

# STRATEGY ON PRESERVATION OF BATIK-MAKING TRADITION BASED ON CHARACTERISTICS OF RIFA'YAH CHILDREN, A PERSPECTIVE FROM CULTURAL THEORY

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**Abstract:** A strategy to ensure uniqueness is by emphasising the product's traditional and cultural values – a virtually unrivalled element of national identity. However, the decline and, to an extent, extinction of traditional and cultural values are very much unwelcomed. Batik-making is a tradition which must be preserved. It is declining over time and in some cases has led to ceased practice of several batik producing centres. An example of such is the Rifa'iyah batik producing centre in Kalipucang, Batang. The number of batik makers are steadily dwindling as is the interest of the younger generation to learn it. It is undesired if the Rifa'iyah batik-making tradition ceased to be practiced. Therefore, efforts to preserve the batik-making tradition of the Rifa'iyah in Kalipucang, Batang is needed. A strategy on preserving batik-making tradition is required. This study was conducted in Kalipucang, Batang, the heart of the Rifa'iyah batik. The location was selected to preserve the batik-making tradition in Kalipucang, Batang. This study employs ethnographic methods accompanied by a literature review on the history of the Rifa'iyah community, its batik, and culture. This study also uses in-depth interviews with general batik experts, Rifa'iyah batik experts, and Rifa'iyah religious figures. For a period of time, residence is taken within the Rifa'iyah community.

**Keywords:** *Inheritance, Preservation, Batik, Rifa'iyah*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Globalization has led to innovations as a result of advancements in information technology, telecommunications, Jonathan Crary said that technology innovation especially television give big impact in culture, and economic order; converging to form an open and efficient market. The convergence increased competition in every facet of life, in particular in trade and industry. For a product to be competitive, it has to be unique. It follows that Indonesian products must have a distinguishing feature to be able to compete in the international market. A likely strategy to ensure uniqueness is by emphasising a product's traditional and cultural values – a virtually unrivalled element of national identity. However, it is almost a certain truth that a number of customs and traditions are on the verge of extinction.

Batik is among the traditions which have to be preserved. This urgency is reflected in the decline of a number of batik-producing centres due to a lack apprentices.

Batik makers are the low to middle class wherein batik-making is their primary source of income. However, more often than not, the prices of the batik made does not recoup the time spent in producing it. There are also batik makers who are indentured to batik workshop owners, who typically are the high and middle class. These owners employ batik makers to commercially produce batik, the profits of which are then used to pay them. The mutual effort, however, have yet to improve the economic standing of the batik makers, which in turn decreases the appeal of batik-making as a source of income.

An example of the decline of batik-making is the Rifa'iyah batik producing centre in Kalipucang, Batang. Miftahutin (2016), a Rifa'iyah Batik expert said that the number of batik makers are steadily dwindling as is the interest of the younger generation to inherit it. It is undesired if the

Rifa'iyah batik-making tradition ceased to be practiced since it implies the loss of the uniqueness of the batik's cultural background, motifs, and visual ornaments.

It is therefore an imperative for Indonesians to take actions to preserve their cultural legacies. A possible mode of action is by passing such cultural legacies to the young.

Over the passage of time, the mind-set and lifestyles of a given public undergo change. Initiatives to preserve and develop batik-making tradition have to be carried out before its inevitable demise. There are particular challenges for the Rifa'iyah children – whose upbringing are enveloped in batik and batik-making tradition.

## 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Over the passage of time, the mind-set and lifestyles of a given public undergo change. Initiatives to preserve and develop batik-making traditions have to be carried out before its inevitable demise. In this case how Rifa'iyah kids in Kalipucang-Batang, Central Java, who are live in village which is almost disappear the tradition of produce batik, want to preserve batik tradition.

Several cultural theories may serve as the foundation using which the issue may be analysed and solutions proposed:

- A. Amartya Sen stated that culture does not exist in a vacuum, but is rather affected and effected by:
  1. Social status, race, gender, profession, politics, problems, and problematized issues.
  2. Issues from beyond the culture itself.
  3. Cultures undergo change due to, in particular, public discussions and policies.
  4. Cultures interact with factors which form social perceptions and action.
  5. There are two differing notions on culture:
    - Freedom of culture, i.e. the freedom to elect to preserve or alter private priorities; and,
    - Protection of Cultural Values, an important issue in discourses on multiculturalism (in general to protect traditional cultural values).
- B. Ulrich Beck stated that transnationalism forms new connections between cultures, peoples, and locations, which in turn alters daily life. Transnationalism clearly affects the second new cultural modernism. For instance, Turks living in Germany bear the physical resemblance of Turks, yet speak German and identified as Germans.
- C. Nietzsche identifies factors which affect transnationalisation of culture, among which is "that wisdom full of pranks" replaces sympathy with collective laughter.
- D. Jonathan Crary stated that technological advances, in particular television, greatly affects culture.

## 3. RESEARCH METHOD

This study was conducted in Kalipucang, Batang, the heart of the Rifa'iyah batik. The location was selected to preserve the batik-making tradition in Kalipucang, Batang. This study employs ethnographic methods accompanied by a literature review on the history of the Rifa'iyah community, its batik, and culture. This study also uses in-depth interviews with general batik experts, Rifa'iyah batik experts, and Rifa'iyah religious figures. For a period of time, residence is taken within the Rifa'iyah community.

#### 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A number of factors affect cultural change and development. Efforts in cultural preservation and development ought to balance mind-set and lifestyle changes of a culture's observer, particularly the younger generation.

In essence, children's education have to take into account their playful and active nature. Educating children on batik, therefore, has to be safe and engaging, in addition to further considerations of the various cultural backgrounds in which a child is raised in.

In this paper, the future generation is the Rifa'iyah youths – whose upbringing is enveloped in a declining yet intimately-close batik and batik-making tradition.

Transposing Rifa'iyah youths to Amartya Sen's view on cultural factors, it is observed that:

1. In general, children in the Rifa'iyah community are low to middle class and have difficult economic standing. These factors affect the community's access to education facilities. The limited access inhibits the Rifa'iyah youths participation in learning. As a fallback, the community considered batik-making as more than just education, which in a way imposes unwanted pressure on the children. Batik-making may be incorporated into the school curriculum so that the Rifa'iyah children can study it more seriously while minimising the cost required.
2. Influences from within and without of a culture significantly affects a child's character. Given the current technological progression, information and cultural exchange are quickly transferred from one culture to another. This view is in line with that of Jonathan Crary's, in that technological advances, in particular television, greatly affects culture. Information and cultural developments are readily available to the general population, both of which have to be considered in preserving batik-making. However, not every Rifa'iyah child has access such media due to their financial constraints. The advancements in technology both forms and alters the play culture of Rifa'iyah children, whose play culture previously relied on direct physical interaction. Following the adoption of digital entertainment, children's play culture shifted towards television, internet, or digital games. This view is in line with that of Ulrich Beck's, in that transnationalism forms new connections between cultures, peoples, and locations, which in turn alters daily life. Transnationalism clearly affects the second new cultural modernism. Currently, direct physical interaction and digital games are struggling for dominance. Efforts to pass batik traditions to children should incorporate both forms of play, i.e. direct physical interaction supported by digital games.
3. Cultures undergo change due to, in particular, public discussions and policies. Areas surrounding the Rifa'iyah batik centre is primarily populated by the namesake peoples. Children in the community are so familiar with batik and batik-making that both are considered to be "common" bordering on "lacklustre." Enticing youths and children to take interest in the tradition is a challenge which calls for proactive response from the community and, in particular, parents.
4. Cultures interact with factors which form social perceptions and action. The Rifa'iyah's principles are deeply ingrained in form of community norms and values, distinguishing the community them from those around it. For the stated purposes, proposed strategies must be accepted by and consistent with the principles of the Rifa'iyah community. To facilitate acceptance, the preservation effort should be within the confines of the community.
5. There are two differing notions on culture:
  - Freedom of culture, i.e. the freedom to elect to preserve or alter private priorities; and,

- Protection of Cultural Values, an important issue in discourses on multiculturalism (in general to protect traditional cultural values).

The Rifa'iyah tend to emphasise on the preservation of cultural values, which in itself imposes an obstruction before acceptance by the community. However, since the Rifa'iyah still practice batik-making, the proposal to preserve the batik tradition should be readily accepted. The primary issue is appealing to children in the community to continue the batik-making tradition. Nietzsche's "that wisdom full of pranks" – replacing sympathy with laughter – is a convincing case on how to pass traditions to children. By appealing to the child's inherent playful and active nature, methods eliciting amusement and mimicking play using tools, materials, and processes may be beneficial.

## 5. CONCLUSION

It may be assumed that efforts to preserve batik traditions require personality analysis of the intended recipient for it to be effective. In this case, the broad personality of the Rifa'iyah children must be first understood by analysing their social environment, character, culture, mind-set, and background.

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The following strategies are proposed in the effort to pass the batik tradition to the Rifa'iyah children:

No.	STRATEGY	RIFA'YAH CHILDREN
1.	Learning	School curriculum
2.	Entertainment	Physical and digital games
3.	Teacher	Teachers and parents
4.	Location	Rifa'iyah community
5.	Support	Primarily from parents

Source: Bulan Prizilla, 2016

Above all, the strategy has to be adapted to the inherent nature of children: playful and active with emphasis on safety of the entire process.

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