

Obama Mother's Batik Collection Comes to New York

By June Kellum

Epoch Times Staff

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A woman creates traditional Javanese batik at the Indonesian Consulate. (June Kellum/The Epoch Times)

NEW YORK—A collection of gorgeous, precisely decorated Javanese batik owned by the late Ann Dunham, President Barack Obama's mother, is coming to New York City on July 24—and with it is coming a cultural legacy.

Maya Soetoro, Obama's half sister writes that "none of her [mother's] collections held any real monetary value ... The batiks in this collection are only valuable insofar as they help to understand the artistic variety and the textured soul of Java."

The exhibition, "Two Ladies Found A Culture In Cloth" presented by the Consulate General of the Republic of Indonesia and the Women's Foreign Policy Group, combines pieces from the batik collections of Ann Dunham

(Obama's mother) and Ani Bambang Yudhoyono, Indonesia's first lady.

Batik traditionally served "as a tool for teaching young girls proper conduct and morals. The drawing of some of the most esteemed designs ... required purity of mind, meditation, and deep philosophical insight. The [Batik] designs were formerly employed to remind makers, users and viewers, of the deeper meaning of life and inculcate [teach] religious and moral values," writes Yudhoyono in a release.

"In New York City, the fashion capital, this rarely seen collection will be something special" said Trie Edi Mulyani, consul general of the Republic of Indonesia on Monday.

Batiked fabric is used to make everything from baby slings and shoes to royal attire and ball gowns. A simple shawl can take up to a month to make due to the elaborate process of drawing, waxing, dying and washing. The finest batik designs are drawn in tiny ordered dots.

"Two Ladies Found A Culture in Cloth" celebrates amnesty between the United States and Indonesia.

For more information about the exhibit or about the consulate's upcoming gala dinner featuring ethnic music and dance, and fashion show, Batik in Haute Couture by noted designer Oscar Lawalata; call the Consulate at 212-879-0600.

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