

The Role of Mass Communication in Preserving Cultural Acculturation in Lasem Hand-drawn Batik

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the role of mass communication in preserving and reinforcing cultural acculturation values embedded in Lasem batik amid the dynamics of the digital era. Mass communication plays a strategic role in sustaining the existence of Lasem hand-drawn batik, which embodies a long-standing process of cultural acculturation. This study employs a qualitative method through field and digital observations, using a mass communication approach. Data were collected through observation, structured and unstructured interviews, and documentation. Data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman model, including data collection, reduction, display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that mass media functions not only as a promotional tool but also as a cultural mediator that ensures the continuity of acculturated values in Lasem batik. Government institutions, local communities, and citizen journalism actively utilize official websites, social media platforms, and community-based media to disseminate narratives about batik motifs, colors, and philosophies. Natural motifs and color symbolism reflect the harmonious integration of Chinese cultural elements, local wisdom, and religious values, particularly through symbolic adaptations of animal imagery. These communication practices strengthen public awareness, cultural identity, and the sustainability of Lasem batik as a symbol of cultural harmony and heritage in the contemporary media landscape.

Keyword: Mass Communication, Culture of Acculturation, Existence of Lasem Batik Tulis

INTRODUCTION

Social systems and the modernization of the media industry have become an integral part of the development of mass communication. In today's era, the complexity of social and cultural systems and conditions can be easily seen and found through the media. The speed of information and media influences people's lives, from the exchange of information to ideology, from simple methods to innovative updates.

The development of digital communication has not only reduced the intensity of direct interaction, but also affected the mechanisms of cultural transmission in society (Dimpleby & Burton, 2020). In the context of preserving Lasem hand-drawn batik, this condition has created a gap in the form of a weakening of the process of passing on values, symbolic meanings, and the philosophy of acculturation, which previously took place through face-to-face social relations between craftsmen, communities, and future generations. When culture is represented primarily through digital media without adequate cultural narratives, batik risks being reduced to mere visual objects and economic commodities. Therefore, mass communication plays a strategic role as a cultural mediator that bridges the disconnect of direct interaction by presenting narratives, meanings, and cultural contexts in a structured manner, so that the values of acculturation in Lasem batik are preserved and understood in their entirety in the digital era.

Along with the development of information media, communication has also undergone significant changes from traditional to modern. From the perspective of values in communication, this development has actually created new problems, one of which is a reduction in direct interaction between individuals. This has led to an inevitable gap. This gap will cause people to lose interest in knowing everything that is happening in society (Koentjaraningrat, 1984). People tend to be indifferent to one another and develop skepticism in their way of thinking. This is what some people are fighting against, maximizing technological developments not as a medium that can passively affect their ability to socialize. For some people, the media is used to provide education about certain things. They interact and provide new information to the public in a simple and effective way.

Ideally, communication in cultural studies is useful in the process of transmitting values in shaping order and adding understanding to society. This process of transmitting values occurs because of continuous interaction through good communication in society, which will give rise to patterned uniformity for the community. As stated by Melville J. Herskovits and Bronislaw Malinowski, everything in society is determined by the culture owned by the society itself (Rorong, 2020).

Lasem, as an area with a rich cultural heritage, is no exception. The religious harmony and social conditions of the community there cannot be separated from the cultural values that flourish there. Lasem is an area that has inherited the cultural legacy of its ancestors, not only in the form of inscriptions, but also in the noble values that continue to thrive today. The cultural characteristics that blend indigenous and immigrant cultures are not only reflected in language/speech and behavior but also in religious values. For example, this can be seen in the patterns, colors, and paintings of Lasem Handmade Batik, which is evidence of cultural acculturation that once existed.

Several literature sources mention that Lasem Handmade Batik is evidence of the acculturation of religious and cultural values that have significant differences. Lasem Handmade Batik has successfully bridged these differences. The indigenous people of Lasem are unwilling to abandon their cultural forms and values, as well as their religious teachings, but it cannot be denied that the culture of the newcomers has gradually influenced the old culture. Reflected in the patterns, colors, and images in Lasem Handmade Batik, religious values, local cultural values, and new cultural values (from Chinese immigrants) collaborate to produce beautiful and unique forms in one medium that we can enjoy today in Lasem Handmade Batik (Maghfiroh et al., 2023).

From its inception to the present day, the noble cultural values in Lasem Handmade Batik have not been eroded or changed in the slightest. With the development of the times and technology mentioned in the previous paragraph, this is certainly closely related to the role of communication in the media in preserving and maintaining it. Therefore, this research is important to determine how mass communication is built in the media so that this culture remains alive today.

To minimize plagiarism and demonstrate the novelty of the research, several previous studies have been conducted, such as those by Dina Dwikurniarini, Agus Murdyastomo, and Ririn, entitled "Acculturation of Traditional Javanese Batik with Chinese Batik." The similarity in the writing is that the results of the research by Dina Dwikurniarini et al. are used as material for analysis, while the significant difference is that the author's focus is on mass communication, not limited to the acculturation of batik values (Dwikurniarini, 2013). Second, the journal "The Influence of Mass Communication and Media on Society and Culture" by Marlina. The research, which places mass communication and media as macro variables to explain the general influence of media on society and culture, this study specifically focuses on mass communication practices in the context of preserving local cultural heritage, namely Lasem hand-drawn batik. While Marlina emphasizes the effects of media on broad social change, this study examines mass communication as an active process of cultural mediation, including message production, symbolic narratives, and strategies for disseminating acculturation through official government media and community-based media. Thus, the main differences lie in the specificity of the object of study and the depth of analysis of the cultural context being examined (Marlina, 2018) Third, is a journal by Dewi Isma Aryani and Hasna Taaj Aiman entitled "The Charm of Lasem Batik and Its Application in Contemporary Fashion." This study examines Lasem batik primarily from an aesthetic perspective and its application in contemporary fashion design, with an emphasis on visual aspects, motifs, and creative adaptations of batik in the fashion industry. Unlike this approach, this study does not treat batik as an object of design, but rather as a medium of cultural communication that is rich in symbolic meaning and acculturation values. The approach used in this study focuses on mass communication and cultural studies, with qualitative methodology through field observations, in-depth interviews, and digital media analysis, to reveal how the meaning of batik is produced, mediated, and maintained in the digital public sphere (Dewi Isma Aryani, 2020). The novelty of this research lies in the integration of mass communication studies and cultural preservation, particularly in interpreting Lasem hand-drawn batik not only as a cultural artifact or creative product, but as a symbol of acculturation whose continuity is largely determined by the role of mass communication in the digital age.

Therefore, this research is important to conduct in order to deeply understand that mass communication plays a role in actualizing the existence of cultural acculturation values through Handmade Batik in the current era.

Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research design (Sugiyono, 2013) with a case study approach, focusing on Lasem hand-drawn batik as a representation of cultural acculturation preserved through mass communication practices. This design was chosen to enable an in-depth understanding of meanings, values, and communication processes embedded in the production, representation, and dissemination of Lasem batik in the digital era.

The research is framed by a mass communication approach, which guides the analysis of how cultural meanings are mediated, constructed, and circulated through various media channels. This approach informs the formulation of research questions, particularly those related to media narratives, message content, communicator roles, audience reception, and the function of media institutions in preserving cultural values. It also serves as an analytical lens in interpreting how official government media, social media platforms, and community-based media contribute to sustaining the acculturation values embodied in Lasem batik (Sutrisno Hadi, 1984).

Data were collected through field and digital observations, structured and unstructured in-depth interviews, and documentation. Primary data sources included media account managers (both official and community-based), batik artisans, and representatives of the Rembang Regency Communication and Information Agency (Kriyantono, 2014). Secondary data consisted of documents, photographs, videos, audio recordings, and digital media content related to Lasem hand-drawn batik. Structured interviews were initially conducted using predefined questions based on mass communication concepts, while unstructured interviews were used to explore emerging themes more deeply.

Data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman interactive model, consisting of data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles and Huberman, 1999). Throughout the analysis process, mass communication concepts were used to interpret patterns of media use, message framing, gatekeeping practices, and the role of media as a cultural mediator in preserving and transmitting the acculturation values of Lasem batik.

Results and Discussion

1. RESULT

A. Cultural Acculturation in Lasem-Rembang Hand-drawn Batik

China has known Java since the early first century AD. Fa Hsein, often referred to as Fa Hian/Fa Xian, and Hwui Ning visited an island called "Ya-Wa-Di." Ya-Wa-Di is a Chinese transliteration and toponym of Jawadwipa in Sanskrit texts. In addition, a number of prehistoric artifacts found in Indonesia indicate the existence of interactions between the Chinese and the Indonesian archipelago (Ryanto et al., 2020). Rumah Buku Lasem Community (2014). *Lasem: A Long History of Tolerance*. Lasem: Ezam Berkah Utama. The Chinese who arrived in the archipelago were generally traders. These traders docked at several ports on the island of Java, one of which was in the Lasem region (Inayah et al., 2023).

The Chinese arrived in Lasem in the 11th century, and some of the traders settled there and assimilated with the indigenous people in terms of culture, language, and religion. There was a permanent Chinese settlement on the east bank of the Lasem River. Generally, they married local women and chose to settle permanently in their new homeland (Putranto, 2022).

This led to Lasem becoming home to several Chinese people who worked as gatekeepers, boatmen, or fishermen, as well as traders. Their arrival in Lasem immediately gave birth to a new culture. This culture is the essence of Chinese customs, which were then adopted into local customs that did not fade from the old (native) culture, resulting in the acculturation of Chinese culture. This was due to good communication between the local community and the Chinese community. The respect of the Javanese/indigenous community towards the Chinese was due to the perception that the Chinese

were tenacious and skilled traders, so many local traders imitated the Chinese way of trading (Ryanto et al., 2020)

Chinese immigrants who have settled for more than two or three generations and blended in with the people of Lasem have become accustomed to the language and customs of their new home. This is reflected in various aspects of Javanese art in Lasem. The influence on Javanese art is evident in batik, particularly in the patterns, decorative elements, and colors used, as can be seen in Lasem batik. Just as the bright red color is characteristic of the Chinese, the indigenous people have accepted it and even combined it with the natural colors of Lasem. These colors are brown and green, which come from roots and plants. Some of the people of Lasem who are of Chinese descent and have intermarried with the Javanese population have become experts in Javanese art and protectors of Javanese culture. As explained in the Lasem book community (Mandaka & Meidayanti Mustika, 2021).

1) The value of cultural acculturation from the perspective of motifs

In addition to assimilation manifested in cultural and religious activities, acculturation can also be seen in batik. Hand-drawn batik is one form and proof of the acculturation of Chinese and indigenous Lasem cultures. Chinese immigrants passed on their batik-making skills to the local community. To this day, Lasem hand-drawn batik motifs are a blend of Javanese and Chinese cultural expressions. This can be seen in batik motifs such as the hong bird, dragon, and bamboo plant, which are Chinese motifs combined with other distinctive motifs such as the Laton and Watu (Stone) Pecah/Kricak motifs (Maghfiroh et al., 2023).



Figure 1. Lasem Hand-drawn Batik with Broken Stone Motif

Watu Pecah/Kricak is one of the indigenous natural products. The broken stone motif has unique historical value. This broken stone/Kricak motif is inspired by the long history of the Pantura road. In ancient times, specifically when the Dutch Governor-General, Daendels, built a 1,000 km road from Anyer to Panarukan, the regents were asked to hand over young men as forced laborers (Rachmayanti et al., 2023). The young men who were handed over became stone breakers, and at that time, there was also an epidemic of malaria and influenza that struck Rembang, causing many deaths in Rembang and Lasem. The impact of this was deep sadness for the people of Lasem. To commemorate the services of these young men, the community made broken stone/pebbles into a batik motif.

However, due to the beauty of the stone/pebble motif, it was widely imitated by other regions. This was confirmed by Arwani (63 years old, a community leader in Lasem) who said:

“Motif Watu Pecah/ Krikil niki salah satunggaling wujud rasa trisna lan derek lara warga kagem para warga sing waktu Deandels nyuwun marang Bupati niko wau tapi katah ingkang sido. Mecahi watu ikang ageng meniko boten perkoro

gampil. Namung para warga (pemudo) ikang dayane tasih enem saget ngremuake watu ikang segene rondan meniko”

(Crushed stones/gravel were used as motifs for this batik as a form of love and concern for the pain and fatigue of the residents who were forced laborers for Deandeles and many of whom later died. Breaking large stones is not an easy task. However, the residents (forced laborers, mostly young men) still had the strength to break stones as big as shops).

Added by Sarmini (56 years old, wife of Arwani, batik artist):

“motif batu pecah/krikil meniko ugi wujud penghargaanipun kagem masyarakat pribumi (Lasem). Sebabe Lasem niki kan wilayah pesisir ikang dikelilingi gunung alit sing watune katah, mulo wargi Pribumi katah ikang manfaatke hasil alam kagem damelan”

(The broken stone/gravel motif is also a form of appreciation for the indigenous people. This is because Lasem, as one of the northern coastal areas surrounded by rocky hills, has many indigenous residents who utilize natural resources as their source of income. Many indigenous people work by breaking large stones into smaller pieces (Kricak).)

The Broken Stone motif is a form of appreciation and remembrance for the ancestors who fought to build the Anyer-Panarukan road, which is used as one of the basic motifs. This is because in several motifs in Lasem Handmade Batik, this motif is often combined with other images such as the Hong Bird motif.



Figure II.
Lasem Hand-drawn Batik with a
Combination of Broken Stone, Hong Bird,
and Chinese Characters Motif



Figure III.
Batik Image : Lasem Writing Combination of
Broken Stone and Flower Motifs

The motif combining Batu Pecah, Hong Bird, and Chinese characters symbolizes harmony, namely that the indigenous people remain respected and have the right to provide shelter to immigrants (tionghia-China). Meanwhile, the Chinese will always respect the indigenous people of Lasem. Thus, the dominant motif in the batik above is Batu Pecah/pebbles. The Hong Bird (Phoenix), known as fenghuang in Mandarin, symbolizes goodness and is believed by the local community to ward off evil. The colors of the Hong Bird also have their own meanings: black means loyalty, white means honesty, red means politeness, green means justice, and yellow means generosity (Rachmayanti et al., 2023).

Next is the Latohan motif, which is a type of seaweed commonly found near the coast and can be eaten as a salad. Since it is abundant in Lasem, this motif is used in batik designs.



Figure IV. Lasem Hand-drawn Batik with Classic Latohan Motif and Magnolia Flower Combination

Latohan comes from a food source rich in protein, similar to seaweed, but it can be found along the coast of Lasem. The community uses it to make food, as well as a source of protein and vitamins. This fulfilled the nutritional needs of the Lasem community at that time. Therefore, this motif was created to honor the indigenous community and preserve the noble values of the community. The combination with magnolia flowers in the image above symbolizes wealth. The abundant natural resources along the Lasem coast (from marine products, salt, and coastal plants such as Latohan) provide many benefits to the surrounding community. The magnolia flower itself symbolizes beautiful women, while the basket filled with fruits and flowers symbolizes wealth and wards off evil spirits (Christine Claudia Lukman, Yunita Setyoningrum, 2020)

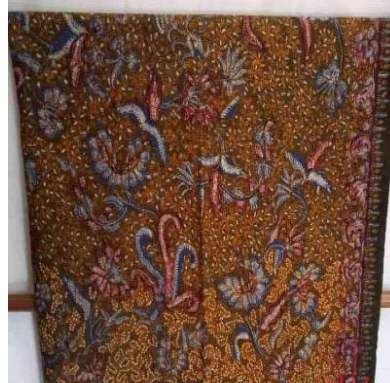


Figure V. Lasem Hand-drawn Batik with Latohan Motif Combined with broken stones, hong birds, and Seruni flowers

The latohan motif is located at the bottom with a combination of carnations and a Hong bird flying under a broken rock. Carnations are a symbol of marriage, fertility, and abundant fortune. In coastal batik, this flower often appears as the main decoration or border decoration, especially in Lasem batik, and is called teluki or celuki. In the past, this motif was often found during wedding ceremonies (Rachmayanti et al., 2023). This is because the community believes that by using these three motif combinations, the owner of the hajjad (wedding) will be given abundant sustenance and the wedding ceremony will run smoothly. Santoso (59 years old - Batik Kencana Beruang Lasem entrepreneur) said:

“diantara motif batik yang sekarang banyak dicari adalah yang memiliki motif-motif syarat akan makna seperti pada gambar di atas, bukan hanya satu motif. Sebab batik lasem ini syarat akan simbol kerukunan Burung hong dengan artikulasinya, terpadukan dengan bungan seruni namun latohan dan batu pecah akan menjadi dasar dan motif utama pada batik tulis lasem. burung hong berarti penolak balak, seruni untuk mengalirkan rizki dari dua pasangan

yang menikah, latohan adalah salah satu tumbuhan yang paling banyak memberikan gizi baik untuk masyarakat sekitar lasem, dan terakhir batu pecah merupakan simbol kekuatan ekonomi masyarakat lasem”

The value or meaning contained in Lasem hand-drawn batik has always been the main foundation of the wealth of the Lasem community, as the combination of latohan above is rich in meaning and symbolizes the values of prayer. Indeed, as stated by Santoso, or commonly known as Pak San, many priyayi wear Lasem hand-drawn batik for important events.

Currently, the main motifs of Lasem hand-drawn batik are diverse, not only limited to batu pecah and latohan. Some focus on a single motif, such as Sigit Wicaksono, an elder of the Chinese community whose Chinese name is Nyo Tjen Hian. Sigit Wicaksono developed a new motif using Chinese characters. The process of creating this motif took place on Chinese New Year's Eve. During his contemplation, Sigit was inspired to create a new Lasem batik motif. The motif consists of pearls of wisdom written in Chinese characters. The philosophy behind this motif is that the four corners of the ocean are all the same, as are the devotion of children to their parents, students to their teachers, and the people to their government. In order to incorporate Javanese philosophy, Sigit wrote this motif into a batik with a Sekar Jagat motif, which means Flower of the World (Inayah et al., 2023).

Sekar Jagad batik comes from kaart (map, in Dutch) and jagad (world, in Javanese). So, the literal meaning of Sekar Jagad batik is a depiction of the beauty of the diversity of various ethnic groups on this earth. In addition to this meaning, Sekar Jagad batik comes from the words sekar (flower) and jagad (world). The beauty of Batik Sekar Jagad is characterized by the diversity of flowers scattered across the earth. Flowers in the sense of blossoms or flowers of life (Chritina Claudia Lukman, Yunita Setyoningrum, 2020).

The characteristic of the Sekar Jagad motif, which is depicted as a map, is the presence of curved lines resembling the shapes of islands next to each other. This motif is unique because it appears irregular, unlike other batik patterns which are repetitive and regular. Sekar Jagad batik itself is characterized by the presence of isen-isen (derived from the word isi, meaning “filling”) within the “islands” of various motifs, such as kawung, truntum, lereng, flora and fauna, and others.



Figur. VI. Batik sekar jagad

2) The value of acculturation from the perspective of color

The distinctive colors of Lasem Batik are chicken blood red, brown, and dark blue. Because of this, Lasem hand-drawn batik is known as Batik Tiga Negeri (Three Countries Batik). This name comes from the batik dyeing process, with the red color originating from Chinese culture, the blue color influenced by Dutch culture, and the brown color derived from Mataraman culture (Maghfiroh et al., 2023). The three main colors of Lasem batik are also obtained from different places, as stated by Ma'shum Ahadi (60 years old - chairman of the Lasem batik community):

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“batik tiga negeri bukan hanya berkaitan dengan warna yang berasal dari tiga budaya yang berbeda. Tetapi juga proses pembuatan batik ini melibatkan tiga corak wilayah dalam produksinya. Dimana warna merah memang berasal dari Lasem karena budaya Tionghoa yang kental di sini. Tetapi untuk mendapatkan warna biru, pembatik harus datang ke Pekalongan, karena di Lasem tidak memiliki warna itu. Sedangkan warna kecoklatan, batik harus dikirim ke Solo untuk mendapatkan warna sogan ini”

Added by Mbah Rubiah (64 years old - batik artist):

“warnane batik lasem sek derekke wong-wong sek gawe batik nek luar kota ini toh, sek dadekke harga batik tiga negeri Lasem larang”

(The colors of Lasem batik, which involve artisans from outside the city, make the price of batik from these three regions expensive.)

Lasem hand-drawn batik does indeed vary in price, ranging from just 350 thousand rupiah to tens of millions of rupiah. This is not without reason. In addition to its coloring, which is characteristic of a particular region, it is also produced by hand rather than by printing and does not use chemical dyes. The dyes used are completely natural.

The red color that comes from Lasem, referred to as getih pitik, does not actually come from blood. Instead, the red color is extracted from teak leaves to produce a color similar to blood. It is impossible to use chicken blood. Artisans, especially those who trained locals in batik making (in the context of the early days of Lasem batik production), explained that Lasem is a religious city where it is impossible to use blood as a color for clothing or food (Rachmayanti et al., 2023).

Beyond its material source and religious permissibility, the red color in Lasem batik also carries layered symbolic meanings rooted in Chinese cosmology, particularly in the concept of balance and harmony. Lasem is one of the most famous religious tourist destinations in Java. As a city of Islamic students, this region strictly upholds religious practices and fiqh. One thing that is strictly prohibited is the use of carcasses or similar substances such as blood, either as a dye (in this case, for batik) or as food. Therefore, the Chinese people at that time, who were fond of providing training to the indigenous community (Lasem), strictly maintained purity and the things that the indigenous people, as the Muslim majority, were allowed or not allowed to do (Maulany & Masrurroh, 2017). In China, the color red is obtained from fermented animal blood, but in Lasem, the color red is obtained from tree roots and teak leaves. Thus, the color red remains a characteristic of Lasem batik, inherited from Chinese teachings, while still respecting the culture and teachings of the indigenous community.

In Chinese beliefs, color combinations create balance (yin and yang). The blood red color in Lasem batik symbolizes happiness and joy or “yang.” Meanwhile, in Chinese society, “Yin and Yang” are not actually red colors. However, the values in “yin and yang” can represent the meaning of the color red, which has always been used as a symbol by the Chinese. One of these is the Yin and Yang symbol. Yin and Yang can be used as a lifestyle and also has several elements in life. These elements are depicted in a cyclical symbol that gives meaning to:

“The Yin and Yang elements in the red color of Lasem batik cannot be separated. Although this red focuses on Yang (meaning joy/luck), both Yin and Yang accompany the meaning of this red color. Yin and Yang have the following principles: 1) Together, Yin and Yang form a whole (Yin and Yang represent opposing forces, but when combined, they form a whole that represents all elements of nature). 2) Neither Yin nor Yang can be completely dominant because they have complementary strengths. 3) Equal balance creates harmony. 4) Yin and Yang can never be separated (the balance of yin and yang is always changing, therefore these two segments appear to flow in and out like the essence of human life, sometimes above, sometimes below). 5) External factors can disrupt the balance. (i.e., sometimes the balance of Yin and Yang is achieved from outside the system in a disruptive manner, which will have an impact on life. So, actually, the red color on this Lasem batik is intended to balance life. What every human being hopes for in life is happiness. However, in reality, this is not always the case; there will definitely be times when we

are unhappy. However, with this red color symbol, whatever our life circumstances may be, the prayer is for happiness.”

Interestingly, the symbolic interpretation of red within the Yin and Yang framework does not stand in opposition to Islamic values, but rather finds points of resonance within Islamic symbolic understanding. There is a saying that red is a symbol of hellfire, but what is more representative is that red in the western sky is a sign of the arrival of the Maghrib prayer and the dawn prayer in the eastern sky.

Another dominant color in Lasem batik is blue. The blue color in Lasem batik is influenced by the Dutch. As explained earlier, the young men of Lasem were once subjected to the legendary forced labor of the Anyer-Panarukan road. Therefore, blue was included as one of the distinctive colors of Lasem batik. In the Netherlands, blue is known as a symbol of “truth and justice.” However, it is true that the people of Lasem themselves are not yet able to produce this color. Therefore, this blue color must be obtained from the Pekalongan area. Blue symbolizes truth and justice. Santoso, or commonly known as Pak San, firmly emphasized that:

“Our gratitude as immigrants to the indigenous people (Lasem) cannot be symbolized in any form. Their struggle to help us (the Chinese) included helping to facilitate access to roads and opportunities to trade here without interference from the Dutch, for which we are truly grateful and owe them thousands of thanks. Therefore, the color blue, which is one of the colors in the Dutch flag, is used as the main color in Lasem batik to commemorate the heroes who died fighting for Lasem. It is not because of the Dutch, but truly a manifestation of our love for the heroes of Lasem.”

So the color blue is expected to serve as a reminder that there were heroes in Lasem who fought to free Lasem from the shackles of colonialism. Although the Chinese community are immigrants and taught the art of batik making, ideally they could have chosen not to use this color as the main color, but the Chinese did not do so. This is because in the lives of the Chinese and indigenous communities, their relationship is not divided by ethnicity or class.

In addition to red and blue, the brown or beige color in Lasem hand-drawn batik further strengthens the acculturative narrative through its emphasis on spirituality, humility, and social harmony. Brown/beige symbolizes a warm, friendly, humble, calm, and simple personality. Brown in sogam batik symbolizes solemnity that emphasizes the spiritual side (Sari, 2015). Therefore, people who wear brown tend to appear more authoritative because they show a more compassionate personality in all their speech and behavior. The three colors above, red, blue, and brown, are the main and most dominant colors in Lasem hand-drawn batik. These three colors are difficult to find in other regions. This is what makes Lasem hand-drawn batik unique and cannot be replaced or imitated by other regions.

2. DISCUSSION

A. The Role of Mass Communication in Preserving Acculturative Values

1) The Existence of Lasem Batik in the Digital Age

The long journey of Lasem Handmade Batik since its revival in the 21st century until now has not been easy. Although Lasem Handmade Batik has been well received by the Indonesian people and even foreign countries since its inception, the 1989 monetary crisis had an impact on its survival. In the early 2000s, Lasem Handmade Batik experienced a revival in production, and craftsmen began to market it massively again (Christine Claudia Lukman, Yunita Setyoningrum, 2020).

With its distinctive characteristics, namely natural colors and motifs that adopt Chinese and indigenous cultural symbols, it has become an icon and a favorite among batik buyers, especially Lasem Handmade Batik. Additionally, the popularity of Lasem Handwritten Batik among the

community was also boosted by Kyai and Santri. Kyai often wore Lasem Handwritten Batik sarongs during religious study sessions and meetings between Islamic boarding schools, and Santri followed suit by wearing Lasem Handwritten Batik sarongs as well.

There is a special feature of animal motifs for santri and kyai, which is that the shapes are not perfected. This is adjusted by entrepreneurs and craftsmen (Chinese people) to respect Islamic teachings that drawing and painting should not resemble the original form. This may be why Lasem hand-drawn batik is so popular among santri and kyai. Not only among santri and kyai, Lasem hand-drawn batik is also one of the garments often worn by government officials and employees. The Rembang regional government itself has regulated Regent Regulation (Perbup) Number 6 of 2023 concerning Official Attire for Civil Servants (Perbup, 2023), one of the official attire that must be worn is Lasem Handmade Batik. Meanwhile, in other local governments, wearing batik on certain days has become a tradition and part of the culture. This is what has kept Lasem Handwritten Batik relevant to this day.

Java, as one of the islands famous for its Kyai and Santri, also has a significant impact on the progress and existence of Lasem Handmade Batik. This is because Lasem Handmade Batik is often worn at religious gatherings, which encourages the community to wear and own it. Kyai has become a strong role model in the hearts of the community. Therefore, Lasem Handmade Batik is still highly regarded.

The media also contributes to the continued popularity of Lasem Handwritten Batik. After the revival following the monetary crisis, entrepreneurs and batik craftsmen began offering Lasem Handwritten Batik through e-commerce. The role of young people in Lasem is also very important, because in addition to the craftsmen themselves marketing their products, other people also participate in promoting the products among the youth of Lasem. As a result, those without sufficient capital to produce Lasem Handwritten Batik have become sellers/resellers. Despite this, it cannot be denied that the existence of Lasem Handwritten Batik has experienced significant progress.

In addition to offering their products through e-commerce and traditional channels, artisans are also actively participating in exhibitions and performances both domestically and internationally. As stated by Gustaf (an artisan and entrepreneur of Chinese descent with the Barokah brand, aged 45), he explained:

We are always given space by the government at every event, so we maximize this opportunity. Because when selling through e-commerce, artisans cannot explain in detail even through product descriptions. There must be an understanding conveyed about Lasem Handmade Batik. We also often receive visits from the government and schools, and we are very happy about that because we can not only showcase the results of Lasem Handmade Batik, but we can also directly explain the meaning of Lasem Handmade Batik to the wider community."

Gustaf added;

"Our batik has now also been recognized. The patterns and colors of our batik have become the hallmark of Batik Tulis Lasem Barokah. Therefore, without this intellectual property right, we would have no proof that the distinctive characteristics of Batik Tulis Lasem Barokah belong to us. Intellectual property rights also help ensure that batik tulis lasem remains an indisputable ancestral heritage belonging to the Lasem region."

Lasem Handmade Batik has also been featured in various e-commerce catalogs. Even the local media in Lasem Rembang has consistently promoted Lasem Handmade Batik until now.

2) Mass Communication in Building the Existence of Lasem Batik Cultural Acculturation

The Rembang government, from the village to the regency level, plays an important role in preserving and maintaining the value of Lasem Handmade Batik. In promoting Lasem Handmade

Batik, the regency government facilitates several batik artisans to participate in batik exhibitions at the local, regional, national, and international levels, such as in Jakarta, Solo, Semarang, Yogyakarta, and even Cambodia, which was facilitated by the Rembang Regency Government. In addition, there are also local media channels, both official government-owned and privately-owned. Among the official government-owned media are websites and social media, including Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. Meanwhile, privately-owned media found include the Rembang Kreatif website. The Rembang Kreatif website focuses more on information about Lasem hand-drawn batik. This includes every pattern and its development, as well as the addition of colors and stripes. This website is more comprehensive, showing not only the physical aspects of batik, but also its history, philosophy, and the values embodied in batik carvings.

These media outlets have a clear accountability for the accuracy of their information. Government media communicators are media editorial teams that are managed and operated under the auspices of the Rembang Regency government. In this case, the communicators are organizations that operate under the law, use tools/media, and are also under government supervision, thus having reliable sources. The audience for each media outlet is a heterogeneous group (Heychael & Sarwono, 2015). from various social categories and anonymous individuals who may not know each other. The content of the message conveyed by this government media is about Lasem hand-drawn batik and the acculturation values contained therein. In addition to containing important information, it is also a means of education and socialization to the public about the diversity and value of batik. Thus, media reporting and interpretive analysis indirectly educate the audience (Nursanti et al., 2024). In mass communication, feedback occurs indirectly. The public's understanding and knowledge of the value of Lasem hand-drawn batik is not immediately apparent in the media comment section or through inbox messages (especially on websites). This is different from social media, where feedback is received directly by the communicator (the government) and then managed and used as input, suggestions, and material to improve information services to the public..

Feedback requires time for the audience to interpret. Every official government media channel displays Lasem Handmade Batik in the hope that the information and education conveyed by the government to the public about Lasem Handmade Batik can be communicated effectively. However, this may be disrupted because government media currently relies on the internet as the most effective channel. These disruptions can take the form of internet network disruptions or even captions/information descriptions on the media screen that do not make sense with the images, which can cause noise or interference. It is at this gatekeeper that official government media has an urgent and important position because it will serve as quality control in the media (Em Griffin, 2011). The gatekeepers in question are reporters or news editors, who function as filters of the validity of data/information to the public, so that noise/interference will be minimized (Removed et al., 2016). So far, the information conveyed by the government through the media has not generated significant feedback, because the gatekeepers in the government media are professionals who already have expertise licenses.

Mass communication in this case plays a role in introducing culture in the digital world in a meaningful and structured way. Its effects or influence can be felt by the entire community. The unlimited reach of messages to the public, with messages that are valuable and important to society, is the main driver of cultural and religious acculturation, as embodied in Lasem batik, which has become a beautiful part of our ancestral heritage and a symbol of harmony.

From a mass communication perspective, the findings of this study align with theories that position media as cultural transmitters capable of shaping collective understanding and preserving shared values.. In line with cultural communication perspectives, Lasem hand-drawn batik functions as a medium through which symbolic meanings and acculturative values are disseminated beyond direct interpersonal interaction. This study also supports acculturation theory, which emphasizes cultural negotiation and hybridization rather than cultural replacement, as reflected in the coexistence of Chinese symbolism, Javanese aesthetics, and Islamic values in Lasem batik. Compared to previous batik studies that predominantly focus on visual aesthetics,

historical origins, or economic dimensions, this research extends existing scholarship by foregrounding batik as a form of mass communication that actively mediates cultural meaning. Thus, the study not only reinforces existing understandings of batik as cultural heritage but also expands the discourse by situating batik within the framework of communication processes and cultural transmission in the digital era.

The acculturation values embedded in Lasem hand-drawn batik represent more than aesthetic expressions; they embody a historical negotiation of identity, belief, and social harmony among Chinese, Javanese, and Islamic cultural traditions. Through the integration of colors, motifs, and symbolic meanings, batik functions as a medium of mass communication that transmits collective memory and ethical values across generations. This cultural layering demonstrates that Lasem batik is not a static heritage, but a living cultural text shaped by continuous interaction and adaptation. Consequently, the preservation of Lasem hand-drawn batik should be positioned as a primary cultural objective, not merely to safeguard traditional craftsmanship, but to maintain the continuity of acculturative values that define community identity in the face of modernization and digital commodification. Without deliberate preservation efforts, the symbolic depth of batik risks being diluted into surface-level visual representation, weakening its role as a cultural mediator and diminishing its significance as a medium of cultural communication.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the research focuses on a specific cultural context, namely Lasem hand-drawn batik, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other batik traditions or cultural settings. Second, data collection primarily relies on qualitative interviews and visual analysis, which emphasize depth of meaning but do not capture audience reception or the impact of digital mass communication platforms quantitatively. Future research could address these limitations by employing mixed-method approaches, expanding comparative studies across different batik-producing regions, or examining how digital media audiences interpret and engage with batik narratives. Additionally, further studies could explore the role of contemporary digital platforms in reshaping the transmission of acculturative values embedded in traditional cultural products.

This study contributes to the field of communication studies by conceptualizing Lasem hand-drawn batik as a medium of mass communication that conveys acculturative values and collective identity. It offers a novel interdisciplinary perspective by integrating mass communication theory, cultural acculturation studies, and batik scholarship within a single analytical framework. Empirically, the research enriches batik studies by revealing how symbolic colors and motifs function as cultural messages rather than mere decorative elements. Practically, the findings provide a cultural foundation for preservation efforts, emphasizing that safeguarding batik is not only about sustaining craftsmanship but also about maintaining the continuity of cultural meaning and social values. In this way, the study positions cultural preservation as an essential communicative process in sustaining heritage in the digital age.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Lasem hand-drawn batik is not merely a traditional craft or aesthetic cultural product, but a medium of mass communication that plays a crucial role in preserving and transmitting acculturative values across generations. The findings reveal that the motifs and colors embedded in Lasem batik—particularly those influenced by Chinese, Javanese, and Islamic traditions—function as symbolic narratives that reflect historical encounters, cultural negotiation, and social harmony within the Lasem community.

In the digital era, where direct interpersonal transmission of cultural values is increasingly limited, mass communication emerges as a strategic mediator that sustains the continuity of these acculturative meanings. Through official government media, community-based platforms, exhibitions, and digital channels, Lasem batik is communicated not only as a visual commodity but also as a cultural text enriched with philosophical, religious, and historical significance. This study

confirms that structured and accountable mass communication practices enable cultural values embedded in batik to remain intelligible and relevant within the public sphere.

Furthermore, the research highlights that the acculturation reflected in Lasem batik is characterized by cultural coexistence rather than domination or replacement. The integration of Chinese symbolism, Javanese local wisdom, and Islamic ethical principles—particularly evident in color symbolism such as red, blue, and brown—illustrates a dynamic process of cultural hybridization that continues to shape community identity. This reinforces the understanding of batik as a living heritage shaped by continuous interaction and adaptation.

Ultimately, this study underscores that the preservation of Lasem hand-drawn batik should be understood as a communicative and cultural responsibility, not solely as an effort to maintain traditional craftsmanship. Safeguarding batik means preserving the symbolic depth, collective memory, and acculturative values it carries. By positioning batik within the framework of mass communication and cultural transmission, this research contributes to a broader discourse on how traditional cultural products can remain meaningful and resilient amid modernization and digital transformation.

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