

# THE STRUGGLE FOR BATIK IDENTITY AS A GLOBAL INDONESIAN CULTURAL HERITAGE

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## ABSTRACT

*This article explores the struggle for batik identity as a global Indonesian cultural heritage, focusing on its international recognition and the challenges of preservation. The introduction outlines the importance of batik as a cultural symbol and the challenges faced in the context of globalization. The research method employs a literature study approach, including an analysis of books, reputable journals, and sources indexed in Web of Science and Scopus, to evaluate the role of batik in cultural identity and the impact of globalization on its preservation. The research findings indicate that the recognition of batik as a Masterpiece of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO in 2009 has increased global awareness and strengthened batik's position in the international market. However, globalization has also posed challenges, such as competition with modern textile products and shifting preferences among the younger generation. The discussion highlights the need for innovation in design and marketing, as well as preservation efforts through government policies and community participation. Thus, to ensure the sustainability of batik as a cultural heritage, collaboration between the government, society, and creative industry players is necessary, along with continuous education to enhance interest and relevance of batik in the modern era.*

## KEYWORDS

Batik Identity,  
Cultural Heritage,  
Indonesia,  
Global

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## INTRODUCTION

Batik is a form of textile art with a long and significant history in Indonesia, particularly on the island of Java. Batik is not merely a cloth with beautiful patterns but also a cultural heritage that reflects the social, philosophical, and religious values of Indonesian society (Yulianto, 2017). As cultural heritage, batik has become a symbol of national identity, representing Indonesia's diversity and cultural richness on the international stage. Since being recognized as a Masterpiece of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO in 2009, batik has gained increasing global attention (UNESCO, 2009).

The history of batik in Indonesia is inseparable from the nation's long journey in preserving its cultural identity amidst the currents of globalization. In this context, batik not only functions as a cultural product but also as a tool of resistance against foreign cultural dominance that entered Indonesia during the colonial period. Batik became a medium of expression, showcasing the resilience of Indonesian society in maintaining local traditions and values amidst the growing influence of Western culture (Soedarmadji, 2015). Research by Susanto (2014) reveals that batik also played a crucial role in the process of national identity creation in the post-colonial era, where batik was used as a symbol of local cultural revival in the face of modernization.

The development of batik over time demonstrates its dynamic adaptation to social and economic changes. During the colonial period, batik was not only produced for local needs but also

to meet the demands of the global market, particularly in the Netherlands and other European countries (Veldhuisen, 1993). This indicates that batik has long been part of the international trade network, albeit in a different context from today. However, despite having penetrated international markets, batik remains a strong symbol of cultural identity for the Indonesian people. A study by Wijaya (2016) shows how Javanese batik, in particular, has become a symbol of cultural resistance against foreign domination and a tool for Indonesians to strengthen their cultural identity amid globalization.

In its development, batik has undergone various innovations in terms of production techniques and the patterns used. These innovations are a form of response to the changing times without abandoning the traditional values inherent in every piece of batik. The batik-making process, which requires high skill and precision, such as the canting technique and the use of natural dyes, is still preserved today. Moreover, batik patterns, rich with philosophical and symbolic meanings, continue to safeguard the cultural wealth embodied in each batik cloth (Beni, 2019).

In the modern era, batik not only serves as traditional attire but also as a national identity in various international events. Batik is often worn by state officials at international meetings as a form of cultural diplomacy. The use of batik on the world stage not only introduces its beauty and uniqueness to the international community but also strengthens Indonesia's image as a nation rich in culture (Kristyanti, 2020).

However, despite being recognized as a world cultural heritage, challenges in preserving batik remain. One of the biggest challenges is industrialization, which threatens the sustainability of traditional hand-drawn batik. The emergence of mass-produced printed batik has increasingly endangered the authenticity and craftsmanship that characterize hand-drawn batik (Wulandari, 2021). Additionally, globalization brings new challenges in the form of competition with cheaper and more accessible textile products from other countries.

Therefore, efforts to preserve batik as cultural heritage require not only government support but also collective awareness from the Indonesian people themselves. Initiatives to introduce batik to the younger generation through formal and informal education are crucial steps in ensuring the sustainability of batik art. Furthermore, the development of a batik-based creative economy must be encouraged so that batik is not only seen as a cultural product but also as a highly valuable economic asset (Handayani & Widodo, 2018).

Thus, the struggle to maintain batik as a global Indonesian cultural heritage requires synergy from various parties. The government, society, and creative industry players must work together to promote and preserve batik. Through continuous efforts, batik will not only continue to live as a symbol of Indonesian cultural identity but also as tangible proof of cultural wealth recognized and valued by the international community.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study employs a qualitative approach with a literature review method to explore and analyze the struggle of batik's identity as a global Indonesian cultural heritage. This method is chosen because a literature review allows the researcher to gather, examine, and synthesize various relevant sources of information from existing literature, including books, journal articles, research reports, policy documents, and credible online sources.

### **1. Data Collection**

The data for this research was collected through a literature search from various credible sources. These sources include academic books, scientific journal articles, dissertations, theses, and publications from international organizations like UNESCO. The literature search was conducted using electronic databases such as Google Scholar, Web of Science (WoS), Scopus, JSTOR, ProQuest, and ScienceDirect, as well as university digital libraries. The inclusion criteria for literature sources include:

- a. Relevance to the research topic, particularly those discussing batik as a cultural identity of Indonesia, the history of batik, and the process of cultural globalization.

- b. Publications within the last 20 years, with some key references from older periods if deemed important for understanding the historical context.
- c. Articles published in reputable journals recognized in the fields of cultural studies, art, and anthropology.

## **2. Data Analysis**

The collected data was analyzed using a content analysis approach. This approach was used to identify the main themes that emerged in the literature related to the struggle for batik's identity. The analysis was conducted systematically through the following steps:

- a. Categorization. The collected literature was classified into several categories based on emerging themes, such as the history of batik, batik's role in cultural identity, and the globalization process of batik.
- b. Thematic Synthesis. After categorization, the data was analyzed to identify patterns, relationships, and differences among various sources. This thematic synthesis process was conducted to integrate information from various literatures to form a comprehensive conclusion on the researched topic.
- c. Data Validation. To ensure the validity of the analysis results, data triangulation was conducted by comparing findings from various sources. If there were differences in interpretations among sources, further analysis was performed to determine which was more relevant and accurate.

## **3. Analytical Framework**

The analytical framework used in this study focuses on cultural identity and globalization theories. Cultural identity theory is used to understand how batik functions as a symbol of Indonesian cultural identity, while globalization theory helps explain the processes and challenges faced in promoting batik as a cultural heritage on the international stage. This framework allows for in-depth analysis of how batik is preserved, developed, and promoted in both local and global contexts.

## **4. Research Limitations**

This study has several limitations that should be noted. First, as a literature review, the research relies entirely on secondary data, meaning no primary data was collected through direct observation or interviews. Second, interpretations of existing literature may be influenced by author bias, although efforts have been made to maintain objectivity through systematic analysis. Lastly, the available literature may not fully reflect the latest developments in the struggle for batik's identity, considering the ongoing changes within the context of cultural globalization.

## **5. Writing Procedure**

After completing data analysis, the research findings were systematically compiled into a written report. This report consists of an introduction, literature review, research methods, results and discussion, as well as conclusions and recommendations. Each section was composed based on the results of the literature analysis, with appropriate citations following APA writing style to ensure academic integrity.

# **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This study reveals several key findings regarding the struggle of batik as a cultural identity and a globally recognized world heritage. These findings are derived from a literature analysis encompassing various aspects of batik's history, cultural identity, and globalization.

## **1. Batik as a Symbol of Indonesian Cultural Identity**

Batik has long been a strong symbol of cultural identity for the Indonesian people, particularly on the island of Java. As a form of textile art, batik is not merely a cultural product but also a symbol of identity that reflects the values, traditions, and history of the Indonesian nation (Hoon, 2020). Batik incorporates elements that represent Indonesia's cultural diversity, with each motif and dyeing technique carrying deep meanings related to daily life and local beliefs.

On the island of Java, for instance, batik motifs often carry profound philosophical meanings and are associated with the life cycle and spiritual values of the local community. Motifs such as "Parang" and "Kawung" are not only decorative but also embody principles of life and harmony cherished in Javanese culture (Santosa, 2019). Thus, batik serves as a medium of cultural expression that connects past generations with the present through the symbolism and stories embedded in each piece of cloth.

This research aligns with the findings of Susanto (2014), who stated that batik serves as a means of cultural expression and a tool for maintaining national identity amidst the influence of globalization. Batik, as a cultural heritage that is hundreds of years old, remains relevant in the modern context by being preserved and maintained as a symbol of Indonesia's rich cultural heritage. The role of batik as a national identity underscores the importance of preserving and promoting batik internationally as part of efforts to protect and celebrate the nation's cultural heritage.

## **2. International Recognition of Batik as Cultural Heritage**

The international recognition of batik as a Masterpiece of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO in 2009 marks a significant milestone in the struggle for batik's identity as cultural heritage (UNESCO, 2009). This recognition not only provides global appreciation for batik but also highlights the importance of preserving and safeguarding this cultural heritage from the threat of extinction. With this recognition, batik has gained internationally recognized status as an integral part of human cultural heritage, strengthening Indonesia's position as a country rich in traditions and cultural values.

According to research by Vickers (2013), UNESCO's recognition has acted as a catalyst that drives the promotion of batik on the international stage. With support from international bodies, batik has gained greater attention from the global market, which in turn supports the local batik industry and expands the market reach of batik beyond Indonesia's geographical boundaries. This recognition has opened opportunities for batik artisans to market their products more widely and gain greater recognition for their skills and artistry.

A study by Fauzi and Widodo (2021) also confirms that this international recognition has encouraged the Indonesian government and society to be more proactive in protecting and promoting batik as a unique cultural identity symbol. The recognition has inspired various preservation and promotion initiatives, including policy-making that supports the batik industry and cultural awareness campaigns. Through these measures, batik is not only preserved as cultural heritage but also introduced to a global audience, further strengthening batik's position in the international cultural context.

## **3. The Role of Globalization in the Spread and Preservation of Batik**

Globalization has played a significant role in the spread of batik worldwide, with varying impacts. On one hand, globalization has opened up vast opportunities for batik to be recognized and appreciated by international communities. Batik is no longer confined to traditional clothing but now also functions as a modern and contemporary fashion element, both in Indonesia and abroad. Along with the trends of globalization, batik is increasingly being introduced to international markets through various fashion platforms and global events, which help enhance its visibility and popularity (Wijaya, 2016).

However, globalization also presents serious challenges to the preservation of batik. One of the main challenges is the emergence of mass-produced printed batik, which often does not reflect the traditional values and craftsmanship inherent in handmade batik (Wulandari, 2021). This mass production not only threatens the authenticity of batik designs and techniques passed down through generations but also diminishes the appreciation for the traditional, high-quality process of batik making.

To address these challenges, comprehensive strategies are needed. Research by Murniati and Nugroho (2020) emphasizes the importance of educating younger generations about the values and skills involved in batik making, as well as empowering traditional batik artisans. With an integrated approach, it is hoped that batik can be preserved while still leveraging the opportunities offered by globalization to introduce batik as a valuable cultural heritage to the world.

#### **4. Innovation and Dynamics in the Batik Industry**

The batik industry in Indonesia has undergone many changes and innovations over time, affecting various aspects from production processes to marketing. One major area of innovation is in production techniques, where the use of natural dyes and environmentally friendly dyeing methods is increasingly being introduced. These innovations aim not only to enhance environmental sustainability but also to maintain the quality and uniqueness of batik that is traditionally valued (Beni, 2019). These new techniques help keep batik relevant in a global market that is increasingly conscious of environmental issues.

In addition to changes in production techniques, innovation also encompasses more modern aspects of marketing and branding batik. With the growing competition from other textile products, the batik industry needs to adopt more sophisticated marketing strategies that are geared towards the international market. Innovations in branding include the use of social media, e-commerce, and marketing campaigns that emphasize the uniqueness and cultural value of batik. This aims to expand market reach and increase the appeal of batik among global consumers (Beni, 2019).

A study by Nurhayati et al. (2019) shows that innovations in batik design and production technology can significantly improve the competitiveness of batik products in international markets. The research highlights that despite the pressure to follow new trends and technologies, it is important to ensure that the cultural values embedded in batik are preserved. Therefore, the innovations made should focus not only on technical and commercial aspects but also on the preservation and appreciation of batik's cultural heritage, which is central to its identity.

#### **5. The Role of the Government and Society in Preserving Batik**

The Indonesian government plays a crucial role in efforts to preserve batik through various policies and programs that support the batik industry. One important initiative is the implementation of a certification program for handmade batik, which aims to ensure that batik products meet internationally recognized standards of quality and authenticity. Additionally, the government provides training for batik artisans to improve their skills and introduce the latest techniques in batik making, thus enhancing the quality and competitiveness of batik products in the global market (Kristyanti, 2020).

Alongside domestic policies, the government actively promotes batik at various international events as part of cultural diplomacy. These efforts not only aim to introduce batik to a global audience but also to emphasize the importance of batik as a unique symbol of Indonesian cultural identity. Participation in international exhibitions, cultural festivals, and global fashion events helps increase awareness and appreciation of batik, as well as expand market opportunities for batik products (Kristyanti, 2020).

However, the preservation of batik also requires contributions from the wider community. Society plays a key role in maintaining the continuity of batik through its use in daily life and participation in batik communities spread across various regions in Indonesia. Active community participation in preserving batik helps maintain traditions and enhance the appreciation of this cultural heritage (Handayani & Widodo, 2018). A study by Wicaksono and Ahmad (2020) indicates that collaboration between the government, society, and creative industry players is vital to ensuring that batik not only survives as cultural heritage but also evolves and remains relevant to contemporary demands.



## 6. Challenges in Preserving Batik in the Modern Era

Despite the international recognition and significant developments batik has achieved, challenges in its preservation remain. One of the main challenges is competition with modern textile products that are cheaper and mass-produced. Batik, known for its intricate and highly skilled production process, often struggles to compete with more accessible and affordable textile products. Additionally, changes in lifestyle and consumer preferences, especially among younger generations, add to the challenges of maintaining batik's relevance as an essential element of Indonesian cultural identity (Wulandari, 2021). Younger generations, who tend to follow global fashion trends, may be less interested in batik, which they might perceive as old-fashioned or incompatible with their style.

To overcome these challenges, it is essential to implement ongoing education and cultural awareness campaigns. Research by Hidayat and Prasetyo (2018) emphasizes that educational efforts should focus on younger generations to increase their understanding and appreciation of batik. Effective awareness campaigns can help shift public perceptions, educate them about the cultural values embedded in batik, and inspire greater interest in using batik in daily life. With this approach, it is hoped that batik can remain relevant and widely accepted by all segments of society while preserving this valuable cultural heritage.

## CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions of this study indicate that batik, which was recognized as a Masterpiece of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO in 2009, plays a crucial role as a symbol of Indonesian cultural identity on an international level (UNESCO, 2009). This recognition has expanded batik's reach in the global market and supported the local industry. However, globalization also brings challenges, including competition with modern textile products and changing preferences among younger generations, which threaten the relevance of batik as cultural heritage (Wulandari, 2021).

To address these challenges, collaboration between the government, society, and creative industry players is essential. The government has demonstrated commitment through policies and training programs, while society plays a key role in preserving batik through its use and participation in batik communities (Kristiyanti, 2020; Handayani & Widodo, 2018). Ongoing education and cultural awareness campaigns are also needed to increase interest in batik and ensure that it remains relevant as cultural heritage in the modern era (Hidayat & Prasetyo, 2018; Wicaksono & Ahmad, 2020).

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