

BATIK AS A CULTURAL IDENTITY AND SYMBOL OF NATIONAL IDEOLOGY IN THE PRACTICE OF HAJJ

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ABSTRACT

Batik as an Indonesian heritage has aesthetic value as well as deep philosophical and ideological meaning. This study examines the role of batik as part of cultural identity and a symbol of national ideology in the practice of the Hajj pilgrimage, especially since it became the official uniform for Indonesian Hajj pilgrims in the 1980s. This study uses a literature review method with a cultural circuit approach to analyze identity elements. Data sources were obtained from journals, books, and relevant documents that discuss batik, national ideology, and Hajj practices. The approach taken comes from Stuart Hall's concept of cultural identity which views identity as a dynamic and fluid social construction, as well as a hybrid. In addition, this study refers to Anthony D. Smith's theory of national identity and cites the role of the Pancasila ideology as a fundamental value of nationalism. This study found that batik functions as a symbol that combines cultural identity with national ideology in the context of the Hajj pilgrimage. The policy of wearing batik uniforms for Hajj pilgrims not only strengthens Indonesia's cultural identity on the international stage but also functions as a medium to convey nationalist ideological values.

Keywords: Batik, Cultural Identity, National Ideology, Hajj

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INTRODUCTION

Batik is a term that refers to a traditional textile art with distinctive decorative patterns created using a dye-resistance technique. The process involves applying hot wax to the surface of the fabric to create a specific motif. When the fabric is dipped in a dye solution, the wax-covered areas retain the color, leaving only the exposed areas to absorb the dye. The final process of boiling the fabric dissolves (*nglorod*) the wax layer, revealing the beautiful motifs previously hidden beneath the barrier layer.

Batik originally held deep religious and spiritual significance, serving more as a ritual medium than simply as everyday clothing. The sacred value inherent in batik made it a material considered to possess magical powers. At that time, batik was not yet a commercial commodity, and its use was limited to elite circles such as royal leaders or religious figures. Royal nobles often used imported patterned fabrics, such as Indian patola ikat or Thai woven fabrics, which commanded high prices. Over time, due to the scarcity and high cost of these imported fabrics, people began to create similar motifs using a different technique, namely through the batik process. This was the beginning of the birth of batik art as a local alternative (Kusnin, 2006). Batik is a cultural product born from human thought and creativity, reflecting philosophical values and specific messages contained within each motif. Based on various historical studies, experts such as Sutjipto Wirjo Suparto (1964) stated that batik embodies the local cultural genius of the Indonesian people in absorbing and adapting various foreign cultural influences, then developing them into a distinctive and highly artistic textile art form. The process of creating batik is not merely a technique; it is also a cultural expression containing ideology and noble cultural values.

Identity is an inherent characteristic that reflects an individual's character in both personal and communal contexts, as well as reflecting the collective characteristics of a nation on a broader scale. In the context of nationality, having a distinct identity has become a necessity in the modern era. Manifestations of national identity can be seen through various symbols such as the flag, national anthem, state emblem, and cultural expressions. Observable cultural elements include traditional cuisine, traditional clothing, religious practices, regional languages, traditional architecture, and various other forms of art (Kustiyah, 2017).

Regarding the practice of the Hajj pilgrimage, in the pre-independence era, the organization of the Hajj underwent significant transformation. During the Islamic kingdoms of the Nusantara archipelago, the Hajj was managed on a limited basis by sultanates such as Banten and Aceh, primarily for the nobility and religious scholars. The Dutch colonial government then imposed strict controls through the Pilgrims Ordonantie, which burdened pilgrims with bureaucracy and taxes, while the *Kongsi Tiga* (Three Kingdoms) monopoly on transportation created poor travel conditions. The Japanese occupation marginalized the Hajj pilgrimage by diverting all resources to the war effort, leaving a system that disfavored the people in general (Zainal, 2012).

LITERATURE REVIEWS

The implementation of the Hajj pilgrimage in Indonesia has witnessed significant transformations throughout various historical periods. In the early days, the Hajj was personal and linked to the Nusantara-Middle Eastern network of religious scholars (Putuhena, 2012). During the Dutch colonial period, the Hajj was restricted through strict regulations, such as travel permits and financial burdens (Ghofur, 2012). After independence, the state took over management through the Ministry of Religion, then made it more modern with a quota system (Janah, 2018), before finally being regulated more transparently through laws during the reformation era.

The development of uniforms during the Hajj pilgrimage in Indonesia reflects unique social, political, and religious dynamics. During the Dutch colonial period (19th century), Indonesian

Hajj pilgrims did not wear specific uniforms, but instead wore traditional clothing such as robes and turbans, adapted to local culture (Van Dijk, 1997). At that time, there were no specific regulations regarding the use of uniforms during the Hajj pilgrimage. It was not until the New Order era (1966-1998) that the Indonesian government introduced an official uniform consisting of a white ihram shirt with a triangular scarf made to resemble the red and white flag as a form of national identity (Feener, 2007).

In the context of the Hajj pilgrimage, batik has been transformed into a symbol that combines spiritual dimensions and Indonesian nationalism. The policy of using batik as a uniform for Hajj pilgrims since the 1980s has made this textile heritage a carrier of ideological messages that articulate the values of Pancasila. The presence of batik in the Hajj ritual plays a dual role: strengthening national identity at the individual level and serving as an instrument of Indonesian soft power internationally. This phenomenon illustrates the state's strategy of utilizing cultural elements as an effective means of instilling national values through religious activities.

During the Hajj pilgrimage, batik serves as a marker of dual identity, combining cultural heritage with the ideological message of the Indonesian nation. As a cultural expression, the diversity of batik motifs, from the Kawung motif, which is steeped in philosophical meaning, to the Mega Mendung motif, which depicts acculturation with Chinese culture, makes it a distinctive feature that distinguishes Indonesian pilgrims amidst the international Muslim community, a practice officially institutionalized since the 1980s. Furthermore, the batik uniform during the Hajj pilgrimage also serves as a medium for state ideology. Design innovations such as the combination of red and white and contemporary motifs visually communicate the basic principles of Pancasila, particularly the value of unity in diversity. This dynamic interaction between cultural and political dimensions positions batik not merely as ritual attire, but as a form of civic expression that connects religious identity with national consciousness in the global space.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research method used is qualitative. The research was conducted by reading journals, books, and other related sources. This literature review was conducted to gain a deeper understanding of batik as a cultural identity and symbol of national ideology in the Hajj practice. The circuit of culture approach was used in this study, particularly for the element of identity. Stuart Hall (1996) views identity as a continuously evolving social construct, not a fixed entity. The process of its formation involves a complex interaction between shared history, power structures, and individual experiences within a specific space and time. In contrast to the essentialist approach, Hall argues that identity is hybrid and plural, constantly reconstructed through cultural practices, social relations, and political discourse. His primary emphasis is on the performative nature of identity, which is constantly actively produced and reproduced through actions and representations, rather than simply inherited as a static cultural legacy.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Batik as a Cultural Identity in the Practice of the Hajj

According to the Oxford English Dictionary (2023), identity can be defined as “the fact of being who or what a person or thing is.” This definition emphasizes the specific characteristics that distinguish an individual or group from others, as reflected in the example of “cultural identity shaped by language and tradition.” Furthermore, identity is also defined as “the characteristics determining this,” which includes various attributes such as culture, beliefs, and shared experiences, for example in the expression “national identity is reflected through its symbols.” This third definition states identity as “the sameness of a person or thing at all times

or in all circumstances,” which emphasizes the concept of identity consistency despite external changes.

The Oxford English Dictionary explains the concept of identity through three main definitions. First, identity refers to the essence of a person or thing that serves as a primary distinction from other entities, as seen in the formation of cultural identity through elements of language and tradition. Second, identity encompasses a set of defining characteristics such as cultural values, belief systems, and collective experiences, which can be observed through symbols of national identity. Third, identity is understood as a unity that persists across situations and time, demonstrating resilience to changes in the external environment. These three dimensions together construct a comprehensive understanding of the meaning of identity.

Referring to this, Stuart Hall (1996) views cultural identity as a fluid and evolving phenomenon, rather than a rigid or permanent entity. In his perspective, cultural identity is the result of a continuous process of social construction through cultural practices, symbolic representations, and intercultural dialogue. Hall rejects essentialist views of identity and instead sees it as situationally formed through the interaction of collective memory, power relations, and lived experiences. Cultural identity is pluralistic and hybrid, constantly in a process of transformation in response to its historical and political context. This concept emphasizes the performative aspect of identity, how identity is continuously "made" and "done" (becoming), not just "existing" as a static legacy (being).

Furthering the concept of identity, the author needs to discuss the definition of national identity. According to Anthony D. Smith (1991), national identity is a social construct born from a nation's shared historical experiences, reinforced by the use of state symbols, the preservation of cultural values, and geographical-linguistic unity. This concept emphasizes the existence of a permanent "cultural core" (ethnie), although expressions of this identity may evolve over time. National identity serves as a shared frame of reference that distinguishes one nation from another in the global arena.

Regarding the regulation of the Hajj pilgrimage, after independence, Indonesia established an organized Hajj system under the Ministry of Religious Affairs, beginning with the establishment of the Indonesian Hajj Travel Improvement Committee/*Petugas Penyelenggara Ibadah Haji* (PPIH) in 1950. Then, during the New Order era, Hajj management became increasingly structured through the Hajj Affairs Council/*Dewan Urusan Haji* (DUHA), which synergized various government agencies, reinforced by technological innovations such as computerized pilgrim data and the procurement of special vessels. The characteristic of this period is the merging of national identity with religious values, reflected in the official Hajj uniform which combines the colors of the Red and White flag with traditional ihram clothing (Zainal, 2012).

Entering the Reformation era, the Indonesian Hajj pilgrimage administration system underwent a fundamental transformation through two key laws emphasizing the principles of transparency and accountability. Digital innovations such as electronic registration (e-Hajj) and a quota lottery mechanism were implemented to ensure equal opportunity, supported by more professional fund management through the Hajj Financial Management Agency/*Badan Pengelola Keuangan Haji* (BPKH). Strategic partnerships with the private sector in the provision of transportation and accommodation were strengthened, along with improvements to the pilgrim protection system, including insurance and healthcare. All of these reforms were aimed at achieving modern governance of the Hajj pilgrimage without neglecting the religious essence of the pilgrimage (Zainal, 2012).

According to research by Jajat Burhanudin (2012), the standardization of Indonesian Hajj uniforms underwent significant development in the 1980s when the Ministry of Religious Affairs implemented regulations requiring the wearing of traditional Indonesian batik uniforms during the pilgrimage. This policy aimed to facilitate pilgrim identification while promoting

national culture. In Saudi Arabia itself, the ihram uniform is still worn according to Islamic law, but Indonesian pilgrims often add accessories such as scarves, sashes or hats with red and white nuances (Bruinessen, 2013).

Significant changes occurred after the reformation through Law No. 13/2008, which restructured the design of Hajj uniforms with a contemporary approach without eliminating national identity. As Ropi (2017) points out, today's Hajj uniforms have become a representation of harmony between ritual piety and nationalism, combining batik and the colors of the Indonesian flag for non-worship activities.

Batik uniforms were officially introduced to the Indonesian Hajj pilgrimage in the 1980s by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. This policy emerged as part of an effort to standardize and strengthen the national identity of Indonesian Hajj pilgrims on the global stage. Prior to this period, Indonesian Hajj pilgrims did not have a standard uniform and generally wore traditional or simple clothing during the journey. The choice of batik as a non-ritual uniform was based on cultural considerations, comfort, and suitability to the Saudi Arabian climate, while the ihram garment was retained for core rituals (Burhanudin, 2012).



Figure 1 Batik Uniforms First Introduced

Note: www.antarafoto.com

The Ministry of Religious Affairs officially introduced batik as the uniform for Indonesian Hajj pilgrims starting with the 2011 Hajj season. The use of batik uniforms by Indonesian pilgrims was intended to facilitate identification among the millions of pilgrims (Antarafoto, 2011). The batik fabric used to make these uniforms is generally made using screen printing or printing techniques.

The 2024 Hajj uniform is a batik with the Sekar Arum Sari motif. This purple batik is inspired by white jasmine, kawung motifs, truntum flowers, songket and woven motifs, and the Garuda bird. This motif draws on the philosophy of Indonesia's national flower, depicted by the white jasmine flower, which symbolizes purity, majesty, simplicity, sincerity, beauty, and humility (Detik, 2024).



Figure 2 Latest Batik Uniforms

Note: www.google.com

The presence of batik in the Hajj pilgrimage plays a dual role as a marker of identity and a medium for promoting Indonesian culture internationally. The batik designs deliberately combine traditional motifs with national elements, creating a visual symbol that unites spiritual and patriotic dimensions. This step illustrates a new, more structured approach to managing the cultural aspects of the Hajj, a stark contrast to the past when there was no centralized regulation (Bruinessen, 2013).

As a cultural element, batik in the Hajj pilgrimage has transformed into a vibrant and evolving marker of national identity. Identity theory suggests that batik in the Hajj pilgrimage is not simply clothing, but rather an embodiment of Indonesian national identity, uniting spirituality and nationality. The history of Hajj regulations over time demonstrates how the government has gradually developed a system that combines religious practice with cultural preservation, where batik serves as a tool of global soft diplomacy. Innovations in batik design, from its first introduction in the 1980s to current motifs, demonstrate Indonesia's ability to respond to the dynamics of the times without losing its traditional roots, while simultaneously solidifying batik's position as a form of cultural heritage with universal value.

Batik as a Symbol of National Ideology in the Practice of the Hajj

Indonesia's national ideology is Pancasila, which serves as a philosophical foundation and guiding value for state governance and social life. Its five principles, namely divinity, humanity, unity, democracy, and social justice, are designed to unite the diverse nation and serve as the basis for legal and social development based on the 1945 Constitution and its derivatives, such as Law No. 12/2011 (Secretariat General of the People's Consultative Assembly of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019).

In Notonagoro's (1974) view, Pancasila is applicable as a living ideology manifested in three areas: 1) character formation through education, 2) a democratic system of government, and 3) equitable economic regulation. In the era of globalization, Pancasila also serves as a bulwark against the absorption of radical ideologies and a framework for adapting to change, the

strengthening of which requires synergy between state policy and public exemplarity (White Paper on Pancasila Education, Ministry of Education and Culture 2020).

Related to national ideology is the concept of nationalism, a fundamental characteristic that every Indonesian citizen must possess. This spirit of nationalism plays a crucial role in strengthening national integration and maintaining the integrity of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. Conceptually, nationalism can be understood as a view that places the highest value on individual loyalty and devotion to one's nation and state. This fosters a strong emotional bond between citizens and their homeland, including an appreciation for the socio-cultural heritage and leadership systems that have evolved over the course of the nation's history. The intensity of this spirit of nationalism is dynamic, constantly adapting to changes and the demands of the times (Firdaus, 2018).

Indonesian National Symbols are visual and conceptual representations that serve as the official identity of the state, reflecting sovereignty, unity, and the nation's noble values. Indonesia has various national symbols that serve as the official identity of the state, depicting sovereignty, unity, and fundamental values. Among these symbols, batik holds a special place after being designated a World Cultural Heritage by UNESCO in 2009. More than just a traditional Indonesian textile, batik holds deep philosophical meaning, with each motif reflecting local wisdom and the principles of Indonesian life. Motifs like the Kawung and Parang, for example, symbolize purity and resilience, respectively. This global recognition not only solidifies batik as a cultural heritage but also emphasizes its role as a symbol of national pride, enriching Indonesia's identity internationally.

Batik is not only a cultural heritage but also serves as a symbol of national ideology, reflecting the values of Pancasila. Each batik motif embodies a philosophy aligned with the Pancasila principles, such as the Parang motif, which symbolizes resilience (in line with the third principle on unity), or the Truntum flower motif, which represents compassion (in line with the second principle on humanity). The use of batik in a state context, such as the official Indonesian Hajj uniform since the 1980s, demonstrates how the government systematically utilizes culture as a medium to strengthen national identity while disseminating ideological values. This aligns with Anthony D. Smith's (1991) concept of cultural nationalism, which emphasizes the role of cultural elements in building national consciousness.

Furthermore, batik reflects the principle of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity), with its diversity that unites differences within the framework of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. For example, Lasem batik, which combines Chinese and Javanese influences, serves as a tangible symbol of tolerance (the first principle of Pancasila). In Stuart Hall's (1996) view, the ever-changing practice of batik demonstrates the dynamic nature of Indonesia's national ideology, capable of adapting to changing times without losing its identity. UNESCO's recognition of batik further solidifies its position not only as a cultural identity but also as a diplomatic tool projecting Indonesian ideology internationally.

The use of batik in the Indonesian Hajj pilgrimage serves a dual role as a marker of identity and an embodiment of the values of Pancasila. The Ministry of Religious Affairs' initiative since the 1980s to make batik the official uniform for Hajj pilgrims, with its red and white patterns or traditional motifs such as Kawung and Parang, cleverly transformed clothing into a means of instilling national ideology. Through this policy, the state positions Hajj pilgrims as agents of the nation, not only performing religious rituals but also promoting national identity globally (Burhanudin, 2012).



Figure 3 Arrival of Indonesian Hajj Pilgrims in Medina

Note: www.times.co.id

The diversity of batik motifs worn by Indonesian Hajj pilgrims reinforces the message of unity in diversity. Although the Hajj is a global event, local influences, such as Pekalongan or Lasem batik, combined with national attributes, create a unique blend of religious piety and patriotism. This approach aligns with Anderson's theory on the power of symbols in fostering national bonds, even in religious activities that transcend national borders.

The development of batik designs for the Hajj over time reflects the flexibility of the Pancasila ideology in responding to changing times. Recent innovations, such as the Sekar Arum Sari motif, which combines the national flower (jasmine) and the national symbol (the Garuda), demonstrate Indonesia's ability to translate fundamental values through cultural media. The high level of batik use among Hajj pilgrims (98% according to 2023 Ministry of Religious Affairs data) demonstrates its effectiveness as a natural, unforced tool for internalizing ideology.

As a manifestation of national values, national ideology is formed not only conceptually but also in cultural practice, with the batik uniforms used during the Hajj pilgrimage being a concrete example of how national ideology is put into practice. Through the policy of batik uniforms for Hajj pilgrims, the government transforms traditional fabric into an ideological communication medium that visually conveys the principles of Pancasila ideology. The evolution of Hajj batik designs from traditional to contemporary motifs reflects the Indonesian nation's ability to modernize cultural expression without losing its identity, while also affirming Indonesia's position as a nation capable of combining cultural intelligence with ideological resilience in global interactions.

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

Batik, in the practice of the Indonesian Hajj pilgrimage, has proven itself both a symbol of cultural identity and a dynamic embodiment of national ideology. Batik has evolved into more than just traditional clothing; it is a tangible manifestation of Indonesia's vibrant and ever-changing national identity. As a globally recognized cultural symbol, batik plays a dual role as a visual distinguishing feature for Indonesian pilgrims among millions of international

Muslims, and as a medium for conveying national ideological messages through its meaningful motifs.

The policy of batik Hajj uniforms, which began in the 1980s and continues through recent design breakthroughs, demonstrates the state's strategy of transforming traditional fabrics into tools of cultural diplomacy and a vehicle for instilling national values. This phenomenon aligns with Stuart Hall's concept of cultural identity, which emphasizes fluidity and adaptability. Hajj batik continues to evolve while maintaining its function as a unifying force for the nation. Batik unites religious and national dimensions; batik in the practice of the Hajj pilgrimage serves as concrete evidence of Indonesia's ability to practice the values of Pancasila through dynamic cultural practices, while simultaneously strengthening the nation's image internationally through a unique and meaningful cultural approach.

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