

Islamic Calligraphy in Batik Medium Contemporary of the Indonesian Islamic Fine Art

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الملخص

هذا البحث يسلط الضوء على استخدام الخط في أعمال الباتيك. يعتبر الخط كأحد أنواع الفنون الجميلة للخط العربي والذي ظهر مع ظهور أول مملكة إسلامية في جاوا، مملكة دماك. في هذه الآونة، هناك اعتقاد بأن الخط العربي له بعض التأثيرات السحرية، يعتبر أحد أشكال الخط والذي هو على شكل إنسان مثل هيئة سمار (Semar)، وهو أحد شخصيات الأساطير الجاوية القديمة، خبير مثال للتأثيرات السحرية. إن تقبل المسلمين للخط العربي هذا أدى إلى ظهور واستخدام عدد من الأدوات والطرق والمواد الأولية للكتابة. بالرغم من هذا التنوع فإنه لا يخلو من وجود كثير من التشابه في اختيار الكلمات التي تمتلك معنى الجمال الروحي والحكمة والعظمة.

يقسم الخط العربي إلى قسمين رئيسيين وهما الكتابة اليدوية والخط الصوري. القسم الأول وهو الفن التعبيري لفن كتابة الحرف العربي المتوارث عن الأجداد. تتحدد حرية الاختيار في هذا النوع من الخط بالموضوع وأدوات الكتابة ولكن يجب اتباع أصول وقواعد الكتابة مثل خط النسخ والفارسي والديواني والريحاني والرقعة والكوفي. بينما يسمح الخط الصوري بتشكيل الحرف العربي بصورة أكثر مرونة ومطاطية لكي تأتي متماثلة مع فكرة وتخييل الخطاط نفسه. ويستخدم هذين النوعين من الخط أنواعا مختلفة من أدوات

الكتابة. وبالإضافة إلى ذلك، فإن الخطاط يعبر أهمية كبيرة لدرجة الجمال في اختيار الحروف وتشكيلاتها في تكوين الباتيك، لا يستعمل الباتيك في اللبس فقط بل له دور في الطبقات الاجتماعية أيضا. أنواع رسوم الباتيك التي تحتوي على أشكال (Parang Barong, Udan Liris, Cemukiran, Parang Rusak)، تشير إلى حالة طبقية اجتماعية عالية ولذلك فإن النبلاء والملوك الذين يقتنوه فقط.

الأدوات المستخدمة في عمل الباتيك لها بعض المعاني الدينية مثل (Canting) والتي تستخدم برسم أو كتابة الباتيك، تحتوي على معنى كلام الله، (Tungku) التي تستخدم في تسخين مواد الباتيك تحمل معنى العالم الصغير. الفحم يعطى معنى قوة وقدرة الله. بينما الدخان يمثل نبي الله. يسرد هذا البحث أيضا طريقة عمل الباتيك على شكل الخطوط العربية الفنية. بالإضافة إلى ما ذكر أعلاه، هناك بعض الأدوات الأخرى المستخدمة في صنع الباتيك مثل (Isen) والتي لها دور في إغناء الخط بكثير من أشكال الحروف. ومن أجل إعطاء جمال ورونق للباتيك تستخدم بعض الأشكال الهندسية مثل الدوائر (Uwer)، النقاط (Cecek)، الزوايا الحادة (Remukan)، الأمواج (Ombak)، المثلثات (Wajik). ونذكر على سبيل المثال بعض الطرق المستخدمة وهي، طريقة الأسود والأبيض وطريقة العمل شيئا فشيئا.

Abstrak

Paper ini menyoroti mengenai Kaligrafi Islam dalam karya-karya batik. Kaligrafi merupakan karya seni menulis indah bahasa Arab yang sudah ada sejak kemunculan Kerajaan Islam pertama di Jawa, Kerajaan Demak. Kaligrafi pada masa ini dipercaya mempunyai kandungan magis. Kaligrafi berbentuk manusia seperti bentuk Semar, satu tokoh dalam pewayangan, salah satu contoh kaligrafi Islam yang mempunyai efek magis. Penerimaan

umat Islam terhadap kaligrafi Arab ini memunculkan digunakannya berbagai macam alat, teknik dan jenis media kaligrafi. Namun, dalam keragaman ini ada kesamaan dalam kata-kata yang digunakan yaitu yang mempunyai kandungan keindahan spiritual, kebijaksanaan, dan keagungan.

Ada dua jenis kaligrafi yaitu kaligrafi tulis tangan dan kaligrafi gambar. Kaligrafi jenis pertama merupakan ekspresi seni tulis huruf Arab yang sudah diwariskan oleh generasi-generasi pendahulu. Dalam kaligrafi ini, kebebasan hanya pada pemilihan materi dan alat tulis, tetapi harus sesuai dengan standar kaligrafi seperti naskhi, farisi, diwani, rihyani, riq'iy dan kufi. Sedangkan kaligrafi lukis membolehkan pengembangan jenis-jenis huruf Arab secara elastis sesuai dengan ide dan imajinasi para pelukisnya. Kedua jenis kaligrafi ini juga menggunakan media dan alat yang berbeda. Lebih jauh, penulis menguraikan peran estetik kaligrafi batik. Batik tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai pakaian tetapi juga merefleksikan status sosial. Batik-batik tertentu seperti *Parang Barong*, *Udan Liris*, *Cemukiran* atau *Parang Rusak*, menyimbolkan status yang tinggi sehingga dapat dipakai oleh para bangsawan maupun raja.

Alat-alat batik juga menyimbolkan makna keagamaan. Canting yaitu alat untuk melukis batik, misalnya, mempunyai arti firman-firman Tuhan. Tungku atau alat pemanas bahan batik mempunyai arti alam kecil (*'alam shagir*). Arang yaitu bahan untuk dibakar, mempunyai arti Kekuasaan Allah (*Qaharullah*). Sedangkan asapnya mempunyai arti Nabi Allah (*Nabiullah*). Dalam paper ini juga dikemukakan proses pembuatan Kaligrafi Batik. Selain hal-hal yang disebut diatas, perlengkapan pembuatan batik lain adalah *isen* yaitu untuk memperkaya tekstur batik. Sedangkan untuk memperkaya efek keindahan digunakan antara lain *uwer* (lingkaran), *cecek* (titik-titik), *remukan* (pecahan), *ombak*, dan *wajik* (segitiga). Teknik yang digunakan antara lain, teknik hitam-putih dan teknik sedikit demi sedikit (*step by step*).

In any geographical regions, al-Qur'an has become an inspiration source that provides every esthetical momentum in Islamic civilization.¹ This fact does not only happen in traditional art dynamic, but also in every kinds of contemporary art that was developed by Moslem

¹This statement be confirmed with various reference have discourse about existence, essence and manifestation esthetic in Islamic civilization. Look, Ismail Raji Al-Faruqi, *Cultural Atlas Of Islam*, (New York: MacMillan, 1986). David James, *Islamic Art*, (Hamlyn,

community everywhere they live in, either in an audio (music and song), visual (drawing, painting and architecture), theatrical arts (dance and drama) or literature (prose and poem). Therefore, every Islamic matters that can be reproduced into symbolic and esthetic sorts always arises as creative challenges that have to be answered or striven for by Moslem art workers and artists. So the esthetic elements of Qur'an, its norms and spiritual values of beauty can be transformed into an appreciation procedure, theory and practices of creating Islamic art.

Nevertheless, that abstraction cannot be actualized into wholly cultural and social systems without involving an experience historical accuracy, art heritage, traditions and custom, that grew and developed in a region.² That is the reason why the practices of creating Islamic art always develop in an idiomatic compound that suits symbolic codes, and it can be understood by local communities, both by Moslem and non-Moslem. One kind of Islamic art that grows in that fact is calligraphy. The combination of calligraphy idiom and tradition had resulted in various expressions, style, forms and beauty of Islamic fine art, which is unique and original.

In Indonesia, such combination can be perceived in convention and experimentation of Arabic inscriptions processed by using *batik technique* and media as an expression space, popularly called *batik calligraphy*. One of Islamic paintings that up to the moment is regarded as part of applied art as well as fine art, have been developed by some contemporary Moslem painters.³

Islamic Art and Culture in Indonesia

Since the Independent Day in 1945, Indonesia has been a unitary state that consists of 27 provinces⁴ with various ethnics, languages, and customs spreading throughout 5 big islands i. e. Java, Sumatra, Kalimantan (Borneo), Sulawesi (Celebes) and Papua (Irian). Indonesia has also been regarded as one of the countries that has a great deal of art and cultures, especially traditional ones.

1974). Richard Ettinghausen, "Islamic Art And Architecture", in Bernard Lewis (ed.), *The World Of Islam*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992).

²J.W.M. Bakker SJ., *Filsafat Kebudayaan*, (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1984), p. 149-152.
Effat El-Sharqawi, *Filsafat Kebudayaan Islam*, (Bandung: Pustaka, 1986), p. 11-13.

³Wiyoso Yudoseputro, *Pengantar Seni Rupa Islam di Indonesia*, (Bandung: Angkasa, 1986), p. 115-120.

⁴Since 1999, Timor Timur not a part of Indonesian province.

Instead of seeing the phenomenon of the art and cultural tradition as merely and naturally born, it is more arguable to regard it as a combination of traditions of Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity and Islam. Nevertheless, in its later development, most of those conceptions and practices have mainly influenced by of Islamic values.⁵ This influence can be traced through artifacts, archeological sites, cultural heritage and other documents. The Islamic symbols.⁶ This fact corresponds with government's efforts to dig and find national cultural identities. With respect to that, the forms of Islamic art and tradition begin to be perceived again and posited as a note worthy national asset to be preserve and renewed in a more dynamic and progressive manner.⁷ Therefore, this various Islamic art and Muslim Artists, who participate in determining this national cultural identities through exhibitions, festivals, contests, discussions and various kind of art advocating activities on Islam. Although, the mission and orientation of those activities seem not more than as a way to develop art appreciation, creativity and source of the Islamic community.

Moreover, various aspects and esthetical matters of Islamic art, especially in painting field, also move and revive to life by their supporters to make creative innovations towards the establishment of a modern Islamic painting. One of them is the endeavor of Moslem painters to explorer various esthetical matters to take calligraphy as a fine art expression.⁸ So that in recent art and cultural constellation, the existence of Islamic calligraphy has widely been recognized by community and grow become a genre in contemporary of the Indonesian fine art.

Batik Calligraphy as Fine Art

As a part of cultural tradition in Indonesia, Arabic transcription or calligraphy has been known since the establishment of first Islamic kingdom in

⁵Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, *Islam Dalam Sejarah dan Kebudayaan Melayu*, (Bandung: Mizan, 1990), p. 29 and so on.

⁶Hassan Muarif Ambary, *Menemukan Peradaban: Jejak Arkeologis dan Historis Islam Indonesia*, (Jakarta: Logos, 1998), p. 35-49.

⁷The most popular activity in this issues are Tale Festival in every region, Festival Istiqlal (International scale), *Musabaqah Tilawatil Qur'an* and Build Museum and Bait Al-Qur'an in Taman Mini Indonesia Indah (TMII).

⁸Like as art work is do it by Amang Rahman (Surabaya), AD. Pirous dan A. Sadali (Bandung), Amri Yahya (Yogyakarta). Look at, Abdul Hadi WM., *Islam: Cakrawala Estetik dan Budaya*, (Jakarta: Pustaka Firdaus, 2000), p. 397-423.

Aceh.⁹ So that this sort of art spreader and could be enjoyed by majority of Moslem community (90 %) in various ethnical region and cultural geography. Furthermore, part of calligraphy works were born in this first Islamic kingdom period in Java,¹⁰ have been believed as having magical meaning and have been positioned as sacred things by their community. Anthropomorphic calligraphy (comprises of Islamic creed and *Semar's* shape, a holy person in tales) is an example of Islamic calligraphy creation which has a magical nature and at the present has been produced thousands copies. This kind of calligraphy also appears in *raja*h (cross-hatching line of certain Arabic letters) that is believed as having a capability to bring about some blessing.

The acceptance and appreciation of Moslem community to Arabic inscription, automatically support the emergence of various equipment, techniques, sorts of media of calligraphy expression. But in this diversity, as in general Islamic art, there are the same vision and mission as spiritual beauty, wisdom and majesty representation of words or sentences derived from popular texts of Koran, prophetic tradition, prayer or poems in Islamic cultural treasure. Then, those texts are processed in inclination of anthropomorphic or zoomorphic expression and geomorphic that is not very different from calligraphy phenomenon in Islamic world. This similarity is seen in inclination of expression that can be classified in two main groups, i. e. *handwriting calligraphy* and *painting calligraphy*.

Handwriting calligraphy (*hat, imlak*) refers to sort of expression art of Arabic inscription according to its certain characters and styles that had been inherited by previous generation.¹¹ Moreover, in this calligraphy, there is a requisite to choose the special material and tools, beside it has to be in accordance with standards of calligraphy like *naskh, farisi, diwani, rihyani, riq'a* and *kufi*. So that this expression of calligraphy writing has a creativity strip similar to the categories of applied art or traditional art practiced and benefited in all various public services, like decoration, illustration, Koran reduplication, signature and so on.

The expression term of painting calligraphy, (*rasm, tashwir*), has an au-

⁹In the other at Aceh, Arabic inscription can be looked in around north island ephigraphy documents. See, Hassan Muarif, *Menemukan Peradaban*, p. 171-189.

¹⁰That calligraphy usually created by Moslem painters in Cirebon (west Java) or Demak (middle Java) Islamic Kingdom in seventeenth century, *ibid*, p. 176.

¹¹Ismail Raji Al-Faruqi, *Cultural Atlas Of Islam*, (New York: Macmillan, 1986), Chapter 12.

tonomous creative freedom to develop the elasticity Arabic letters as a way for acquiring esthetic effects according to its painter's ideas and imagination. Furthermore, this painting calligraphy is called as fine art (modern art) expression, so that either in distribution or creation process and esthetic achievement process cannot be imitated or reproduced by any one.

The difference of visual and expression media between writing calligraphy and painting calligraphy also appears in Indonesia Islamic art treasury. The former tends to use wood, leather, glass, paper and black ink as main media. The latter is more focussed on canvas, cloth and color. Besides that, there are those which use mixed media (collage) from various hard or soft thing like quill, horsehair, thread and so on.

The expression of fine art in specific Indonesian calligraphy is batik calligraphy. It is creation processes and achievement of esthetic of calligraphy art through cloth media and certain technique according to disciplines of batik creation. Furthermore, this kind of calligraphy has place and appreciation in the world of art in general. This is not merely caused by sophistication of creation technique and process, but also related to glorious meaning and batik philosophy in tradition and culture treasures, so that the appearance of art expression and it is esthetic achievement in publicly and domestically Indonesia fine art appreciation, its existence is validated by critics as contemporary Islamic calligraphy.¹²

The Esthetic Roles of Batik Calligraphy

As fine art expression, the presence of batik calligraphy in the world of Indonesian contemporary art has brought a certain role, image and discipline which contains elements of identity, character, technique, method, types and symbolic esthetic other than generally art in public. To reach a better understanding one needs not only a broad explanation from the types of visual expression, but also from aspects of etymology, history and sociology which scope their existence.

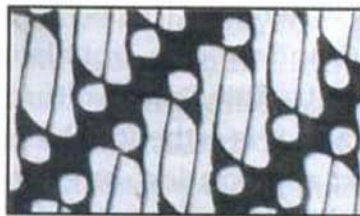
In Indonesian cultural literature, the term "batik" is an acronym of Java diction "*embat*" (to write or to arrange) and "*tik*" (dot or ink drops). According to the fusion of those two words, the terminology of batik can be stated as activities of writing or arranging dots to produce certain motive

¹²Munawir Sadzali and HB Yasin (ed), *Nafas Islam Kebudayaan Indonesia*, (Jakarta: Festival Istiqlal, 1991), p. 93-121.

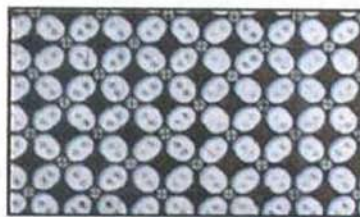
and picture in chosen cloth media (silk or cotton). The elements of the terminology have been recognized and practiced in every discipline and process of batik's creation.

Historically, batik was one main part of tradition art that grew and developed in Javanese cultural treasury since sixteenth century, about 1520.¹³ In the treasury, batik meaning did not only take as art work but also it functioned as dress designed and created to reflect social status and culture of the wearer according to agreed motives as *Parang Barong*, *Udan Liris*, *Cemukiran*

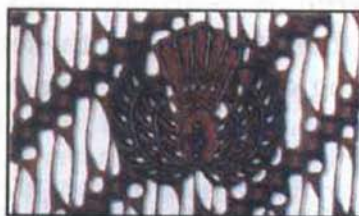
¹³Inger Mc Cabe Elliot, *Batik: Fabled Cloth of Java*, (New York: Clarkson N Potter, 1984), p. 22. Mattiebelle Gittinger, *Splendid Symbols: Textiles and Tradition in Indonesia*, (Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 16. Example of batik traditional motive can be looked in this picture:



Parang Rusak Barong



Kawung



Parang Rusak Barong Seling Kusumo Gurdo

or *Parang Rusak*. Kings and the royal family only can wear them.¹⁴ Meanwhile other motive like *Truntum* only can be worn by kingdom officials for certain ceremonies and people community had been only permitted to wear batik dress with the motives had ruled by authority of king (Sultan).

Beside motive, symbolization and batik creation process in the tradition mentioned above, it also bears technique and tool related to way of life and Moslem values. For examples: *Canting* (stylus it is used to write or draw with liquid wax) means God words. *Tungku* (brazier, burner tool) means *alam shagir*, microcosmic space. *Arang* (firewood, burner tool) means *qaharullah*, absolutely of Allah. And *asap* (for the beauty of color) means *nabiyullah*, prophetic.¹⁵ So, the whole batik creation process in that tradition and cultural space can be treated as the duty and obligation as both *khalifatullah* (slave of culture) or *abdullah* (slave of religion) to achieve the perfection of faith and piety.

Thus, appreciation and recognition understanding of batik calligraphy automatically position to philosophical elements as drawn above, both in its creation process or matters pertaining to meaning. So that blend sorts of Islamic values that contained in calligraphy art with its cultural values in batik can reflect local and universal esthetic values.

So, when batik calligraphy has put its existence and cultural position in community, it directly become a part of universality of Islamic values that functions as a reflection media for its lover to arrive at the esthetical world which is both religious and transcendent. Beyond those, creative achievements in batik calligraphy have also not less roles in searching and finding Islamic esthetic elements in Indonesian fine art treasury.

As pioneer in this field,¹⁶ the writer has done creative exploration through works, exhibitions and other local, regional, or international publications to put the existence and originality of batik calligraphy as one of expression sort of contemporary Islamic art.

¹⁴Soedarso Sp., *Seni Lukis Batik Indonesia: dari Klasik sampai Kontemporer*, (Yogyakarta: Taman Budaya-IKIP Negeri, 1998), p. 9-13.

¹⁵Amri Yahya, *Sejarah Perkembangan Seni Lukis Batik Indonesia*, (Yogyakarta: Javanologi, 1985).

¹⁶Catalogue, *2nd Batik Painting Exhibition By Indonesian Artist*, Thailand, 1991. So, *Orientations: A Discovery of Asia*, volume 6, November 1975, p. 61-65.

The Processes of Creating Batik Calligraphy

As applied, the processes of creating batik can be grouped in two categories, traditional groups and modern ones. The traditional batik processes still use manual equipment such as *canting* (stylus), *malam/lilin* (bees wax), *wajan* (pan), *tungku* (brazier), *arang* (firewood), *gawangan* (frame) and color dye, and carried out in home industry. And modern batik that so called stamped batik (*batik cap*), use big stamp or printing equipment processed in a factory. The creation of printing batik as a fine art expression, use a mixed equipment and technique. Traditional equipment had been still used but in the same time using modern equipment as far as needed. Meanwhile, *isen* (traditional batik texture) had been still used to enrich texture and esthetic effects in creating batik are *uwer* (circle), *cecek* (dots), *remukan* (crackle), *ombak* (wave), *wajik* (diamond), etc.¹⁷

The creation of batik calligraphy as I do, also refers to fine art technique and discipline. But different from generally batik technique, I have

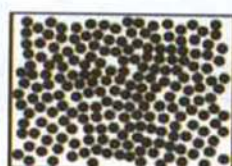
¹⁷This is a tool and some *isen* (traditional batik texture) that are still used in creating contemporary batik:



Canting
(stylus, is used to write or draw with liquid wax)



Uwer (circle)



Cecek (dots)



Remukan (crackle)



Ombak (wave)



Wajik (diamond)

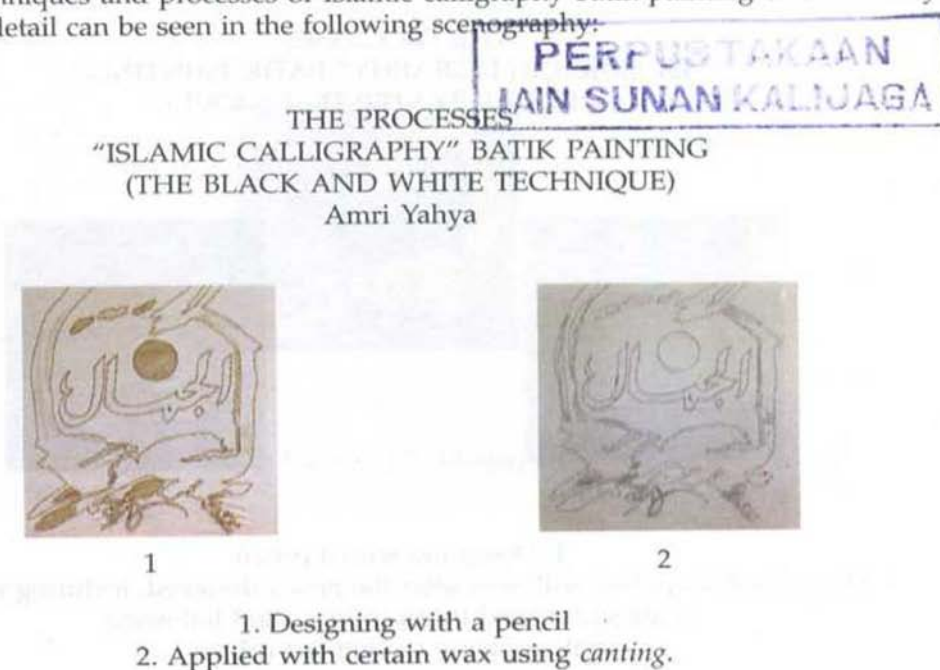
found my own technique and have a copyright in processes of batik creation. These are called in "the black and white technique" and "the step by step technique".¹⁸

The black and white technique, being started with pattern plan, sketch or drawing and writing or letters on chosen cloth, then blocked with wax (expected sketch). After that, all sketches are colored 3 times from front and 3 times from behind, then removing the wax.

The step by step technique is started finished by the same way as black and white technique, but all sketches and started from the smallest lines should be blocked with wax, then dyed from the lightest color to the darkest color.

Nevertheless, as the processes of fine art expression in general, the achievement of batik calligraphy esthetic are not only reside in the technique perfection, but also there is an aspect of mysterious activity and together with intuition and spirituality that can be experienced only by its painter himself. So, the expression of fine art in batik calligraphy can find esthetic matters, beauty and enjoyment that not easy to be imitated or reproduced by others. This is a part of secret of art creation.

¹⁸Techniques and processes of Islamic calligraphy batik painting of Amri Yahya creation in detail can be seen in the following scenography:





3



4

3. Applied with certain wax using brush

4. The patterns is about to be applied with liquid chemical colours.



5



6

5. Three times dying processes on both sides, front and rear surfaces.

6. The final result, after wax is eliminated.

THE PROCESSES

"ISLAMIC CALLIGRAPHY" BATIK PAINTING (THE STEP BY STEP TECHNIQUE)



1



2

1. Designing with a pencil

2. The pattern is applied with wax after the pencil designed, texturing with the smallest dots and theniest lines. And following with applying the lightest colour.



3



4

3 and 4

Adding more detail or textures shaping "cecek" etc. The next sequence colour is taking deeper than the first colour.



5



6

5 and 6

Take the same step of number 3 and 4, applied an other deeper colour than the previous one after adding an other necessary textures (details).

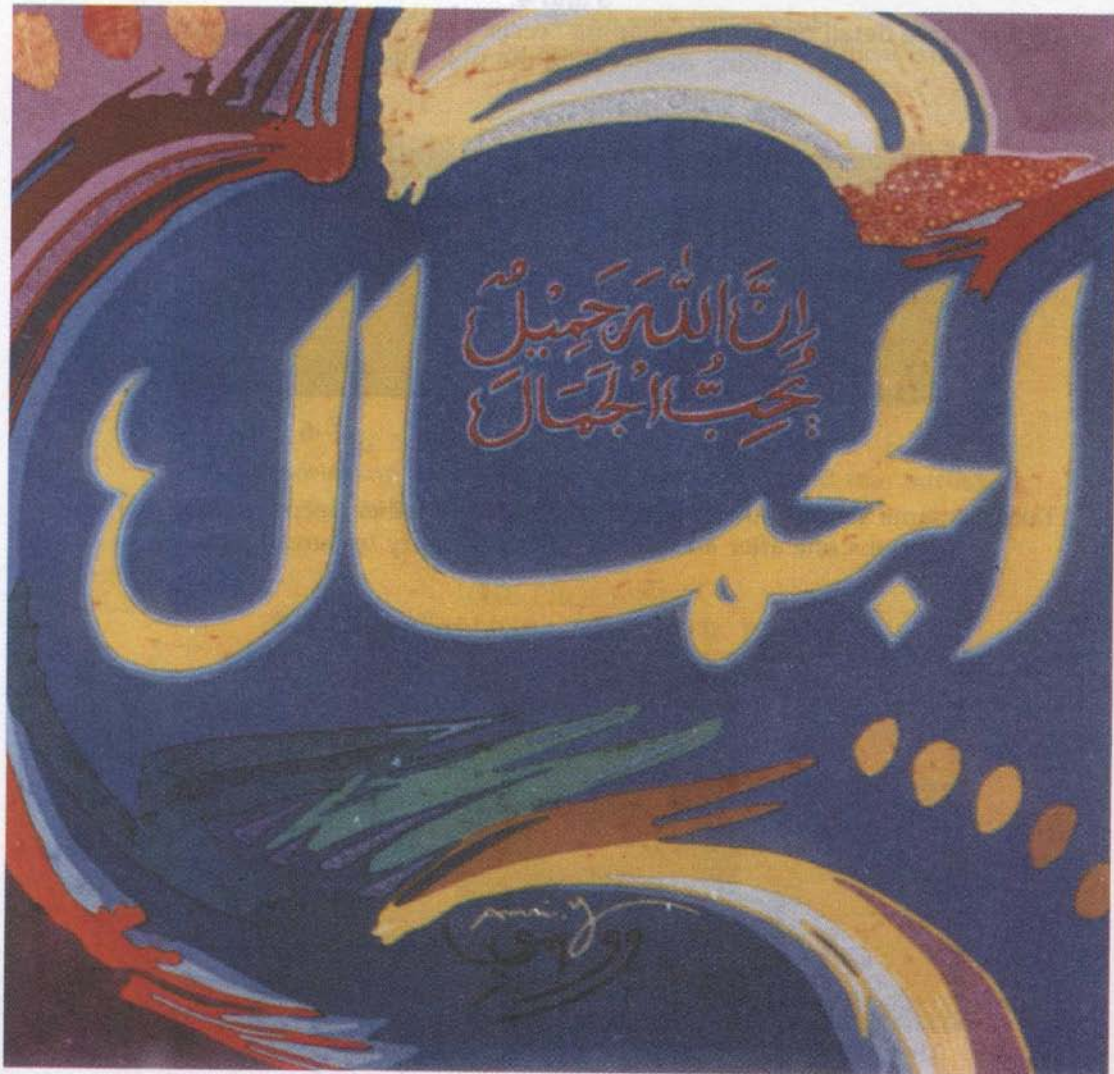


7

7. The first result of a bunch of 5 colours, after wax is eliminated.

Appendix

THE PROCESSES "ISLAMIC CALLIGRAPHY" BATIK PAINTING (THE STEP BY STEP TECHNIQUE)



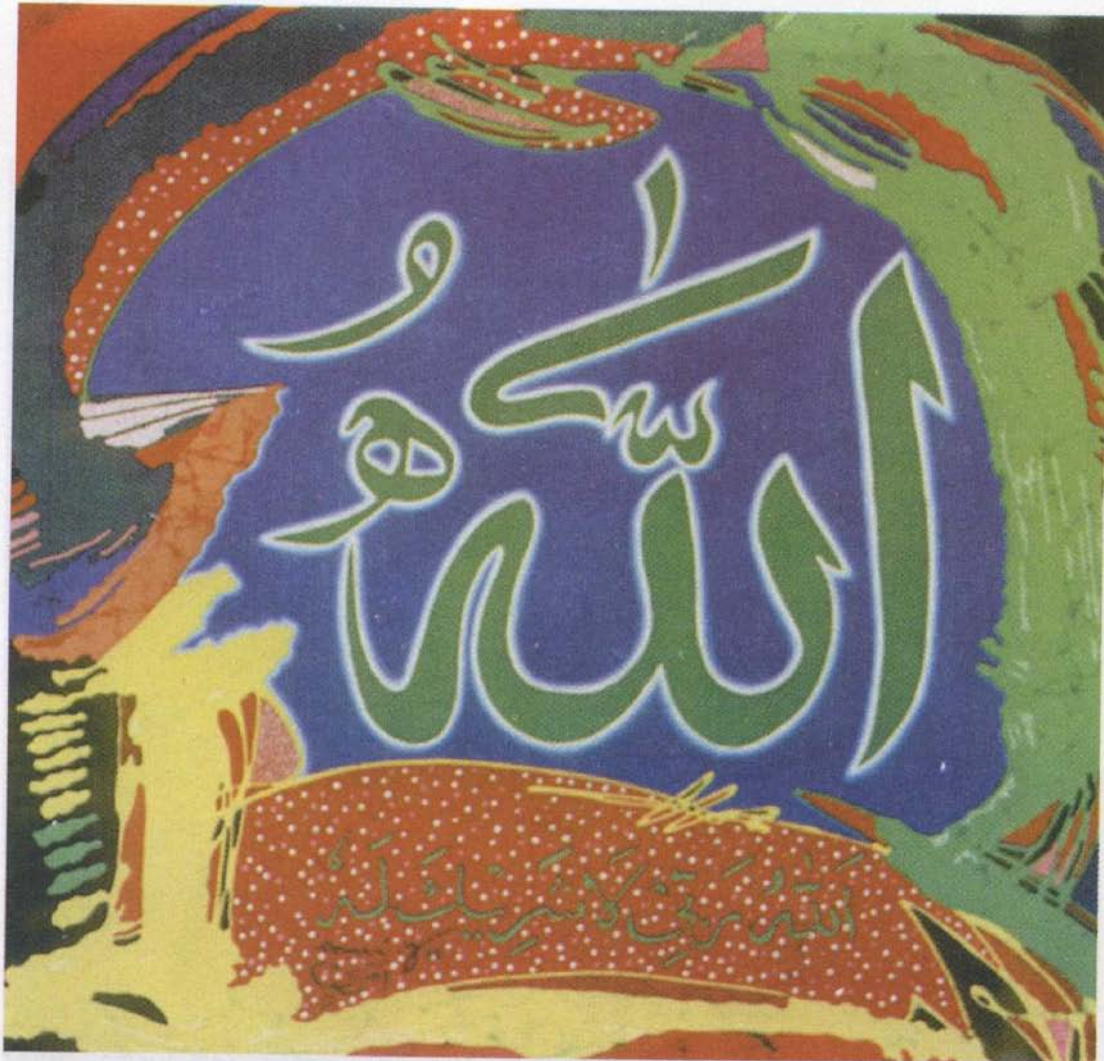
Al Jamaal
(Beauty)



At Taqwa
(Obedience)

Appendix

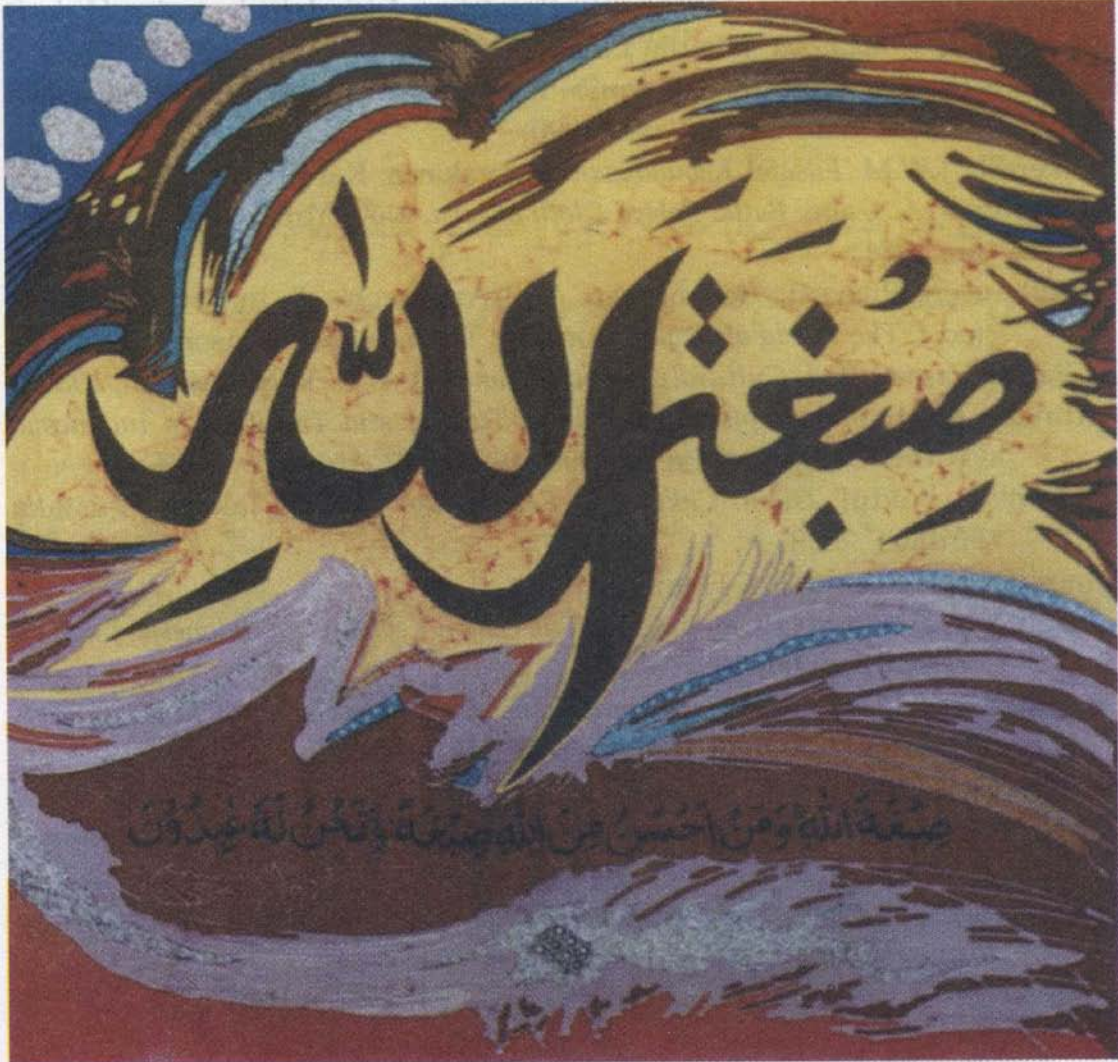
THE THIRTY-THIRD
ISLAMIC CALLIGRAPHY BATIK IMITATION
TUTORIAL BY STEP (IN ARABIC)



Allaah

Al-Jamaal
(Beauty)

Al-Ta'wil Al-Tamir (Tafsiran Paradigma
Penafsiran Kitab Suci)



Shibghatallaah
(Dyeing of God)

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