

Indonesian Cultural Traveling: Batik as the Indonesian Traditional Heritage and Hidden Treasure

The History of Indonesian Traditional Batik

Traveling to Indonesia and you will meet Batik. Batik is a traditional garment from Indonesia. It's using a *canting* and wax-resist dyeing technique to create a unique and beautiful pattern for each piece of work. All of them are done manually by hands and have their own symbolic meaning. Some patterns are used in special ceremonies or rituals, such as marriage, *tedhak siten*, baby shower, etc.

Batik History in Indonesia

The history of batik was started in the 6th century when the resist dyeing technique was introduced to Indonesia from Sri Lanka or India. However, batik was exclusively worn by the royalties as an art form while the commoners were prohibited from wearing batik. It was part of the caste system in Hinduism that most of the Indonesian empires embraced.

In the 13th century, Arab merchants were the leading traders, and they brought Islam. When Islam successfully affected 20 Indonesian empires, the caste system disappeared. Islam prohibited the caste system and batik were believed to be a symbol of social oppression. Batik exclusivity was dropped, and the commoners were introduced to batik.

The influence of batik patterns mostly came from nature and Hindu motifs. But in the 17th century, when hundred thousands of the Chinese became permanent residents in Indonesia, they brought along their color designs and symbolisms like chrysanthemums and peonies, the sacred phoenix and mythical creatures, into batik.

At the end of 17th century, the Dutch made a transcript about their journey to Java and said that the fabric was highly decorated. However, when they occupied Java, most batiks was made for commodities, and they put aside batik's authenticity and customs. Only a few particular families that still reserved some batik's motifs. The Dutch also introduced a new method of creating batik; by using a *cap* for mass production.

Batik was not only found in Java, but also in Flores, Toraja, Papua, and Halmahera.

Indonesian Batik in Present Day

Even though batik workers were declined in early 20th century, but the recent trends make batik rise again and reach its "golden age".

In 2009, **Indonesian batik** was designated as a Masterpiece of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.

How to Make Batik

Indonesian traditional batik is using wax-resist dyeing technique, which needs patience and accuracy to make a perfect pattern. There are two kinds of tools that can be used to draw batik; *canting* and *cap*.

THE STEPS

1. Wash, soak, and beat a cloth using a large mallet.
2. Draw the patterns using a pencil.
3. Redraw the patterns using a mixture of beeswax or paraffin and plant resins (as a dye-resist).
4. Applied the wax using *canting* or *cap*. *Canting* is a spout made from the wooden handle with a small copper reservoir for holding the wax. The wax will flow through the spout, and it will be easier to create lines and dots as it moves. A stiff brush can be

used for larger patterns. To work efficiently, batik workers will cover large areas by using *cap* or copper block stamp.

5. When the cloth is dry, remove the resist by boiling or scraping the cloth. More colors mean to repeat the whole process again one by one (for all the desired colors).

Batik can be very expensive depends on the intricate patterns and colors. Most **Indonesian batik** that is using only *canting* and need a year to finish the whole process. It is called *batik tulis* or written batik. The batik workers need to draw the pattern on both sides and dip the cloth in a dye bath four times. While the stamped batik that is using *cap*, has a quicker process. But, *batik tulis* has finer results than stamped batik. Today batik printing is also popular.

Batik across Beautiful Indonesia

Even though the wax-resist dyeing technique was found in many other countries, **Indonesian batik** has the most developed history.

There are 10 regions in **wonderful Indonesia** that are popular with its traditional batik. Every region has their own unique motifs and patterns.

YOGYAKARTA

Yogyakarta is known as the heart of **Indonesian batik**. Batik Yogyakarta mostly has a natural color like black, brown, cream, white, and indigo. You can visit Museum Batik Yogyakarta to see batik's motifs and patterns from Yogyakarta, Solo, Pekalongan, and other traditional patterns. There is also a place where you can try to draw your own batik.

SOLO

Solo, which is also known as Surakarta, is popular with batik that depicts nature such as birds and flowers. Batik Solo also has different symbols and meanings in their batik, some of them are *sido mulyo* means happiness, *sido dadi* means prosperity, *satrio wibowo* means honor,

and *tikel asmorodono* means love. There is two famous batik producer in Solo; Danarhadi and Batik Keris.

PEKALONGAN

Batik Pekalongan has attractive bright pastel colors that depict nature with soft designs and textures. Most of the colors have China, Dutch, and Arab influence.

CIREBON

Batik Cirebon is mostly influenced by Chinese culture. The motifs are dominated by animals like elephants, lions, tigers, and dragons. Some other motifs are mountains and clouds. Batik Cirebon are known as "*kencana ungu*" because they are using the best quality woven fabric.

MINAHASA

Batik Minahasa is influenced by many ethnicities like *tolour*, *tonsea*, and *borgo babontehu*. There are five batik motifs and patterns that can mostly find in Minahasa's batik; *tonaas* (about human nature), *tarawesan paredey* (about life), *ma'sungkulan* (lotus), *ma'suiyan* (bird's wing), and *wewengkalen* (snake with two heads).

BALI

Batik Bali has unique motifs and designs. They are using bright colors with Bali's and China's ornaments like turtles, deer, dragons, and storks. Their motifs are usually depicted freedom.

MADURA

Batik Madura is popular with leaves, flowers, birds, *serat kayu*, and *tanjung bumi* motifs. The most popular one is batik *gentongan*. It needs almost a year to complete due to its intricate and detailed motif.

INDRAMAYU

Since most people in Indramayu are fisherman and farmers, most of their batik motifs are *kembang gunda*, *kapal kandas* (a sinking ship), *manuk kunthul*, and *ombak laut* (waves). Batik Indramayu is also influenced by Arab calligraphy, China, Centre Java, and East Java.

BENGKULU

Batik Bengkulu is known as Batik *Besurek* because their motifs are similar to Arab calligraphy. Some other motifs are *bunga rafflesia*, *relung paku*, birds, and the moon.

PALEMBANG

Batik Palembang is mostly influenced by Javanese culture. They have soft motifs with bold colors. Some of the motifs are *lasem*, *sisik ikan*, *gribik*, *kembang jepri*, *encim*, *bakung*, and flowers.

Doing an **Indonesian tour** and seeing batik from all different regions will be a perfect experience. It is fascinating to see that every region has their own personal touch and cultural influences.

Indonesian Batik Traditional Market

There are a lot of places where you can buy **Indonesian traditional batik**. However, they set different range of prices, depend on the intricate patterns and the fabric's quality. You can do **Indonesian travel** to hunt some batik's new collections, because **traveling to Indonesia** won't be complete without **Indonesian batik** in your hand.

Batik Traditional Market in Indonesia

1. Kampoeng Batik Laweyan

Kampoeng Batik Laweyan is a cultural heritage and a batik center in Solo. You can buy batik and learn *membatik* (making batik). You can also enjoy local delicacies such as *apem* and *Ledre*.

2. Pasar Beringharjo

Pasar Beringharjo is the oldest market in Yogyakarta. You can find batik, local delicacies, traditional spices, clothes, and *jamu* (Indonesian traditional drink). Pasar Beringharjo also has a closed relationship with *Kraton* Yogyakarta.

3. Pasar Setono and International Batik Center Pekalongan

Pasar Setono is a batik center in Pekalongan. You can get a good quality of batik pekalongan at a low price here. Pekalongan also has International Batik Center Pekalongan that is bigger and more sophisticated than Pasar Setono, but the prices are more high.

4. Kampung Batik Trusmi

Kampung Batik Trusmi is a batik industry center and culinary tour in Cirebon. It is not a market, but more like a home industry and shop in one big area.

5. Wale Batik Minahasa

Wale Batik Minahasa is the first official batik producer in North Sulawesi. They are selling batik Minahasa and also batik from Java.

6. Pasar Sukawati

When you are visiting Bali, make sure to visit Pasar Sukawati in Gianyar. Bargaining is allowed here, so you can buy Bali's traditional batik, paintings, and handicrafts at a low price.

7. Pasar Batik Pamekasan

Unlike the other batik traditional markets, Pasar Batik Pamekasan in Pamekasan Madura, is opening on Thursday and Sunday only. Don't be surprised when you visit this place in those days, because besides batik they are also selling animals like cow, chicken, duck, sheep, goat and birds. On the other day, they sell groceries and other daily needs.

Hunting batik to traditional markets is the best choice if you want batik at a low price. Make sure to bring cash and don't forget to bargain for the cheaper price.

Modern Batik

When batik got UNESCO's award as a Masterpiece of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity, **Indonesian batik** becomes widespread.

In order to reach young customers and internationally, batik designs have developed. Many batik designers try to modify their batik designs into something modern and classy. Here are some of them.

DANAR HADI

Santosa Doellah is the owner of batik Danar Hadi from Solo. His business start in 1967 when he was 26 years old with only 20 batik workers. He opened a batik village around his house in 1968 and opened a batik center in Sragen, Central Java in 1970.

To introduce his batik internationally, Santosa held fashion shows in Jakarta and Singapore and opened many outlets in Yogyakarta, Semarang, Surabaya, Bali, Medan, etc.

In order to fulfill the market's demand, batik Danar Hadi left *batik tulis* and only focused on *batik cap* and batik printing.

Today, batik Danar Hadi has more than 1000 batik workers and has several batik outlets in Singapore and Jeddah. He also exports his batik collections to Italy, US, and Japan. He got a title "*Empu Batik*" from Institut Seni Indonesia Surakarta.

BATIK KERIS

Kasom Tjokrosaputro established Batik Keris in 1947 and opened a batik store in Solo. His batik collections got a good response from customers, and they had their own batik printing factory in 1970.

In the beginning, Batik Keris was only selling batik cloth, but later they also produced batik clothing.

Today, Batik Keris is one of the biggest batik producers in Indonesia and has 27 batik stores.

IWAN TIRTA

Iwan Tirta is an Indonesian batik fashion designer and has modern batik collections under his name. He was involved at the beginning of batik design revival in the 1970s and 1980s.

Iwan Tirta's has written some books about batik. His mission is to make batik popular and put away the wrong paradigm about batik as old-fashioned and boring.

All of his designs are mostly batik pekalongan in bright colors and using batik *prada*. Batik *prada* is a way of decorating batik by putting golden dust into the cloth. In Javanese, *prada* means gold.

Iwan Tirta's batik collections are mostly *batik tulis* and every piece of them needs six months of work. They are using high-quality fabrics like silk, organza, high-quality cotton, and linen.

Iwan Tirta is famous among the world leaders such as Bill Clinton, Nelson Mandela, and Ronald Reagan. Iwan Tirta also designed batik clothes for George W. Bush and his wife.

His collection also hit many fashions shows internationally like New York, Paris, Sydney, Tokyo, Rio de Janeiro, and Singapore.

In Indonesia, Iwan Tirta is targeting upper-class customers. The prices are started from 6 million rupiahs to 15 million rupiahs.

These hardworking batik fashion designers deserve honor and respect for their effort to make batik popular internationally. So come, visit the **wonderful Indonesia** and enrich your **Indonesian cultural traveling** with batik. Because with batik souvenir in your hand, now your **Indonesian traveling** is complete.