malls in Jakarta with their batiks.

The resurgence in batik in Indonesians is in part a response to this growing intrusion into what Indonesians feel is our heritage. If Japan in the 1970s and 1980s had a slogan "Buy Japanese First", then Indonesians are now being told wear batik if they love their country.

I, for one, don't buy this at all.

Batik is an ancient method of dyeing fabric that was developed in Java -- so it's more correct to say that its part of Javanese heritage.

We Sumatrans have *kain* or *songket* and *Baju Melayu* or *Teluk Belanga* as traditional costumes for men. Admittedly, I'd never be seen dead in one of those.

I don't think Indonesia has the right to accuse other countries of stealing our batik. Wax printing methods have been around for centuries, which I think makes it a sort of an "open source" style. What we, or rather what the Javanese have done, is to develop the designs into a higher form of artistic expression.

The Javanese claim to batik is more a claim to specific motifs and designs. Indeed, no one can take this away from them, but if you think about it that way, there is no such thing as Indonesian batik in Indonesia, just as there is no such thing as Chinese restaurant in China or a Padang foodstall in Padang.

In Indonesia, batik aficionados recognize Yogya batiks, Solo batiks, Pekalongan batiks or Cirebon batiks for their unique designs. But there is no such thing as Indonesian batik.

The Malaysians, Indians, Chinese and Africans have every right to claim their own batiks, at least as far as motifs and designs are concerned. Incidentally, if Wikipedia is to be believed, Nelson Mandela is not wearing Indonesian batik. He may have worn a few from Iwan Tirta's collections, but apparently most of his *Madiba* shirts are supplied by a South African designer.

My sorry excuse for not wearing batik is that to me it is just another form of Javanese cultural domination that we other ethnic groups in Indonesia have had to endure.

They already dominate the nation through the sheer size of their numbers, especially among the ruling elite. Their culture permeates our lives, and batik is just another part of this.

But you can't win them all.

We Sumatrans won the language war back in 1928 when the Javanese, the largest cultural group in what is now Indonesia, agreed to use Malay as the root for Bahasa Indonesia, the national language. That's a huge concession on their part that no amount of "Javanization" of our local cultures can ever match.

Perhaps, I'll start wearing that batik shirt after all, if only to preserve Malay's linguistic domination.

-- Eric Musa Piliang

Editorial: Promotion of batik clothes

Chinese-made batik has been flooding the local market in recent times, as reported by this paper this week, and the government swiftly put the blame on Indonesian businessmen whom it claims have smuggled the product into the country.

It is easy to blame others -- the practice is like a national past-time, however, what we have to ask ourselves is this: Was it really due to smuggling or is this phenomena simply a market mechanism?

The latter seems to have more truth than the former, as products with the right price will flow into a place where demand is high in this globalized world.

Rising demand for batik is a welcome trend, as more and more Indonesians are now wearing batik (which until now has never enjoyed wide popularity in the country, let alone become a nationwide fad).

Indonesians are acutely foreign brand-minded, in clothing and otherwise. When batik clothing proliferates in government offices or organizations, it is often due to an instruction from their respective leaders.

This is true of government ministries, as well as organizations like the Young Indonesian Entrepreneurs Association (HIPMI).

In trading commodities like batik, which is part of our cultural heritage, one could also go beyond its implications to trade as the issue of property rights is also involved.

The recent surge of batik popularity in Indonesia, interestingly, has not come from leaders but from our neighboring country, Malaysia.

Thanks to its recent claim of ownership over some Indonesian traditional cultural wealth such as the reog dance, the traditional Indonesian song *Rasa Sayang-sayange* and batik, locals reacted by donning batik as if they wanted to say batik belonged to us and would stay with us.

Nationalism is playing a part in the background, but it is debatable if that should be the right basis for a surge in batik sales.

When it comes to the promotion of Indonesian batik abroad, no one could come close to Nelson Mandela in terms of effectiveness and magnitude of influence. Not a single soul in

this country of 230 million people could beat him -- not even our President, who likes to don batik shirts.

This is simply because Mandela has a more impressive international stature. Revered throughout the world for his magnanimity, which has been mirrored in his willingness to shake the hands of his political adversaries, the former president of South Africa is in fact the icon of Indonesian batik.

So great is his love for batik, he once refuted a request made by officials at Buckingham Palace by insisting on wearing batik during a meeting with the Queen.

The next day, the Western media reported the meeting and added that Mandela had worn a batik shirt with an African motif to the occasion.

This shows that Indonesian batik is less known in other countries although batik itself may have enjoyed some international popularity.

Perhaps we cannot claim that batik comes from Indonesia but that our country has been the biggest producer of batik.

The right response for Indonesia should have been a preparedness to tap into the rising demand both in local and overseas markets rather than lamenting the flooding of our markets with international products.

Locally produced batik must be able to compete with foreign-made batik, not only from China but also from Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam and Singapore. There is no other way.

When Indonesians find foreign products that are more affordable, we need to look at reasons why we should shun our own products.

Local hand-made batik prices could reach up to Rp 8 million (about US\$800) apiece. But there are good local products whose prices are affordable to many.

Our homework here is to find ways to increase our efficiency, improve our discipline in production lines, material procurement and pricing strategies and find better distribution mechanisms for products.

On top of that, we are hopelessly weak in matters related to patenting and intellectual property rights protection. Much of our cultural wealth like sambal, batik, wood and silver carvings, coffee and tempe have been patented by other countries.

We have also been weak in unveiling the rich history behind our traditional batik motifs, which could shed some light into our past.

We need to right all this. At the very least the government can spur our businesspeople to produce competitively priced batik in the market and come up with draft laws to protect our cultural heritage.



How to Look Cool in 2009

Titania Veda

Batik was the belle of the fashion ball this year. Thanks largely to Edward Hutabarat's flirty and playful interpretation of the fabric in his Part One collection, an explosion of the traditional textile made its way into everyone's hearts and wardrobes in everything from classic hues to pastel tones, from gowns to tank tops.

Minarti Lemy, managing editor of Amica women's monthly magazine, says that batik has become a hip alternative. "People who buy international brands are those who understand quality and appreciate them in such a way that they are willing to pay the high price," she said. "People who used to be impressed by international labels are starting to see batik in the same way."

The rise of batik and traditional fabrics has helped the local garment industry but Retno Murti, editor-in-chief of FashionPro, an Indonesian fashion industry magazine, sees a tendency toward uniformity. "Everyone is creating the same models. It is important to be creative, to be able to mix and match in terms of design and fabric," Retno said.

Fashion editor of Harper's Bazaar Indonesia, Dien Tirto Buwono, agrees that local designs can be developed further.

"Right now it is more surface exploration, motifs or fabric," she said. "The application can be from the essence not from fabric alone. I like it best when local designers put local tradition forward. It is refreshing."

In the men's department, ethnic rules the roost. "We are seeing ethnic-elegant, ethnic-sportif, ethnic-modern, using fabrics like *tenun*, *ika t* and batik," said Adi Surantha, a fashion reporter for Esquire Indonesia magazine.

"Elegant ethnic sees pairings with blazers, edgy ethnic like XSM and Studio 1773 by Biyan. batik shirts are becoming streamlined and colors were brighter — sky blues, reds, pinks and soft greens," Surantha said.

"The best part of 2008 was our designers are finally bringing something from our heritage and tradition into the modern life, the now," said Ni Luh Sekar, editor-in-chief of Dewi magazine.

Muslim Wear

Spearheaded by the designers of Indonesian Fashion Designers Association, or APPMI, is the growing popularity of Muslim wear. Designers with a specialty in Muslim wear are seeing an increase in demand. It is easy to see why.

From Monika Jufry's ease of dress that flutter and float in the wind using the lightness of chiffons and pale colors to Merry Pramono's streamlined silhouettes and bold hues enchant the public.

“This year Muslim wear is very visible,” Murti explained. “Here we wear color, unlike the Muslim countries like the Middle East who tend to wear black. It is because of this Muslim wear is not only related to religion but is also modern.”

End of an Era?

Although beading and embellishment will remain, they have begun to take a back seat this year for a play on proportions originating from rising young designers like Stella Rissa, Barli Asmara and Ichwan Thoha.

“The embellishments were quite strong but have become minimized. A few designers are starting to move away from embellishments,” observed designer Didi Budiardjo.

“I was not too fond of beading,” designer Priyo Oktaviano said. “It is too heavy but I see it less, more used as an accent now.

“It is no longer the era. We have to be brave enough to throw away the beading — though there is still a market for it.”

Lemy agrees, saying, “We are not entering the age of ’90s Calvin Klein minimalism, but in my opinion we are entering the constructive era. Still loose but less flowy.”

Silhouettes

Two silhouettes stood out this year against the soft flowing pieces — constructive and voluminous.

Lemy favors the structured silhouettes. “There was a mix of volume, texture and shape,” Lemy said. “Often there would be detailing in the arms, braver in the accessories department with necklaces, shoes, bags, even glasses. Fashion does not meet architecture but is integrated into the clothes. Darting is actually shaping, the bodice, the structure of the collar and pockets; they are all constructive for clothes. And this year it was blown up, twisted, processed, searching for innovative shapes to appear constructive.”

Drapes and Shapes

Clothes were less structured, according to Tirto Buwono.

“There is a lot of elements of drapery and symmetry,” she said. “Drapery techniques are more abstract, more asymmetric but relaxed. The feel is less formal than the years before. Now it is more ready to wear and all about the exploration of cutting.”

Tirto Buwono cites Tri Handoko, Deden Siswanto and Priyo Oktaviano as the leaders of this movement toward drapery.

“I used a lot of Balinese weaving and bright colors. I prefer the drapery technique from 2008 and the loose dress silhouette,” Oktaviano said. “More play with fabric texture, origami, and fitting the fabric straight onto the body of the mannequin instead of drawing patterns. It is more about using feeling. The drapery is more avant garde. “Carmanita, Era Soekamto, Ari Seputra and Ghea use a lot of these techniques and play with cutting.”

Looking Forward

The impact of the global economic crisis is already affecting the fashion scene.

Fashion reflects and is related to global issues.

"The crisis will influence everyone's daily lifestyle and we have to tighten our budget strings, perhaps lessen embellishments and unnecessary detailing," Budiardjo said.

Another local designer, Barli Asmara, predicts an increase in the attention to detail.

"The forward trend is plaiting and weaving," Barli said. "But basic cuts such as the classic, vintage, modern, feminine, elegant and glamorous will never change. Ever. Look at Chanel Classic."

Indeed, classic silhouettes should be anticipated in 2009, Dewi's Sekar said.

"People will invest in longer lasting items and be more creative in terms of mixing and matching what they already have in their wardrobe," she said.

But there is a silver lining, especially for the Indonesian textile industry, as designers are adapting to the crisis by using more local fabrics and local culture as a main inspirations.

"We are developing our own materials with an edgier, more modern style," Oktaviano said.

Designers like Budiardjo are pleased at this turn of events.

"This will take fashion to a higher level because people have to think about how to make fashion more interesting but more economical in terms of fabric and design yet still keep things new and fresh," Budiardjo said.

If you use local fabric, it is cheaper, agreed Tirto Buwono.

"And local fabric tends to use more colors," Tirto said.

Bold colors of mandarin, canary yellow, fuschia, apple green, eggplant and tiffany blue can be expected next season.

"Black and pastels will still be popular for Indonesians because they suit our skin tones," Oktaviano said. "Designers like Ghea use neutral and earth tones. They are safe and classic colors."

Oktaviano predicts an increase of traditional fabric but using international silhouettes that play with volume and are deconstructive or asymmetric, and classics such as high waisted pants and skirts.

The urban woman will be delighted in the upcoming season with the increase in quality ready-to-wear pieces rather than ball gowns.

"There are a lot of upcoming new designers, who are young, and share similarities in terms of lifestyle and fashion style. They cater to working women and women with more dynamic lifestyle so automatically their designs are dynamic and urban," Tirto Buwono said.

On the male front, streamlined shapes are spilling over from this year but with less motifs.

"There will be more attention to detail, playing with pleats in the shoulder or chest area," Surantha said.

The discerning man of 2009 will be combining couture with casual. Think blazers paired with T-shirts and sneakers and tuxedos used for casual wear. Pastels, for the moment, are here to stay.

The Ones to Watch

Keep an eye out for the aggressive new powerhouses that are Priyo Oktaviano and Stella Rissa, who are building a reputation for producing pieces of unique shape and daring hues.

"I feel you can rely upon those two names to keep developing themselves," Tirto Buwono said.

Another name on everyone's lips is Barli Asmara.

"He has found himself," Sekar said.

"He is becoming more mature in working his architectural concepts."

The feminine lines of Adrian Gan always leave Lemy in anticipation.

"When he creates something, it is his own statement and no other designer can make anything similar," Lemy said.

"I see Gan as being the next Biyan."

