



Manuscripts and Creative Industries: Batik as a Medium for Introducing Ulu Script in South Sumatra

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the efforts made by the South Sumatra Ulu Script Lovers' Association in introducing the Ulu Script to the public through the creative industry, specifically batik. The research used a case study research method, conducted over four months, with the primary data source being the Ulu script. The motivation for this research is the limited public knowledge about the Ulu script and the innovative approach taken by the South Sumatra Ulu Script Lovers' Association in introducing the script through batik. The findings of the study are as follows: First, the South Sumatra Ulu Script Lovers' Association introduced the Ulu Script through the creative industry, namely batik. Second, the community was introduced to the Ulu script through learning and developing the script. Third, the community was introduced to natural dyes for creating batik motifs derived from the Ulu script. Fourth, the batik motifs based on the Ulu script included the Ulu Bunga Enim Motif, the Ulu Kujur Motif, the Ulu Komerling Dam Bridge Motif, the Ulu Duku Komerling Tree Motif, the Ulu Ampera Bridge Motif, and the Ulu Dragon Motif.

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INTRODUCTION

So far, research that places manuscript studies on the content analysis of manuscripts has rarely been carried out. So far, many manuscript studies have been conducted around codicology, inventory, digitization and transliteration of manuscripts. Some studies include Titik Pudjiastuti's, in her work she tries to inventory manuscripts in Ulu script, besides that there is Ottoman, she tries to discuss the contents of the Gelumpai manuscript in Ulu script, in her writing she tries to transliterate the ulu script which consists of 14 bamboo slats. The manuscript is thought to have been written during the Palembang Darussalam Sultanate (Pitri et al., [2019](#)). There is also Anida et al, who tried to edit and analyze the Ulu script in the PNRI Collection PETI 91/ET (Anida, [2021](#)).

In addition, there is also Ridwan Maulana, he tries to present some of the distribution of Ulu script in the Sumatra region. However, there are also those who try to disseminate or introduce Ulu script in the community as done by Dewi Dkk, he tried to conduct a *workshop on* writing Ulu script to teachers and students in the Musi Rawas region (Widadi, [2019](#)). But actually, doing content analysis is very useful in providing an overview of the knowledge contained in the contents of the manuscript. Especially if the research is carried out with the development towards a creative economy, in addition to providing knowledge but also can improve the economy of the community.

Basically, every ancient manuscript is a very rich source of knowledge written by our ancestors. In every ancient manuscript, it is composed of characters that are unique to Indonesia. One of the scripts used in writing manuscripts is Ulu script. Ulu script is one of the scripts that developed in the South Sumatra region, especially around the Musi River. Ulu script is widely used in ancient manuscripts such as for regional literature or folklore. Ulu script is also known as Kaganga script in the southern Sumatra region with the name Ulu writing, while in the Batanghari Sembilan inland area of Jambi it is known as Incung Jambi writing and in the Aceh region it is known as Rencong writing (Sarwono et al., [2019](#)).

Ulu script is not widely recognized by the wider community such as today's younger generation. Therefore, efforts are needed to introduce and preserve the ancient script of the archipelago. One way to preserve the ancient script can be done by transforming the ancient script into batik which is also the wealth and identity of the Indonesian nation. The selection of batik is a cultural heritage that is inherent and close to the community which has historical, artistic and aesthetic values. In addition, the transformation of ulu script or ancient script into batik motifs can enrich the treasures of Nusantara batik. Therefore, this paper seeks to try to explain the efforts made by Pencinta Aksara Ulu Sumatera in introducing the Ulu script through the creative industry in the form of batik (Pebriona et al., [2023](#)).



Works themed on the creative industry with regard to ancient manuscripts can basically be found in various scientific writings, ranging from research or books that review various creative industries ranging from films, batik and t-shirts. The first is M Yusuf in 2013 who made a movie screenplay entitled *Badai Bukan dari Timur* which is an adaptation of the *Hikayat Tuanku Nan Muda Pagaruyung* media transfer. Second, Yulienta in 2018 made a Comic entitled *Comic and Animated Film Raja Kerang* which is a transformation of ancient manuscripts into animation as an effort to introduce ancient manuscripts and bridge the past with the present in the modern world (Anida et al., [1970](#)).

Third, Jajang A Rohmana wrote an article entitled *The New Meaning of Manuscripts in the Era of Creative Economy: Haji Hasan Mustafa's Dangding in T-shirts*. Jajang seeks to introduce Haji Hasan Mustafa's dangding poetry through the *fashion* industry, namely t-shirts. Fourth, Irwan Malin Basa in 2019 who wrote *Creative Industry Development from the Illumination of Pariagan Ancient Manuscripts in the Study of Pariagan Batik Motifs in West Sumatra* (Basa, [2019](#)). This paper explains the efforts made by local residents who were once lost, namely dyeing cloth. From these efforts, thirteen batik designs were produced that came from manuscript illumination.

In addition, there is also Dini Yanuarmi who wrote the *Application of Manuscript Motifs in Batik: Cultural Heritage through the Learning Process for ISI Padangpanjang Students*. This paper tries to explain that ancient manuscripts are cultural heritage categorized as visual culture. Ancient manuscripts are utilized by ISI Padangpanjang students to create several works designed using natural and synthetic dyes to make batik that has creative, innovative and competitive illumination (Maulana, [2020](#)).

There is also Harken (2021) wrote *Incung Script as an Inspiration for Batik Motifs of the Kerinci Community*. *Incung script* is an inspiration in making batik in the Kerinci tribe. The development of *Incung script* batik has also experienced developments, which were previously only patterned with flora, fauna and cultural symbols, increased by *Incung script* batik which is the result of the creation of batik crafters' ideas.

In addition, Ferli and Fernandes wrote *Decorative Variety in Ancient Manuscripts as a Source of Batik Motif Inspiration in Nagari Priangan, Tanah Datar Regency*. In their writing, they revealed the decorative variety found in ancient manuscripts and Pariangan batik motifs. The variety of Pariangan batik motifs originating from the ancient manuscripts of Nagari Pariangan are *Labuah Nagari Motif*, *Surau Pariangan Motif*, *Bintang Tatabua Motif*, *Mangkuto Rajo Motif*, *Kembang Rangkang Motif*, *Dama Kapadam Motif*, *Rantiang Saliguri Motif*, *Sijambai Ani Motif*, *Bungo Lado Motif* (Fernandes & Efi, [2022](#)).

In terms of literary events that take from ancient manuscripts, Roma Kyo wrote *Literary Event Activities through the Minangkabau Manuscript Exhibition and Creative Industry Products by SURI*. In her work, it is explained that the SURI Institute is one of the institutions that wants to introduce manuscripts through literary events in which there are products such as men's clothes and women's clothes, *totebags*, head coverings and wood carvings for display.

Finally, Azwar also wrote *Media Transfer of Ancient Manuscripts as Creative Economy Development*. Azwar (2015) seeks to explain that ancient manuscripts need serious attention to be carried out in terms of the creative economy. There are two views, the first is to be careful in utilizing ancient manuscripts for industrial purposes and the second is that industrial development will make culture with the industrial world, because it will make ancient manuscripts introduced to the public.

On the basis of the above literature review, this research will provide a new discourse on the introduction of ancient scripts through different media, namely the creative industry through batik or items used daily. So that the introduction through batik or wallet media will be one way to approach the *ulu script* in the community. In addition, this study will also enrich the study of the *ulu script*, this paper places the position of the *Ulu script* as an object of research in its capacity to reveal the creative industry and ancient manuscripts. On that basis, this research will directly provide a new perspective specifically on the study of ancient manuscripts.

METHODS

The research method used is the *case study research* method and the research data source is the *Ulu script*. The research began by looking for information related to the *Ulu script*. Furthermore, the author participated in activities carried out by the *Ulu Script Lovers* who were holding a *Focus Group Discussion on Learning and Development of Ulu Script* by presenting South Sumatra *Ulu Script Experts*, namely Drs. Ahmad Rapani Igama. M.Si. and Dr. Wahyu Rizky

Andhifani S.S. M. M and representatives of Malay Manuscript experts, Muhammad Daud. MA. As well as designers and craftsmen of natural clothing made from Mrs. Anggi Fitrilia. The FGD resulted in several agreements, including the name of the patterned clothing (Fadli, [2021](#)).

Aksara Ulu, namely Batik Ulu, which consists of five Batik Ulu designs, then Batik Design Making is carried out. In making the batik design, the Ulu Batik design is made with motifs and patterns that are in accordance with regional characteristics, as well as by using references to the Ulu Aksara manuscript, either from the variants of the characters or the motifs of the images in the manuscript. In the making of this ulu batik motif design concept, there are six motifs made, first one Palembang motif, second, two Muara Enim motifs, and third, two East Oku motifs, as well as an ancient dragon-shaped manuscript motif design. Finally, the Ulu Script Training Workshop and its Development in Palembang City, as well as the *launching* and exhibition of the results of the South Sumatra Ulu Script clothing products aimed at introducing them to the public.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Batik and Creative Economy

Batik is one of the illustrated fabrics in which the manufacturing process is carried out specifically by writing or stamping (molding) or applying night or wax to the fabric. Batik is one of Indonesia's heritages that has a long history. Batik is one of the relics of Indonesian culture that should be preserved (Suryanto, [2021](#)). The existence of batik began to be looked at again after Malaysia claimed that batik originated from Malaysia. This made the Indonesian government submit to the United Nations to immediately determine that the legal owner of batik is Indonesia as a world cultural heritage. After going through a long process, finally on October 2, 2009, UNESCO (*United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organizations*) designated batik as the Heritage of Humanity for Oral and Intangible Culture owned by Indonesia (Yanuarmi, [2020](#)).

Since its establishment by UNESCO, batik has been used and used as national clothing and is used by all levels of society when there are official activities ranging from the community to officials. In the past, batik was only used by certain circles such as rulers or aristocrats, but now batik has become a garment that can be worn by everyone that shows and reflects beauty (Basa, [2019](#)).

One of the efforts to introduce batik to younger generations is through contemporary media that can be accessed by the wider community. One of them is by introducing batik to the creative industry. Apart from being a source of inspiration for the creative industry, it actually has advantages such as both batik as a cultural heritage that must be preserved as well as for the creative industry. For the creative industry, it can be a creative product such as clothing, batik or fashion that is in demand by the younger generation. And related to ancient manuscripts, it can introduce ancient manuscripts to every level of society (Trixie, [2020](#)).

Therefore, the development of a creative economy with the theme of batik has a very strategic role in terms of community economic development. The concept of economic implementation into the development of creative industries is one of the smart solutions in maintaining economic development and business development in this era of globalization. With creativity and quality resources, it will produce products that are able to empower the community with a creative economy.

In South Sumatra, it is very suitable to develop a creative economy in the form of batik with a source of inspiration from ancient manuscripts whose writing uses the Ulu script. For that reason, which makes the Ulu Aksara Association to introduce batik with the concept of creative industry using Ulu script motifs. In the process, the Ulu Aksara Lovers Association makes batik and ulu script to be projected into creative industry works with high economic value (Asmara, [2019](#)).

The development carried out by the Ulu Aksara Lovers Association is not only about the results or *output*, but the community is given gradual motivation, training and coaching independently to be able to support an independent economy in their area. The result is not only introducing batik, but also gaining knowledge about the creative economy and increasing the community's income as a creative economy product.

Aksara Ulu Palembang

The word script is an absorption from Sanskrit, namely *akshara*, which means letters, sounds or vowels, while according to the term script is the smallest unit that becomes a tool organized through orthography and writing systems. In the Big Indonesian Dictionary, script is a graphic sign system that is usually used by humans to communicate. Meanwhile, according to Cook et al, script is a form of physical implementation of a writing system, for example Malay writing which uses Latin script and *Jawi* script (Maulana, [2020](#)).

In Indonesia there are many types of characters, such as Pallawa script, Sundanese script. Javanese script, Lontara script, Balinese script, and Batak script. On the island of Sumatra, there are two large groups of scripts, namely Batak script and Surat Ulu script. Even so, according to Uli Kozok, the two scripts are still related. One of the scripts found in many manuscripts in Sumatra is the Ulu script. Ulu script is one of the ancient writings that developed in the archipelago, especially in the 13th century around the South Sumatra region. Especially in the upper reaches of the Musi River, this script is widely used by the community in regional literature or folk stories.

In its broadest sense, Ulu script is a family of scripts that developed around the upper reaches of rivers in the hill regions of the Sumatran range from central to southern Sumatra. Included in this script are Kerinci script, Ulu script and Lampung script. In a narrower sense, Ulu script refers to the script used by local people who use the Kaganga script that developed in South Sumatra and Bengkulu (Kozok, [2012](#)).

In addition, the ulu script can be categorized as the Rencong script. The naming of Rencong is to make it easier to mention nationally although sometimes the naming and designation in each region is different. Even in South Sumatra, this script is called Kaganga script which is known as Ulu writing. In its development, the Rencong script in the South Sumatra region is used by the inland people of Palembang in particular, precisely around the Musi River and its tributaries such as the Lematang, Komering, Rawas, Kelingi, Rupit, Beliti, and Lakitan rivers. The people who live around this inland area are commonly and often called the Uluan community, so the writing or script used is called Ulu Tulisan (Rohmana, [2018](#)).

Hartati said that the Rencong script is sometimes also called the Kaganga script. This is because, if you pay attention to the name of the alphabet, it is taken from the letters Ka, Ga, Nga which are the basic letters in the Ulu script. Even researchers also look at the Ulu script guidelines, and the sequence in writing uses the letters Ka, Ga, Nga. In its distribution, the Ulu script is extensive and includes various tribes and languages making this script has many local varieties and variants. But like the Batak script, the Ulu script can be grouped into four groups, namely Ulu Rejang script, Ulu Pasemah Ulu Lembak script, and Ulu Serawai script (Andhifani, [2020](#)).

Ulu script has basic letters, all consisting of 16 consonant-vowel letters (Ka, Ga, Ta, Da, Na, Pa, Ba, Ma, Ca, Ja, Sa, Ra, La, Ya, Wa, Ha), and 9 consonant-consonant-vowel letters (Nga, Nya, Mba, Mpa, Nca, Nta, Nda, Nja, Gha), then 2 consonant-consonant-vowel letter symbols (Ngga, Ngka) and 1 vowel letter symbol (A) (**Figure 1**), each letter can change its mention according to the key layout of the punctuation marker (Dewi & Muslihah, [2022](#)).

Ulu Aksara in Batik Motifs

From the results of the research conducted, the Ulu Aksara Lovers Association carried out activities to make Ulu Batik designs with motifs and patterns that were in accordance with regional characteristics. This is based on using references to the Ulu script, either from the variant of the script or the motif of the image on the script. there are six types of motifs made by the Palembang Ulu Script Lovers Team, including the first one Palembang motif, second, two Muara Enim motifs, and third, two East Oku motifs, as well as the design of ancient manuscript motifs in the form of dragons (Pramono, [2018](#)).

Ulu Bunga Enim Motif

The Ulu Bunga Enim motif is a motif inspired by the word *Serasan Sekundang*, the motto of the Muara Enim Regency area, from the motto then made in the South Sumatra Ulu Script which is taken from the letter's ulu based on the Ulu script artifacts found in the Muara Enim Regency area (**Figure 2**).

Ulu Kujur Motif

The Ulu Kujur motif is a representative result of Ulu script in the form of a *kujur* (spear). This Kujur motif is based on the traditional weapon of the Muara Enim Regency community which is depicted in the Ulu script artifacts found in Muara Enim Regency (**Figure 3**).

Ulu Motif of Komerling Dam Bridge

The Ulu Bridge Komerling Dam motif is a motif inspired by the logo of East Oku Regency with the shape of a bridge that reads *Sebiduk* and the shape of a river that reads *Sehaluan*. The meaning of the word *sebiduk* is a boat and *Sehaluan* is one goal. So *sebiduk sehaluan* is a representation of a container of activities both farming, trading etc., but one goal is to build East Ogan Komerling Ulu (**Figure 4**).

Ulu Duku Komerling Tree Motif

The Ulu Duku Komerling motif is a motif inspired by the superior fruit commodity from Komerling which is well known in Indonesian society. With the shape of the trunk that reads *duku* and the twig reads *Komerling*, while the *duku* fruit, leaves, rice and birds as decoration of the Ulu Duku Komerling motif, with the meaning of the form of rice on the side indicating the majority of people work as farmers (**Figure 5**).

Ulu Motif of Ampera Bridge

The Ulu Ampera Bridge motif is a batik motif representing the Ampera bridge which is the pride of the Palembang city community and is known by people throughout the archipelago. In this motif, the Ulu script is formed in such a way as to form the ampere bridge motif itself (**Figure 6**).

Ulu Naga Motif

The Ulu Naga motif is an ulu motif taken from one of the illustrations in the Kaghas manuscript findings in Lubuk Sepang Village, Lahat Regency. On the artifact there is a picture of a dragon which eventually inspired the formation of this motif in ulu batik (**Figure 7**).

Launching Batik Aksara Ulu

In order to introduce the batik motifs that have been designed by the Ulu Aksara Lovers Association, it is necessary to make efforts to spread the values contained. After the training was carried out, the next activity was the *launching* and exhibition of South Sumatra Ulu Batik products on October 23, 2022 at Bukit Siguntang Field, Palembang. This activity is the culmination of all series of activities of the South Sumatra Ulu Aksara Lovers Association, or obtained as a gongxi activity, because the activity is the *launching of* ulu batik products made from natural materials as a local clothing product of South Sumatra and was officially inaugurated by the Governor of South Sumatra represented by expert staff on government and politics, namely Dr. Ir. H. Firmasyah, M.Sc. In this activity there is an Ulu Aksara gallery and an exhibition of Ulu Batik clothing products made from natural materials in the form of clothes, sarongs, shawls, sal, tanjak, small bags and so on. With the explanation from the speakers about the meaning of the natural Batik Ulu clothing products themselves, so that the public knows the philosophy and local wisdom values that exist in the ulu batik clothing. The following is a documentation of the Ulu Aksara Batik *Launching* activity carried out by the South Sumatra Ulu Aksara Lovers (**Figure 8, 9 and 10**).

CONCLUSION

South Sumatra Ulu Script Lovers have succeeded in introducing Ulu Script to the public through the batik creative industry. This batik creative industry is not only able to bring back the Ulu script in the midst of modernity and globalization, but also helps people earn income with creative industry businesses. Ulu script, which is a cultural heritage of the archipelago, has been able to be re-presented through batik. The effort was made to keep the ulu script known and also to strengthen the culture of South Sumatra in the modern era. Therefore, batik and the work of the South Sumatra Ulu Aksara Lovers Association have shown their efforts in responding to modernization and globalization and

introducing ulu script through the creative industry. So that it can be a strategy and awareness of the importance of cultural products owned by South Sumatra.

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