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The Religious Values Existence on Pekalongan Batik Cultural Heritage

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Abstract

This study explores the cultural heritage of Pekalongan batik, which holds the identity of the City of Batik and the City of *Santri*. The analysis focuses on the economic, cultural, and Islamic roles and how they determine the existence of batik businesses that have persisted until now. This study uses a cultural approach with case study analysis and finds that batik businesses transmit a cultural heritage that continues from generation to generation until batik becomes a cultural identity and the lifeblood of Pekalongan's economy. Cultural transmission occurs socially, through learning processes, interaction among peers, socialization in society, skill mastery cadreship, and batik business management. As a source of grassroots economy, batik is integrated into society's daily activities, crystallizing in mindset as tradition and implicating in the development and preservation of batik that always follows the dynamics of the times. The cultural inheritance of batik cannot be separated from the role of religion, which serves as a source of moral vitality and a means to preserve the existence and sustainability of batik businesses.

[Studi ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi eksistensi warisan kultural batik Pekalongan yang menyanggah identitas sebagai Kota Batik dan Kota Santri. Fokus analisis pada peran ekonomi, budaya, dan Islam serta bagaimana ketiganya menjadi penentu dalam eksistensi usaha batik yang masih bertahan hingga kini. Studi ini menggunakan pendekatan budaya dengan analisis sudi kasus dan menemukan bahwa usaha batik mentransmisikan sebuah warisan budaya yang berlangsung dari generasi ke generasi hingga batik menjadi identitas kultural dan urat nadi perekonomian Pekalongan. Transmisi budaya berlangsung secara sosial, melalui proses belajar, berinteraksi antar sesama, sosialisasi di masyarakat, kaderisasi penguasaan ketrampilan serta pengelolaan usaha batik. Batik sebagai sumber ekonomi kerakyatan, terintegrasi dalam kegiatan sehari-hari masyarakat, mengkrystal dalam pola pikir sebagai tradisi, serta berimplikasi pada pengembangan dan pelestarian batik yang selalu mengikuti dinamika zaman. Pewarisan kultural batik tidak terlepas dari peran agama yang menjadi sumber vitalitas moral, sebagai sarana untuk menjaga eksistensi dan keberlanjutan usaha batik.]

Keywords: religious; batik; culture; art; heritage

Introduction

The recognition of batik as a cultural heritage of Indonesia by UNESCO on Friday, October 2, 2009,¹ followed by Presidential Decree No. 33 of 2009 on National Batik Day, has had significant implications for Indonesia's positive image on the global stage. It has also infused a new spirit into the efforts to develop and preserve batik across various regions. One such region is Pekalongan, which has undergone social transformation since UNESCO's designation.² Its status as the City of Batik has become more prominent through productive competitions showcasing exemplary batik designs, leading to increased demand for batik products and higher sales figures. The rise in batik products seems to be closely linked to government support, particularly during the presidency of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. All civil servants were encouraged to wear batik attire every Friday, and Indonesian officials also wore batik at international forums. This encouragement reflects a political effort to introduce batik as a national identity.³ Not dissimilarly, the general public wears batik on special occasions, thereby actualizing it as a cultural identity associated with the dignity of the Indonesian nation⁴ and reflecting nationalist sentiments.⁵

In 2014, UNESCO designated Pekalongan as a "Creative City" for the Crafts and Folk Arts category. Following this critical development, batik has remained a local commodity and expanded to become a national and even international export, reaching countries

¹ UNESCO, *Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity* (2001–2005), <https://ich.unesco.org/en/proclamation-of-masterpieces-00103>.

² Wenti Ayu Sunarjo, Mutadin, and Maghfiroh, "Identification of Five Years After the UNESCO Recognition of Batik and Its Impact on the Development of Batik SMEs in Pekalongan (Case Study in Kauman Batik Village and Pesindon Batik Village)," *Jurnal Litbang Kota Pekalongan* 7, no. 1 (2015): 122-40, <https://jurnal.pekalongan.kota.go.id/index.php/litbang/article/view/88/85>.

³ Syakir, "Konstruksi Identitas dalam Arena Produksi Kultural Seni Perbatikan Semarang," Disertasi, Universitas Negeri Semarang, 2017, 72.

⁴ Evi Steelyana, "Batik, a Beautiful Cultural Heritage that Preserves Culture and Supports Economic Development in Indonesia," *Binus Business Review* 3, no. 1 (2012): 116, <https://doi.org/10.21512/bbr.v3i1.1288>.

⁵ Eriesta Lila Permata, "Modes and Purposes of Consuming Batik Products: A Case Study of Airlangga University Students," *Allusion* 1, no. 1 (2012): 60-70, <https://journal.unair.ac.id/ALLUSION@modes-and-purposes-of-consuming-batik-products--a-case-study-of-airlangga-university-students-article-5800-media-95-category-8.html>.

such as the United States, Sweden, France, Saudi Arabia, Germany, and others.⁶ The batik industry is the backbone of Pekalongan's economy. It involves major economic players and can potentially improve the community's well-being. It contributes to the national economy amidst global crises and has become a priority for the Ministry of Industry and Trade and the Ministry of Cooperatives and Small Businesses.⁷

The batik industry requires adequate⁸ and competitive strategies⁹ to compete in the global market, mainly due to the presence of Chinese products after the implementation of the ASEAN China Free Trade Area (ACFTA) on January 1, 2010.¹⁰ Failure to compete effectively could lead to the marginalization of local batik products due to price disparities.¹¹ Moreover, the market structure is monopolistic,¹² with each product having different characteristics but sharing similarities. These factors can lead to instability in the batik industry and make it vulnerable to closure.¹³ Indeed, the number of UKMs (small and medium enterprises) in Pekalongan experienced a decline in 2014.¹⁴ Given the dynamic nature of consumer demand, batik UKM must focus

⁶ Budiono Gatut and Vincent Aryanto, "Batik Industry of Indonesia: The Rise, Fall and Prospects," *Studies in Business and Economics* 5, no. 3 (2010): 156–70, <https://ideas.repec.org/a/blg/journal/v5y2010i3p156-170.html>.

⁷ Wenti Ayu Sunarjo, Mutadin, and Maghfiroh, "Identification of Five Years After the UNESCO Recognition of Batik and Its Impact on the Development of Batik SMEs in Pekalongan (Case Study in Kauman Batik Village and Pesindon Batik Village)," 122–140.

⁸ Joko Sudantoko, "Pemberdayaan Industri Batik Skala Kecil di Jawa Tengah (Studi Kasus di Kabupaten dan Kota Pekalongan)," (Universitas Diponegoro, 2010).

⁹ Amalia Suzianti, Sofrida Rosita Hanum, Nabilla Nur Anisah, and Septy Aprilliandary, "Knowledge Management System for Creative Small Medium Enterprise," *International Journal of Sustainable Human Development* 2, no. 2 (2015): 64-73, <https://prodev.ie.ui.ac.id/2015/10/13/199/>.

¹⁰ Badan Pusat Statistik, *Produk Domestik Regional Bruto Kota Pekalongan Menurut Lapangan Usaha 2011-2015* (Pekalongan: BPS), 2.

¹¹ Ida Nurdalia, "Kajian dan Analisis Peluang Penerapan Produksi Bersih pada Usaha Kecil Batik Cap (Studi Kasus pada Tiga Usaha Industri Kecil Batik Cap di Pekalongan)" (Thesis, Universitas Diponegoro: Semarang, 2006) 5.

¹² Sudantoko, "Pemberdayaan Industri Batik," 12.

¹³ Amalinda Savirani, "Business and Politics in Provincial Indonesia Batik and Construction Sector in Pekalongan Central Java," Disertasi, University of Amsterdam, 2015. 83.

¹⁴ Sunarjo, "Identifikasi Lima Tahun," 129.

on improving production quality and enhancing marketing management to remain viable.

From a socio-cultural perspective, the batik industry in Pekalongan reflects the city's deep-rooted cultural identity as a Batik City.¹⁵ Due to continued historical industrialization, the emergence of batik entrepreneurs is supported by the strong tradition of batik as both an artistic expression and an economic activity,¹⁶ Intertwined with the worldview of the people of Pekalongan. The batik industry also represents the preservation of culture through citizen participation in reinforcing the nation's cultural identity and contributing to sustainable development.

In fact, UNESCO considers Pekalongan a prime example of implementing cultural-based development programs that support its residents, particularly women, in generating income to improve their quality of life.¹⁷ For the people of Pekalongan, engaging in the batik industry is a way of life that imbues their existence with meaning related to their life goals.¹⁸ Meanwhile, the life goals of the people of Pekalongan cannot be separated from Islamic values, which represent the city's identity as a City of *Santri* (a term for devout followers of Islam).¹⁹ This designation emerges not only because the majority of its population is Muslim but is also evident in the community's behavior, which is characterized by adherence to Islamic teachings. Other indications include the numerous Islamic boarding schools, educational institutions, and religious figures such as *Kiai* and *Habib* (Islamic scholars) who actively disseminate Islamic teachings within the community. Moreover, the predominant profession among the people of Pekalongan is batik entrepreneurship.

This study explores fundamental questions regarding the existence and sustainability of Batik in Pekalongan amidst business competition and influencing factors. Is it solely related to livelihood

¹⁵ Chusnul Hayati, "Pekalongan Sebagai Kota Batik 1950-2007," *Lensa: Kajian Kebahasaan, Kesusastraan, dan Budaya* 2, no. 1 (2012), <https://doi.org/10.26714/LENSA.2.1.2012>.

¹⁶ Hayati.

¹⁷ UNESCO, "Pekalongan Craft and Folk Art," <http://en.unesco.org/creative-cities/pekalongan>

¹⁸ Sartono Kartodirdjo, *Kebudayaan Pembangunan dalam Perspektif Sejarah* (Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press, 1987), 19.

¹⁹ Hayati, "Pekalongan Sebagai Kota Batik 1950-2007"

fulfillment (economic factors), the transmission of inherited cultural heritage, or does it relate to the identity of being a Muslim? The focus of the analysis lies in the interconnectedness of economics, culture, and Islam in the lives of the community and how these factors determine the continued existence of the batik industry in Pekalongan. The analysis is directed towards social practices, examining how Islam is understood and practiced by the people of Pekalongan in their economic activities, as Islam is highly revered and serves as an ideological lens through which the people of Pekalongan interpret their lives. This suggests that Islam plays a significant and dominant role in the continuity of social life, which will be explored in this study.

Methods

This study employs a qualitative method²⁰ to explore the cultural framework underlying the community's economy, mediated by Islamic teachings as the primary analysis point. The approach utilized is a case study,²¹ focusing on the knowledge and experiences of the people of Pekalongan in sustaining the batik industry amidst business competition. The case will be specifically identified within the location parameters (Pekalongan) and ongoing time frame. It will then be illustrated in detail as an intrinsic and instrumental case to facilitate a comprehensive understanding, especially the perspectives of the community in comprehending and interpreting their lives.

Data sources utilize the purposive sampling technique with criteria from Spradley:²² 1) full enculturation; 2) directly involved in their culture; 3) potential good informants; 4) availability of adequate time; and 5) non-analytical, not presenting their own "packaged" results. The selection of batik industry participants is based on these criteria, with the analytical units being producers, craftsmen, and laborers. The data collection method employs unstructured interviews,

²⁰ John W. Creswell, *Penelitian Kualitatif dan Desain Riset Memilih diantara Lima Pendekatan*, trans., Ahmad Lintang Lazuardi (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2014), 135-139.

²¹ Norman K. Denzin dan Yvonna S. Lincoln, *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (London: SAGE Publication, 1994), 236.

²² James P Spradley, *Metode Etnografi*, trans. Misbah Zulfa Elizabeth (Yogyakarta: PT Tiara Wacana, 2007), 68-77.

namely in-depth interviews.²³ The data analysis technique involves critical, descriptive analysis, analyzing the core issues with appropriate interpretation to obtain a comprehensive and systematic description of the studied case. Methodically, the analysis encompasses steps including:²⁴ 1) organizing data; 2) reading and memorizing into several parts; 3) describing, classifying, and interpreting data into codes and themes; 4) interpreting data; and 5) presenting and visualizing data. Based on these steps, the form of life of the batik industry community in Pekalongan is described based on their subjective experiences.

Results

The existence of Pekalongan batik, which has endured until now, is influenced by internal, external, and pragmatic factors. These three factors are interconnected and mutually influential. Several facts can be mentioned based on interviews with members of the batik business community, consisting of producers, artisans, and workers.

Most of the people in Pekalongan pursue batik businesses due to hereditary factors. "I was born into a batik family environment," said Mr. Din, much like Mr. Abu, who pursued the batik business "because of hereditary factors." Mr. Amin and Mr. Irwan use the term "inheritance from parents," while Mr. Zain mentions, "My bloodline is of batik producers," and Mr. Yasin explicitly states, "I continue my parents' business." From all the explanations, hereditary factors are the fundamental reasons that spark entrepreneurs' interest in pursuing the batik business.

In addition to heredity, other essential factors provide further insight into choosing a profession in the batik field. Mr. Abu explained, "Becoming a batik producer is a life choice that aligns with my interests."²⁵ Despite being involved in the batik business since graduating from high school in 1992, he had to deal with Indonesia's political and economic conditions, which experienced the 1998 monetary crisis and influenced the increase in *mori* (raw material) price, making it unaffordable for small entrepreneurs. Eventually, he switched

²³ John Lofland & Lyn H. Lofland, *Analyzing Social Settings A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis* (California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1971), 76-77.

²⁴ Creswell, *Penelitian Kualitatif*, 251-263.

²⁵ Interview with Abu Bakar, 22-10-2016.

to becoming a craftsman. In such a situation, working as a craftsman is very likely because it is free from raw material providers, only involved in the production process, and not related to marketing. However, if there are failures or production errors (locally termed rejected batik), the artisans bear the losses. Mr. Abu explained: "That's why my business did not grow; I could not profit; I only got unsold batik. Now I'm a producer again." Mr. Qohar also explains this issue from the producer's perspective:

"Becoming a producer is more profitable because it's a clean job, and you do not have to worry about failed batiks because the craftsmen usually bear the losses. Although the losses are sometimes shared, the artisan still loses because the producer usually takes failed batiks at a low price."²⁶

The two explanations converge, namely that producers' profits are higher than those of artisans due to artisans's borne losses as a job responsibility. Consequently, according to Mr. Zain, producers' profit becomes even greater "because it comes not only from the production process but also from marketing results."²⁷ However, generally, craftsmen do not switch to becoming producers because of the lack of capital, as explained by Mr. Anwar: "I am not interested in switching to another job because it requires a considerable amount of capital,"²⁸ supplemented by Mr. Ahsin: "I am grateful to be a craftsman because I don't have to think about sales strategies."²⁹ This statement reinforces the explanation of producers like Mr. Zain that "becoming a batik producer is not easy; sometimes you can produce but cannot sell."³⁰ Thus, the potential losses experienced by producers are much more significant than those of artisans.

Unlike the perspective of the workers: "Perhaps because I'm already comfortable being a screen-printing batik worker, so I'm not interested in becoming a craftsman, let alone a producer. It's a headache to deal with other workers."³¹ Mr. Anwar reinforces this: "As a worker,

²⁶ Interview with Abdul Qahar, 30-11-2016.

²⁷ Interview with H. Zainudin, 10-9-2016.

²⁸ Interview with Khoirul Anam, 9-11-16.

²⁹ Interview with Ahmad Ahsin, 1-11-2016.

³⁰ Interview with H. Zanudin, 10-9-2016.

³¹ Interview with Mugiono, 28-2-2017.

I don't need to invest capital; unlike producers or craftsmen, they need capital, experience, and great courage, especially nowadays when there are many batik entrepreneurs who often borrow capital from banks. I'm afraid I won't be able to repay it."³²

Mr. Mugi and Mr. Anwar are examples of people who are reluctant to switch to being artisans or producers because the batik business is not as simple as people imagine. Perhaps this is why someone feels comfortable as a worker. Being a worker can also meet the needs of life, as stated by Mr. Saif: "Well, what else can I do? For the needs of my wife and children, I work as a laborer for daily needs." Another reason stated by Mr. Muhadi regarding social issues that commonly occur is:

"I didn't go to school back then. Children here who don't go to school usually work; if not, they hang out in the alley playing cards. At that time, Mr. Thoi became a craftsman and needed workers. I was invited to work as a laborer. I thought it was better to work as a laborer than to be idle and hang out; it can earn money. Being a laborer is fine. Because young people here, if they don't go to school, usually get into trouble with the police because of mugging, stealing, and gambling. It's like that here. At least if you work as a laborer, you can reduce unemployment and avoid getting into trouble with the police."³³

Suppose the workers' perspective above represents social issues. In that case, the following entrepreneurs' perspective connects internal motivation with the social context, as explained by Mr. Irfan: "My motivation is profit and business advancement, so that I can become wealthy. I want to make as much profit as possible to be successful, wealthy, and financially secure."³⁴ In Javanese society, financial security is a condition of comfort, the result of hard work that leads to success and places someone in a high social stratification.

Several explanations indicate that the batik industry plays an essential role in the economy of Pekalongan, such as the portrayal of batik craftsmen: "Batik has been my job since a long time ago, so batik

³² Interview with Saiful Anwar, 9-11-2016.

³³ Interview with Muhadi, 8-9-16.

³⁴ Interview with Irfan, 20-12-2016

is a part of life, very important.”³⁵ Besides that, as a cottage industry, the batik business can absorb labor from all ages without needing diplomas. Those who do not have the opportunity to receive education up to junior and senior high school levels can still work in the batik sector. The main requirement (especially for hand-drawn batik) is for people who have an artistic soul.³⁶ This is already possessed by the people of Pekalongan, with the habit of batik-making being passed down from generation to generation,³⁷ so they are skilled in batik-making from an early age. This skill does not require high energy and extensive knowledge and can be used by children, teenagers, and older people.

The batik industry provides equal opportunities for people to earn income according to their respective types of work. The workers stated, “Batik can elevate people’s status by reducing unemployment. Like me, who didn’t finish school, what else can I do besides becoming a batik worker?”³⁸ Mrs. Nur shares the same opinion: “In this day and age, any job is important as long as it’s halal. I didn’t go to school; what else can I do if I don’t become a batik worker?”³⁹ This indicates that job opportunities in the batik business are open to anyone, even without formal education. This fact also highlights the significant role of the batik industry in the sustainability of the Pekalongan community, as stated by the workers: “Batik has become the livelihood of the people of Pekalongan, the backbone of the community’s economy. If Pekalongan didn’t produce batik, unemployment would increase, ultimately leading people to migrate to Jakarta.”⁴⁰

Thus, the batik industry provides employment opportunities for the community, thereby reducing unemployment and urbanization. On a broader scale, regional income increases, resulting in billions of rupiah flowing rapidly into the country. Behind all of that, there are actors whose roles cannot be ignored and who are fully involved in providing job opportunities:

³⁵ Interview with Purwanto, 8-9-2016.

³⁶ Hayati, “Pekalongan Sebagai Kota Batik 1950-2007”

³⁷ Savirani, “Business and Politics,” 99.

³⁸ Interview with Muhadi, 8-9-2016.

³⁹ Interview with Nur, 8-9-2016.

⁴⁰ Interview with Husni Mubarok, 29-8-2016

“As an entrepreneur, I contribute to creating job opportunities while indirectly assisting the government in empowering the community socio-economically. By being a producer, more labor can be absorbed, and the unemployed can be empowered. As a young generation, I must promote batik culture, Indonesia’s greatest asset. As a member of the Pekalongan community, I engage in the batik business to preserve our national culture and safeguard Indonesia's greatest asset, especially Pekalongan batik.”⁴¹

Another entrepreneur with a strong motivation to preserve Batik is Mr. Irwan.

“The people of Pekalongan must preserve Pekalongan batik because its quality is not inferior to Batik outside Pekalongan. Most Pekalongan residents are batik entrepreneurs, so why look for other businesses when Pekalongan batik is already famous and of excellent quality? Therefore, the people of Pekalongan should be proud because they have an inherited business, namely Pekalongan batik, which is renowned and recognized nationally and internationally.”⁴²

The dynamics of the batik business undertaken by the people of Pekalongan are full of challenging events on the path to success. Therefore, batik business practitioners, as a community of Islamic students, use religion as a means to maintain the existence of their business. They follow Islamic teachings, such as performing obligatory and voluntary prayers, including the pre-dawn prayer (*duha*) and the night vigil prayer (*tahajud*). Mr. Din states, “Prayer significantly contributes to the batik business because, by performing prayers on time, I can work calmly and produce good-quality batik that sells well in the market.”⁴³ For Mr. Abu: “Consistently performing the *tahajud* prayer makes me intelligent and able to find the right solutions to business problems. Because Allah’s guidance is close to those who

⁴¹ Interview with Fatkhul Amin, 14-11-2016.

⁴² Interview with Irwanto, 30-11-2016.

⁴³ Interview with Saefudin, 29-9-2016.

consistently perform *tahajud*.”⁴⁴ Mr. Al-Muhlis also reinforces this explanation: “The *tahajud* prayer is the key to selling batik and attracting customers.”⁴⁵ Similarly, Mr. Irwanto believes: “If you only work without performing the *tahajud* prayer, without certain recitations and prayers, you won't achieve anything; you'll just end up tired.”⁴⁶

Other entrepreneurs use charity (*sadaqah*) and continuous charity (*amal jariyah*) to avoid business problems: “I allocate 2.5% of my income for the needy, which I distribute to the needy people in the surrounding community.”⁴⁷ Mr. Zain also follows this practice: “To avoid any losses and to keep my business progressing and thriving, I allocate a portion of my income for charity to the needy and orphaned children. This way, my business receives blessings.”⁴⁸ Most batik business practitioners perceive blessings as being free from losses, being able to pay off debts, and conducting business with a peaceful heart.⁴⁹

The facts above indicate that practicing Islamic teachings such as observing additional prayers (*rawatib*), voluntary prayers like *tahajud* and *duha*, and giving charity are preventive measures against business problems. When encountering business issues, according to Mr. Umar, “When there are business problems, entrepreneurs approach religious figures, one of whom is Habib Luthfi. He usually advises on certain remembrances (*zikir*) to find a way out of business problems.”⁵⁰ Even during bankruptcy, entrepreneurs resolve it by repenting to Allah: “When I went bankrupt, I felt there was no logical way out. Then, my relatives advised me to repent because, for Allah, it's a small matter. Only Allah, the Most Wise, can resolve it. It will surely be answered with repentance, prayer, and supplication to Him. Entrepreneurs who can rise again often come from unexpected sources (*la yahtasib*).”⁵¹

These explanations show that they believe the solution to business problems is to draw closer to Allah through repentance, hoping Allah will assist. To ensure business continuity, entrepreneurs believe it comes from the prayers of the workers, as Mr. Din suggests: “What

⁴⁴ Interview with Abu Bakar, 22-9-2016.

⁴⁵ Interview with Al-Muhlis, 16-9-2016.

⁴⁶ Interview with Irwanto, 30-11-2016.

⁴⁷ Interview with Fatkhul Amin, 14-11-2016.

⁴⁸ Interview with H. Zainudin, 10-9-2016.

⁴⁹ Interview with Purwanto, 29-8-2016.

⁵⁰ Interview with Umar, 28-8-2016.

⁵¹ Interview with Saefudin, 29-11-2016.

makes the batik business a blessing is the prayers of the workers because the batik business provides job opportunities for the surrounding community.”⁵² Therefore, they treat employees well: “Granting employees their rights, not taking or reducing their rights, ensuring that wages are given according to the work done, and must not be reduced.”⁵³ This indicates that the sustainability of the batik business is an indication of blessings, so the company must be conducted based on Islamic values. Thus, they believe their business can remain sustainable.

Discussion

People's Economy

The Central Statistics Agency (BPS) of Pekalongan City⁵⁴ shows data indicating that the economy's largest sectors are occupied by industry and trade, followed by construction. In contrast, in Pekalongan Regency,⁵⁵ The most significant contributions come from the industrial, agricultural, and trade sectors. The two main activities in the industrial sector include the textile industry and packaged food processing. Companies in both fields produce textile products such as batik *sarongs* and *palekat sarongs*.⁵⁶ Among them is the largest *palekat* producer in Indonesia, namely PT. Pismatex, with *Gadajah Duduk* as a well-known brand. However, in formal statistics, batik production cannot be categorized as manufacturing because textile production data does not include the traditional batik sector.

Statistical data is only one part of the economy of Pekalongan. The backbone of Pekalongan's economy lies in the informal sector, namely small to medium-scale household industries with one to four workers, whose business conditions are unstable and prone to closure.

⁵² Interview with Saefudin, 29-11-2016.

⁵³ Interview with Abu Bakar, 22-10-2016.

⁵⁴ Badan Pusat Statistik Kota Pekalongan, *Produk Regional Bruto Kota Pekalongan menurut Lapangan Usaha Tahun 2011-2015* (Pekalongan: BPS, 2016), 16; and Badan Pusat Statistik Kabupaten Pekalongan, *Produk Regional Bruto Kabupaten Pekalongan menurut Lapangan Usaha Tahun 2011-2015* (Pekalongan: BPS, 2016), 16.

⁵⁵ Badan Pusat Statistik Kabupaten Pekalongan, *Produk Regional Bruto*, 16.

⁵⁶ Badan Pusat Statistik Kota Pekalongan, *Kota Pekalongan dalam Angka*, (Pekalongan: BPS, 2016), 305.

However, their contributions are less significant than those of large producers such as the Gadjah Duduk textile factory. This contribution shows that the batik industry is the lifeblood of the community. Like the flowing energy felt in the form of job opportunities, its current strength lies in income, which can ultimately ignite hope for everyone. However, the harshness of competition sometimes leads to closure. Nonetheless, it serves as the pillar of the economy, supporting the community's future and becoming the lifeblood of Pekalongan's economy.

The batik industry in Pekalongan is classified as an informal sector with a putting-out system.⁵⁷ As seen in Diagram I, several actors are involved in the circulation of batik production.

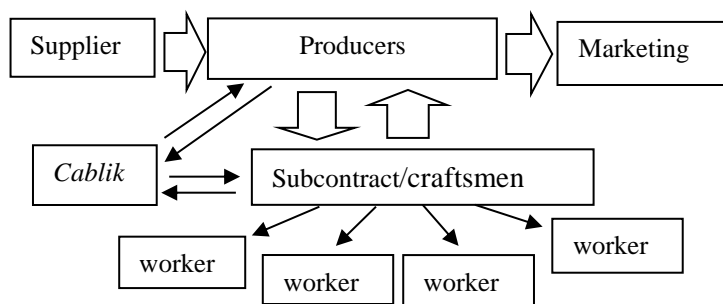


Figure 1. Batik Production Chain

Figure 1 depicts the activities involved in batik production, which include several actors: 1) Supplier: Provides raw materials (*more*) and chemical dyes, predominantly consisting of the Chinese ethnic group with a smaller proportion from the Arab ethnic group and the rest from the Javanese ethnic group from both within and outside the city; 2) Producer or entrepreneur: Produces batik either independently or through subcontractors. Producers or entrepreneurs, known as batik merchants, are at the top of the subcontracting hierarchy. Subcontractor: Produces batik based on orders from producers, using raw materials provided by the producers. Subcontractors provide chemical dyes and pay workers, receiving payment from producers based on production output. Most subcontractors identify themselves as laborers, but since they also employ laborers, they are referred to as subcontractor

⁵⁷ Oxford, "Putting-Out System," *Oxford Reference*, www.oxfordreference.com.

merchants by the laborers. Batik production process: involves male and female workers through several stages, from the beginning to the end, based on the type of batik produced, such as batik tulis (hand-drawn batik), *batik sablon/cap* (stamped batik), and printing; 5) Marketing: conducted by several entrepreneurs who sell their products through outlets at home or in the market. This category includes retailers in statistical data ranging from small retailers to entrepreneurs. Most batik entrepreneurs are only retailers, not producers. Other intermediaries: Act as intermediaries between producers and subcontractors, known as *cablik* (batik brokers). While producers and subcontractors may not necessarily know each other, they are connected through Cablik's services. *Cablik* earns income based on agreed-upon terms between themselves and subcontractors.

In the above batik production chain, batik industry players in Pekalongan have identified themselves as “worker entrepreneurs” on a small-to-medium scale since the 1970s, when the batik stamping technique began to emerge.⁵⁸ In the 1970s, many traditional batik entrepreneurs went out of business due to the enactment of “Law No. 1 on Foreign Investment and Law No. 6 on Domestic Investment (PMDN).” This policy led to the establishment of batik printing factories. By 1978, most traditional batik entrepreneurs had switched to producing stamped batik and printing, abandoning hand-drawn batik. Intense competition between batik printing and large-scale batik industries occurred until the 1980s, although traditional batik businesses still persisted. However, because mass production of batik printing was possible, difficulties in marketing led to a halt in capital turnover. The inability to penetrate the marketing network, already dominated by non-indigenous or Chinese ethnic entrepreneurs, led many producers to become “worker entrepreneurs” or subcontractors.⁵⁹

In the batik production chain, subcontractors do not hold a strategic position. They occupy a moderate pole, do not promise financial comfort, and only provide security with stagnant living conditions. Simply put, the system shields them, and they are psychologically stable, but social prosperity is only possible. The presence of artisans is no more than that of a laborer who works on orders from producers, even though they may have several laborers

⁵⁸ Savirani, “Business and Politics”, 90.

⁵⁹ Hayati, “Pekalongan Sebagai Kota Batik 1950-2007.”

themselves. However, suppose a production error occurs (locally termed “batik reject”). In that case, the producer is unwilling to bear the loss and passes it on to the subcontractor, as the selling price of the rejected batik is far below the standard price. This is the condition experienced by subcontractors.

Meanwhile, producers aim to achieve significant profits to attain a comfortable life. Comfort refers to individuals who do not experience any financial shortages—a form of economic comfort. Ownership of “*dunyo, turangga, lan kukilo*” (wealth, vehicles, and birds) symbolizes an individual’s comfort in the Javanese world.⁶⁰ The dignity and honor of Javanese people in the “Serat Wedhatama” are determined by “*wiry, arta, lan winasis*” (nobility, wealth, and intellectual knowledge).⁶¹ Therefore, batik entrepreneurs work hard to position themselves in society as prosperous individuals (possessing wealth).

Transmission of Cultural Heritage

The batik industry in Pekalongan has historically existed for centuries, even before the independence era. According to Elliot, Batik was traded in Pekalongan around 1840, and by 1850, Pekalongan had developed into a batik center.⁶² This fact is reflected in the statistical data of Javanese society created by the Dutch colonial government regarding the low literacy rates among women, despite their active involvement in the workforce. This situation is evident in the past of Pekalongan, as during that decade, the absorption of female labor had entered the industrial sector, namely the batik industry. Consistent with Ricklefs’ explanation, one of the conditions of Javanese life in the 1930s was primarily agrarian. However, industrialization had developed in several areas of Central Java, such as Banyumas, Sukaraja, Purbalingga, Pemalang, Kedungwuni, Lasem, Blora, Wates, Surakarta, and Pekalongan.⁶³ Thus, the increasingly developing industrialization today is part of the transmission of past cultural heritage that has enabled Pekalongan to become a business and trading city on a global scale, as well as the cultural identity of Pekalongan.

⁶⁰ Nur Syam, *Islam Pesisir* (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2005), 159.

⁶¹ Anjar Ani, *Menyingkap Serat Wedhatama* (Semarang: Aneka Ilmu, 1993), 38.

⁶² McCabe Inger Elliot, *Batik, Fabled Cloth of Java* (New York: Potter, 1984), 43.

⁶³ M.C. Ricklefs, *Mengislamkan Jawa Sejarah Islamisasi di Jawa dan Penentangannya dari 1930 sampai Sekarang*, trans. FX. Dono Sunardi and Satrio Wahono (Jakarta: PT. Serambi Ilmu Semesta, 2013), 65.

Batik is transmitted from generation to generation as the nation's cultural heritage, leading most of the Pekalongan community to engage in the batik industry due to hereditary factors. From an artistic perspective, this transmission process occurs socially through learning and interaction among individuals and socialization within the community.⁶⁴ Through this process, culture is inherited, and it is called "civilization."⁶⁵ by Peursen and described as a learning process.⁶⁶ The process of transmitting batik culture in Pekalongan has been ongoing for a very long time. Eventually, it received recognition from UNESCO. This recognition does not lie in a single piece of batik fabric intrinsically but in a combination of various components that encompass it instrumentally.⁶⁷ These components are related to the integrated process of making batik in the community's daily activities, their views on batik, which have crystallized into a mindset as a tradition, and implications for the development and preservation of batik that always follow the dynamics of the times.

Transmitting batik culture is one way of sustaining cultural existence through artistic creations and community participation in affirming the nation's identity and contributing to sustainable development.⁶⁸ According to Syakir, cultural preservation efforts expressed by the community refer to the existence of a culture.⁶⁹ However, this does not mean that sustainable cultural manifestations are static. Culture's existence always undergoes changes due to its adaptive nature in the dynamics of community life. In this regard, UNESCO considers Pekalongan the best example of a culture-based development program that supports its citizens, especially women, to obtain decent incomes to enhance their livelihoods.⁷⁰ Therefore, it is the

⁶⁴ Clyde Kluckhohn, "Cermin bagi Manusia," in *Manusia Kebudayaan dan Lingkungannya*, ed. Parsudi Suparlan (Jakarta: PT RajaGrafindo Persada, 1996), 83.

⁶⁵ Mudjahirin Thohir, *Metodologi Penelitian Sosial Budaya* (Semarang: FASindo, 2012), 67.

⁶⁶ CA. Van Peursen, *Strategi Kebudayaan*, trans. Dick Hartoko (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1988), 14-15.

⁶⁷ Adi Kusrianto, *Batik Filosofi, Motif dan Kegunaan* (Yogyakarta: Andi Offset, 2013), 304.

⁶⁸ UNESCO, "Why Creativity? Why Cities?," <http://en.unesco.org/creative-cities/content/why-creativity-why-cities>.

⁶⁹ Syakir, "Konstruksi Identitas," 73-74.

⁷⁰ UNESCO, "Pekalongan Craft and Folk Art," <http://en.unesco.org/creative-cities/pekalongan>.

shared responsibility of all Indonesians to preserve and uphold the nation's most significant cultural asset in non-material heritage, namely batik.

The existence of the batik industry as a cultural expression can be seen in three aspects. Firstly, ontologically, batik as a noble cultural heritage represents Indonesia's personality, identity, and national identity. This culture is formed through a lengthy process that is simultaneously reflected in production and reproduction in the social world, resulting in a unique and distinctive Indonesian identity that is different from that of other nations.⁷¹ The cultural heritage contains symbols that reflect society's values, representing the social fabric of Indonesian culture.⁷² Regarding art, batik expresses sentiment with high aesthetic and economic value. The combination of the two contributes significantly to the welfare of society as a source of grassroots economy. Secondly, epistemologically, batik production is an adaptive strategy for individuals, as members of society, to survive in social life. Humans' adaptive strategy results from interaction and socialization that occur reciprocally in the social world. Thirdly, axiologically, the presence of the batik industry (with the status and role played by actors as entrepreneurs, subcontractors, or workers) is oriented towards meeting the needs of life and achieving social welfare. The fulfillment of these life needs drives the people of Pekalongan to produce batik, and in this realm, humans have become cultural beings.

For the people of Pekalongan, the socio-cultural conditions that encompass their lives become determining factors that make them entrepreneurs, subcontractors, or workers, as seen in Diagram II.

⁷¹ Suyani, "Pengaruh Budaya Asing Terhadap Perkembangan Batik Pekalongan," *CORAK Jurnal Seni Kriya* 2, no. 1 (May–October 2013): 71-82, <https://journal.isi.ac.id/index.php/corak/article/view/2330>.

⁷² Hayati, "Pekalongan Sebagai Kota Batik 1950-2007."

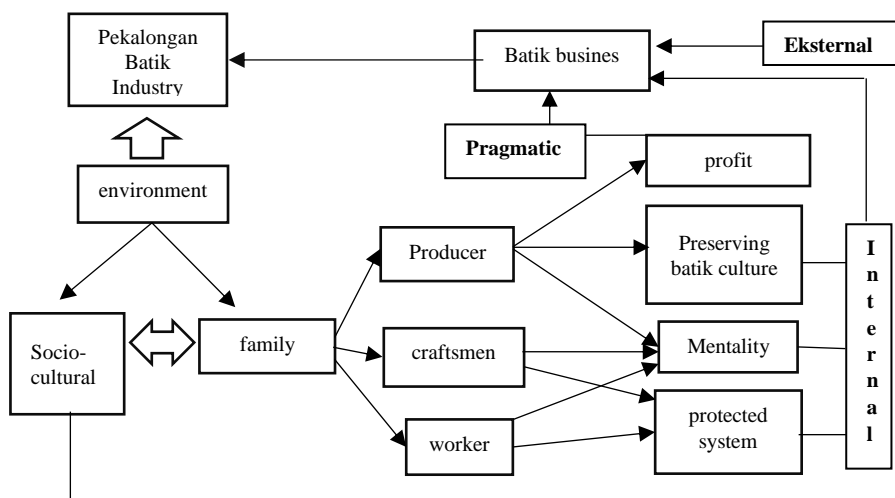


Figure 2. Motivation in Batik Business

Among the many factors, they can be classified into three categories: internal, external, and pragmatic. The first concerns attitudes, values, and emotions; the second concerns the social environment; and the third relates to financial gain. Each factor does not stand alone but is interrelated with the others. An individual's attitudes, values, and emotions may arise from interaction with the social and economic conditions surrounding their life. Contextually, everything leads to the fulfillment of life's needs as an adaptive strategy to survive. This is useful for every individual as the basis of behavior represented in the social world is culture.

Religion as Moral Vitality

From a cultural perspective, religion helps individuals cope with emotional pressure by offering a way out of life's impasses, albeit not empirical but supernatural.⁷³ When someone experiences chaos in their life, a mental impasse, issues that cannot be rationalized, and no available solution to life's problems, at this point religion becomes meaningful. Entrepreneurs choose to repent by surrendering themselves to Allah through prayer and patience. Repentance, which in Arabic

⁷³ Clifford Geertz, *Kebudayaan dan Agama*, trans. F. Budi Hardiman (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1992), 21.

means to return, marks a turning point in one's journey toward a new life, allowing humans to free themselves from everything that binds them toward emptiness, known in Javanese culture as "*suwung*,"⁷⁴ the highest truth or reality (*kasunyatan*),⁷⁵ a psycho-sufistic experience in the form of the soul.

Repentance, as an effort to draw closer to Allah, is undertaken by batik entrepreneurs in a psychological condition called moral anxiety,⁷⁶ often leading to physical and psychological illness. Through repentance, one's soul can return to its origin, regain the stability of its intellect, and not follow its desires. Repentance, in the view of batik entrepreneurs, is crucial not for escapism but as a means to confront life's complexities and uncertainties. Batik entrepreneurs believe that Allah's help will come unexpectedly. This belief demonstrates religion's function, according to Geertz, not only as an ethical foundation but as a source of moral vitality inherent in the beliefs of its followers.⁷⁷

Some findings above indicate that human life needs, actualized in economic activities, merge with the values of supportive cultural communities. Economic activities in this context employ a substantive approach, not just formalism, that focuses solely on capital, production, and markets. According to Thohir,⁷⁸ The substantive approach sees economic activities not in isolation but interconnected with seemingly unrelated activities such as religious rituals like prayer, remembrance, supplication, charity, and others, and how practitioners believe and understand all these as fundamental.

Conclusion

The existence of Batik cultural heritage serves as the lifeblood of the economy in Pekalongan, transmitting a cultural legacy passed down

⁷⁴ Setyo Hajar Dewantoro, *Suwung Ajaran Rahasia Leluhur Jawa* (Serpong: Javanica, 2017).

⁷⁵ Risa Permanadeli, *Dadi Wong Wadon Representasi Sosial Perempuan Jawa di Era Modern*, trans. Stephanus Aswar Herwinarko (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Ifada, 2015), 43.

⁷⁶ Hasyim Muhammad, *Dialog Antara Tasawuf dan Psikologi Telaah atas Pemikiran Abraham Maslow* (Yogyakarta: Walisongo Press dan Pustaka Pelajar, 2002), 33-34.

⁷⁷ Clifford Geertz, *Kebudayaan dan Agama*, trans. F. Budi Hardiman (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1992), 50.

⁷⁸ Parsudi Suparlan, "Kata Pengantar" in Mudjahirin Thohir, *Wacana Masyarakat dan Kebudayaan Jawa Pesisiran* (Semarang: Bendera, 2006), xiv.

through generations, making batik both a cultural identity and a source of grassroots economy. Batik enterprises transmit a cultural heritage that has persisted from generation to generation, establishing batik as a cultural identity and the lifeblood of Pekalongan's economy. Cultural transmission occurs socially through learning processes, peer interaction, community socialization, skill mastery, and batik business management. Batik, as the lifeblood of Pekalongan's economy, is integrated into the community's daily activities, crystallizing in the mindset of tradition and impacting the development and preservation of batik that continuously adapts to the dynamics of the times. The cultural inheritance of batik cannot be separated from the role of religion as a source of moral vitality, serving as a means to preserve the existence and sustainability of batik enterprises.

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