



Ethnic Identity and Cultural Resilience in Banten and Pattani

Historical Legacies, State Policies, and Globalisation

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Abstract

This study compares the preservation and adaptation of ethnic identities in Banten (Indonesia) and Pattani (Thailand), with particular attention to the effects of globalisation, state policies, and political conflict. It examines how historical legacies, cultural practices, education, and socio-economic interactions have shaped identity in both regions. In Banten, the Sultanate era (seventeenth to nineteenth centuries) created a cosmopolitan society through trade and Islamic learning, where Javanese, Sundanese, Arab, Persian, and Chinese communities coexisted. Today, Banten continues to integrate traditional practices with modern technologies, with education playing a central role in sustaining heritage. Pattani, by contrast, faces ongoing struggles of cultural preservation in a politically contested environment. The Malay-Muslim community demonstrates resilience through the preservation of language, religious education, and traditional arts, despite tensions with the Thai state. The findings reveal both similarities and divergences, underscoring the need for context-sensitive strategies to safeguard ethnic identities and foster coexistence in diverse societies.

Keywords: preservation of ethnic identity, adaptation of cultural identity, modernisation challenges, comparative analysis, Indigenous People of Southeast Asia



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Introduction

Ethnicity plays a crucial role in shaping cultural and social landscapes across the globe. In Southeast Asia, particularly in Banten, Indonesia, and Pattani, Thailand, the intricate tapestry of ethnic identities has developed over centuries of historical change and cultural interaction. Although separated by national boundaries, both regions share a heritage marked by the coexistence of diverse ethnic groups whose interactions have profoundly shaped traditions and ways of life. Examining the historical contexts and contemporary cultural expressions of ethnicity in these regions offers valuable insights into the dynamics of identity formation and cultural preservation.

The histories of Banten and Pattani are defined by the arrival of multiple ethnic communities, each contributing to their distinctive cultural mosaics. In Banten, the Sundanese form the dominant ethnic group, with a long record of interaction with Javanese, Chinese, and Arab traders. This interplay has produced cultural practices and traditions that are uniquely Bantenese (Pribadi, 2017). Pattani, by contrast, has been shaped by its role as a crossroads for Malay, Thai, and Chinese cultures. The Malay-Muslim population, in particular, has been central in forging the region's cultural identity, blending Malay and Thai influences into a distinctive synthesis (Kvam, 2015).

Despite extensive scholarship on ethnicity in Banten and Pattani, there remains a significant gap in comparative studies systematically addressing the two regions together. Most existing research treats them independently, missing opportunities to identify parallels and contrasts that might yield deeper insights into the processes of ethnic identity preservation and adaptation in Southeast Asia. Moreover, little attention has been paid to the effects of contemporary forces such as globalisation and state policies on ethnic and cultural dynamics. Addressing these lacunae can advance understandings of identity resilience and inform strategies for cultural preservation in other multi-ethnic settings.

Globalisation has introduced profound changes in both Banten and Pattani, reshaping how ethnic identities are understood and sustained. In Banten, greater connectivity and economic opportunities have drawn populations from across Indonesia and beyond, introducing new cultural influences that at times challenge established practices (Humaeni, 2010). Pattani, similarly, has been increasingly exposed to global cultural trends and economic pressures, which have altered local customs and social structures. These shifts make it crucial to study how global forces intersect with local traditions, and how such interactions affect identity and cultural continuity (Thomas, 1985).

This research seeks to address the comparative gap by examining the historical trajectories and modern cultural expressions of ethnicity in Banten and Pattani. Drawing on historical records, cultural practices, and contemporary social interactions, the study highlights the distinctive strategies through which ethnic identities have been preserved and adapted. By focusing on these two cases, it aims to deepen our understanding of the complexities of ethnic identity and the resilience of cultural traditions under the combined pressures of globalisation and state intervention.

The preservation of ethnic identity in Banten and Pattani involves a delicate balance between maintaining traditional practices and adapting to contemporary realities. In Banten, cultural festivals, traditional music, and dance play a crucial role in sustaining Sundanese heritage. Community efforts to document and transmit traditional knowledge to younger generations are essential for maintaining ethnic identity (Pribadi, 2017). In Pattani, the Malay-Muslim population continues to celebrate cultural and religious festivals, practise traditional crafts, and uphold local customs despite the pressures of modernisation and state policies (Intanee et al., 2023).

There remains a clear lack of comparative research examining how these two regions navigate contemporary challenges such as globalisation and state policies. This study seeks to address this gap by analysing the socio-economic and cultural changes brought by globalisation and the specific policies shaping ethnic dynamics. In Banten, policies promoting national unity and integration have at times conflicted with efforts to preserve regional ethnic identities, creating tensions in cultural heritage maintenance (Saputri et al., 2021). In Thailand, state policies directed towards integrating Pattani's predominantly Malay-Muslim population into the broader Thai nation have likewise generated friction, influencing the region's cultural and ethnic landscape. Understanding the interaction between state policies and ethnic identity in these contexts is vital for developing effective strategies for cultural preservation (Arismunandar et al., 2019).

Interethnic relations in Banten and Pattani also illuminate the dynamics of cultural coexistence and conflict. In Banten, harmonious interactions among Sundanese, Javanese, Chinese, and Arab communities demonstrate the potential for multicultural integration, though competition for resources and political influence sometimes generates tension (Hahyeejehteh, 2021). In Pattani, relations between the Malay-Muslim community and the Thai state are more contested, with continuing struggles for cultural and political autonomy underscoring the complexities of ethnic relations in a multi-ethnic society (David, 1995).

The resilience of ethnic identity in Banten and Pattani testifies to the strength of cultural traditions and community solidarity. Despite the challenges posed by globalisation and state policies, both regions have preserved their distinctive cultural heritages. This resilience is reflected in the continuity of traditional rituals, the preservation of indigenous languages, and the enduring significance of ethnic identity in community life (Tayeh et al., 2020). Analysing the factors underpinning this resilience offers valuable lessons for other regions facing comparable challenges.

A comparative study of ethnicity in Banten, Indonesia, and Pattani, Thailand, therefore provides rich insights into the complex intersections of historical, cultural, and contemporary forces shaping ethnic identity. By investigating historical legacies, cultural practices, and present-day challenges, this article enhances understanding of how ethnic identities are preserved and adapted over time. The findings emphasise the importance of cultural resilience and the need for policies that acknowledge and respect ethnic diversity in Southeast Asia and beyond.

Historical Context of Ethnicity in Banten and Pattani

The historical development of ethnicity in Banten and Pattani reveals a complex tapestry of cultural interactions shaped by trade, religion, and colonial encounters. Both regions have long served as melting pots where diverse ethnic groups coexisted, interacted, and at times conflicted, thereby shaping their distinctive identities.

In Banten, the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries represented a period of considerable growth as the region emerged as a prominent centre of trade and Islamic scholarship. The Sultanate of Banten attracted Javanese, Sundanese, Arab, Persian, and Chinese communities who arrived for commerce, religious proselytisation, and Islamic study. This influx fostered a multicultural society in which various groups integrated and interacted, creating a distinctive socio-cultural environment (Humaeni, 2010). Educational policies played a vital role in sustaining this pluralistic heritage by instilling nationalist sentiment among younger generations (Supriatna, 2017). The social structure of Banten was thus characterised by the contributions of diverse communities, whose socio-economic and cultural ties fostered mutual respect and cooperation (Pribadi, 2017).

Trade was central to Banten's development, most notably its role as a global hub in the pepper trade. Merchants from Arabia, Persia, Gujarat, India, China, the Netherlands, Portugal, and England contributed to economic prosperity while also facilitating rich cultural exchange (Wardah & Malihatunnajah, 2022). Religion likewise played a formative role in social integration. Arab and Persian traders, many of them Islamic scholars, advanced the spread of Islam, forging a shared identity among Banten's heterogeneous communities. Islamic education, championed by figures such as Sheikh Nawawi al-Bantani, further consolidated Islam's significance in shaping Bantenese identity (Haki, 2022).

Pattani, by contrast, possesses a history rooted in its role as a cultural and ethnic crossroads. It became an influential centre for the dissemination of Islam in Southeast Asia, enriched by contributions from Acehnese Muslims and other Islamic scholars (Manan et al., 2022). Historically, Malay-Muslim and Thai-Buddhist communities coexisted with relative harmony, fostering cultural practices that promoted mutual understanding and collaboration (Kvam, 2015).

Yet Pattani's socio-political landscape has been deeply affected by conflict, particularly since 2004, when ethnic tensions and political unrest intensified. As a minority within a predominantly Buddhist state, the Malay-Muslim community has faced challenges of cultural marginalisation, with state policies promoting Thai nationalism often undermining their cultural and religious identity. These pressures have generated resistance and ongoing struggles for autonomy (Arismunandar et al., 2019). Such struggles are compounded by historical narratives situating Pattani within the broader Malay world, distinct from Thai national identity (Liow, 2016). The region's cultural heritage is also embodied in practices such as traditional pottery, crafted with methods transmitted across generations, which symbolises Pattani's enduring link to its historical and cultural past (Intanee et al., 2023).

In both regions, education and cultural transmission have been fundamental to the preservation of ethnic identities. In Banten, the legacy of Islamic education has left a profound imprint on local culture, particularly through the contributions of figures such as Sheikh Nawawi al-Bantani (Haki, 2022). In Pattani, efforts to sustain the Malay language and cultural practices have been central to safeguarding the region's distinctive identity (Tayeh et al., 2020).

The historical contexts of both regions also bear the marks of colonial intervention. In Banten, the arrival of European powers, most notably the Dutch, transformed the socio-political landscape. Dutch colonial rule, driven by control of the lucrative spice trade, led to prolonged conflict and eventual subjugation of the local sultanates. This era of colonisation also introduced new cultural influences and administrative structures, leaving a lasting imprint on Banten's ethnic dynamics. In Pattani, colonial pressures were equally consequential. Its strategic position drew interest from both the British and the Siamese (Thai), making it a contested site of influence. Resistance against colonial domination was often articulated through the preservation of Islamic and Malay identity, with scholars such as Sheikh Daud al-Fatani playing pivotal roles in shaping both resistance movements and Pattani's cultural identity (Amin & Hasaruddin, 2023).

The preservation of cultural heritage has remained vital in maintaining ethnic identity in both regions. In Banten, traditional music, dance, and festivals safeguard Sundanese heritage, supported by community initiatives to record and transmit traditional knowledge to younger generations. In Pattani, cultural practices such as traditional pottery and religious festivals serve to uphold Malay-Muslim heritage. Archaeological findings further illuminate Pattani's layered past, indicating its significance as a Buddhist ceremonial centre prior to its transformation into an Islamic stronghold (Welch & McNeill, 1989). These findings underscore the region's historical role as a cultural crossroads.

The socio-political dynamics of both regions continue to be shaped by their histories. In Banten, the integration of multiple ethnic groups and the preservation of cultural traditions have fostered a strong sense of identity and community, reinforcing its position as a model of ethnic diversity and resilience in Southeast Asia. In Pattani, however, ongoing conflict and the Malay-Muslim minority's struggle for autonomy illustrate the difficulties of preserving cultural identity within a predominantly Buddhist state. Policies promoting Thai nationalism frequently marginalise Malay-Muslim cultural and religious identity, fuelling resistance and ongoing demands for autonomy (Arismunandar et al., 2019). These challenges are compounded by historical narratives situating Pattani within the wider Malay world, distinct from Thai cultural identity (Liow, 2016).

The resilience of ethnic identity in Banten and Pattani reflects the enduring strength of cultural traditions and community solidarity. Despite the pressures of globalisation and state policies, both regions have succeeded in safeguarding their distinctive cultural heritages. This resilience is visible in the persistence of traditional rituals, the preservation of indigenous languages, and the continued centrality of ethnic identity in community life (Tayeh et al., 2020).

The integration of diverse ethnic groups and the preservation of cultural heritage have been essential in cultivating a strong sense of identity and belonging in both contexts. Historical narratives and cultural practices continue to shape the social and political landscapes of Banten and Pattani, positioning them as distinctive examples of ethnic diversity and resilience in Southeast Asia.

A nuanced understanding of the historical trajectories of ethnicity in these regions is critical to appreciating their contemporary socio-religious dynamics and ongoing efforts to foster multiculturalism and ethnic harmony. The complex web of interactions shaped by trade, religion, and colonial encounters has produced unique and plural identities in both Banten and Pattani. The capacity of these regions to integrate multiple ethnic groups while maintaining cultural heritage has been central to sustaining community cohesion. Ultimately, the resilience of ethnic identity in Banten and Pattani underscores the power of cultural traditions and solidarity, offering important lessons for other regions confronting comparable challenges.

Socio-Religious Interactions

The socio-religious interactions in Banten and Pattani provide valuable insights into the dynamics of multiculturalism and religious coexistence in Southeast Asia. In Banten, particularly among the fishing communities of Karangantu, these interactions illustrate a vibrant multicultural fabric. Migrants and local residents have forged distinctive socio-economic and cultural ties that exemplify the potential of multiculturalism (Pribadi, 2017). Rooted in Banten's historical role as a maritime hub and trading port during the Sultanate era, these connections were shaped by the arrival of diverse ethnic groups engaged in commerce and religious proselytisation. The fishing communities of Karangantu continue to embody this legacy, where economic activity and cultural exchange are closely intertwined, fostering social cohesion and resilience (Pribadi, 2017).

In Pattani, the socio-religious landscape is characterised by the interplay of Islamic traditions with local cultural practices. Initiatives such as the Village Youth Club in Ban Sarong have demonstrated positive outcomes in promoting Islamic values and encouraging youth participation in community life (Laeheem et al., 2015). These efforts underscore the importance of religious leaders and local institutions in shaping the socio-religious fabric. Nevertheless, challenges persist. Despite their commitment, Muslim leaders in Ban Sarong often lack the skills and networks required to effectively engage younger generations, limiting the impact of their efforts and highlighting the need for more comprehensive strategies (Laeheem et al., 2014). The region's historical and political context further complicates these dynamics. The southern provinces of Thailand, including Pattani, have endured protracted unrest and violence frequently framed as ethnic and religious conflict. Yet examples of peaceful coexistence remain evident, as Buddhist and Muslim communities continue to share cultural practices grounded in mutual respect (Harish, 2006).

Religious and cultural pluralism in Pattani is not a contemporary phenomenon but has

deep historical roots. Various Islamic movements from the Middle East and South Asia have left a lasting imprint, introducing diverse practices and ideologies that enriched the region's religious traditions (Aree & Joll, 2020).

The socio-religious interactions of Banten and Pattani underscore the significance of historical context, community engagement, and cultural exchange in sustaining multiculturalism and religious coexistence. They demonstrate that, despite persistent challenges, communities can flourish through collaboration and respect for diversity. Understanding these dynamics offers important lessons for promoting inclusive and harmonious societies.

Educational Initiatives in Banten and Pattani that Incorporate Local Cultural Values

Educational initiatives in Banten and Pattani play a vital role in safeguarding and promoting local cultural values. By integrating traditional practices and religious teachings into formal education, these initiatives ensure that students remain connected to their heritage while engaging with modern curricula.

In Banten, educational programmes have been designed to combine local cultural and religious values with the national curriculum. Schools frequently include lessons on traditional arts, such as the Debus martial art and local music, to instil cultural pride and identity among students. Community-based initiatives further enrich this process by introducing local history and cultural practices through extracurricular activities and cultural days. As Supriatna (2017) observes, these initiatives not only strengthen national pride but also maintain students' ties to their cultural roots. Cultural days, in which students participate in traditional dances, music, and crafts, promote appreciation of their heritage, while the inclusion of local history and cultural studies reinforces awareness of their unique identity. This blending of traditional knowledge with formal education has proven effective in sustaining Banten's cultural heritage.

In Pattani, the preservation of Malay-Muslim cultural identity is strongly shaped by the local education system, particularly through religious schools known as pondok or madrasah. These institutions prioritise Islamic teachings and Malay customs, offering a holistic education that balances religious and secular knowledge. The curriculum encompasses the Malay language, traditional arts, and religious studies, thereby ensuring continuity of cultural traditions. Mahdee Maduerawa (2021) notes that such schools are highly valued within the community for their role in maintaining local customs and reinforcing collective identity. By embedding both religious and cultural education, they foster a strong sense of belonging and cultural pride among students (Maduerawa, 2021).

Both Banten and Pattani illustrate the importance of integrating local cultural values into educational frameworks to preserve ethnic identity and heritage. While Banten emphasises the combination of traditional arts and local history with national curricula, Pattani relies heavily on religious schools to sustain Malay-Muslim traditions. Together, they reflect a broader Southeast Asian trend in which communities seek to protect cultural

heritage amidst modernisation and globalisation. By embedding traditional values within education, both regions are nurturing generations who remain proud of their heritage and committed to sustaining their cultural identities in the future.

Impact of Religious and Cultural Education on Maintaining Ethnic Identity

The impact of religious and cultural education on sustaining ethnic identity in regions such as Banten, Indonesia, and Pattani, Thailand, is considerable. These educational systems serve not only to impart knowledge but also to reinforce cultural and religious values integral to community identity.

In Banten, educational initiatives integrate religious and cultural teachings within the national curriculum, aiming to instil national pride while keeping students connected to their heritage. The region's history, shaped by Javanese, Sundanese, and Islamic influences, is taught in schools to foster appreciation of Banten's unique legacy. According to Supriatna (2017), this approach helps students balance traditional values with the demands of modern education, thereby sustaining ethnic identity. Lessons on local history, traditional arts such as Debus, and Islamic teachings deepen students' cultural and spiritual ties to their community (Supriatna, 2017).

Educational institutions in Banten also organise cultural events and festivals that enable students to engage actively with their heritage. These activities complement the formal curriculum, creating a holistic learning environment that strengthens ethnic identity. Celebrations such as Maulid Nabi (the Prophet Muhammad's birthday) provide opportunities for students to participate in traditional performances, reinforcing their cultural pride (Supriatna, 2017).

In addition, modernisation has prompted innovative methods of cultural preservation. Efforts to document and digitise cultural practices, such as recording Debus and sharing it on digital platforms, illustrate how technology can support rather than erode traditional culture (Muhtarom, 2021). Platforms like YouTube and social media make Bantenese arts accessible to younger generations, ensuring continuity and revitalisation.

The role of schools extends beyond formal teaching to active collaboration with local communities in organising cultural activities and festivals. Such initiatives highlight education's dual role: transmitting knowledge while cultivating identity. By learning history, practising cultural traditions, and participating in community events, students develop a strong sense of belonging essential to sustaining ethnic identity in a rapidly changing world.

Thus, the integration of religious and cultural teachings within Banten's educational framework constitutes a powerful strategy for reinforcing ethnic identity. Combining formal education with cultural participation nurtures pride in heritage and ensures resilience amid modernisation. This holistic model, balancing tradition with contemporary realities,

is critical to preserving Banten's ethnic identity for future generations.

In Pattani, Islamic education plays a central role in sustaining the Malay-Muslim identity. Religious schools are pivotal to this process, focusing on Islamic teachings and Malay cultural practices to provide a balanced education that honours both religious and cultural traditions. Mahdee Maduerawa (2021) observes that these institutions are highly valued within the community, as they safeguard local customs and reinforce collective identity (Maduerawa, 2021).

The curriculum of these schools encompasses the Malay language, traditional arts, and religious studies. This dual emphasis ensures that students not only acquire formal education but also remain firmly anchored in their cultural heritage. By embedding local values within educational structures, students develop a strong sense of identity and belonging, while simultaneously preparing to engage with the broader socio-political environment. Such an approach not only preserves but actively strengthens the cultural and religious identity of Pattani's Malay-Muslim community, positioning it as a core component of students' educational and social development.

Banten and Pattani together demonstrate the profound influence of religious and cultural education in maintaining ethnic identity. In Banten, the integration of local history, traditional arts, and Islamic teachings within the national curriculum fosters a holistic educational framework that sustains cultural heritage. In Pattani, the focus on Islamic education and Malay cultural traditions within religious schools ensures the continued vitality of Malay-Muslim identity.

These approaches mirror a wider Southeast Asian trend in which communities seek to preserve heritage amid rapid modernisation and globalisation. By embedding cultural and religious values within education, both regions cultivate generations who take pride in their heritage and are equipped to sustain their cultural identity in the future. This model of education thus operates as a vital instrument of cultural preservation, fostering belonging, resilience, and continuity within their respective communities.

Religious Practices and Their Influence

Religious practices and rituals, deeply rooted in Islam, exert a profound influence on daily life in Pattani. From dress codes to dietary customs and social norms, Islam shapes the cultural identity of the Malay-Muslim community (Aisah & Albar, 2020). Mosques serve not only as places of worship but also as community centres where religious teachings and cultural values are transmitted, reinforcing solidarity and spiritual connection.

Islam has left an enduring imprint on cultural practices in both Banten, Indonesia, and Pattani, Thailand. In Banten, Islam was introduced via trade networks and soon became embedded in local traditions. The Sultanate of Banten played a pivotal role in spreading Islam, with religious practices interwoven into daily life and cultural expression. This integration is evident in traditions such as Debus, a martial art involving demonstrations of invulnerability believed to derive from spiritual power, which remains a central cultural

performance (Maftuh, 2015).

In Pattani, Islam's influence is equally profound. Historically, Pattani served as a major centre for Islamic dissemination in Southeast Asia, maintaining strong connections with Acehnese Muslims. Islamic teachings shaped social norms, communal rituals, and cultural celebrations. The Malay-Muslim population continues to observe Islamic practices in everyday life—including dress codes, dietary rules, and ritual observances—ensuring that cultural expressions remain firmly aligned with Islamic principles (Aisah & Albar, 2020).

Religious institutions are crucial in safeguarding cultural and ethnic identity across both regions. In Banten, Islamic boarding schools, or pesantren, serve as centres of religious and cultural education. Beyond transmitting Islamic knowledge, these schools cultivate traditional arts and practices, functioning as custodians of Bantenese heritage and ensuring continuity across generations (Maftuh, 2015).

Similarly, in Pattani, pondok or madrasah play an essential role in preserving Malay-Muslim identity. These schools integrate Islamic teachings with Malay cultural customs, offering a holistic education that strengthens both cultural and religious values. By embedding religious instruction alongside cultural practices, they foster a resilient sense of identity among students, enabling them to remain rooted in their heritage while navigating wider societal contexts (Maduerawa, 2021).

Community participation in religious and cultural practices is essential for preserving ethnic identities. In Banten, communal prayers, religious festivals, and traditional performances form core aspects of community life. Events such as Maulid Nabi (the celebration of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday) are marked by collective gatherings and cultural performances, strengthening religious bonds and cultural identity. These occasions also provide platforms for transmitting cultural knowledge, fostering unity and shared identity among participants (Humaeni, 2013).

In Pattani, religious festivals and community gatherings are equally significant for cultural preservation. Islamic holidays such as Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha are celebrated with Malay traditions, including communal feasts and performances. Such events bring the community together, reinforcing heritage and enabling the transmission of cultural values to younger generations. The emphasis on community involvement plays a central role in sustaining the Malay-Muslim identity (Manan et al., 2022).

Despite the strong role of religion in shaping cultural identity, both Banten and Pattani face challenges in preserving traditions. In Banten, modernisation and urbanisation pose threats to traditional practices. Younger generations, increasingly exposed to global influences, often prefer modern lifestyles over cultural traditions, raising concerns about the erosion of Banten's cultural heritage. Efforts to counter this include documenting and digitising cultural practices such as Debus. As Muhtarom (2021) notes, technology can preserve and share these traditions, making them accessible to wider audiences. Digital platforms such as YouTube and social media act as modern repositories of cultural knowledge, bridging the gap between tradition and contemporary life.

In Pattani, political and social tensions further complicate cultural preservation. The

conflict between the Malay-Muslim minority and the Thai state has led to marginalisation and at times suppression of cultural expression. Religious practices may be regarded with suspicion, yet the community remains resilient. Religious schools and community leaders continue to play pivotal roles in maintaining traditions, ensuring the endurance of Malay-Muslim cultural heritage (Amin & Hasaruddin, 2023).

Islam profoundly shapes cultural practices in both Banten and Pattani. Religious institutions are central to preserving cultural and ethnic identities by embedding cultural practices into education. In Banten, pesantren integrate Islamic teachings with cultural traditions, while in Pattani, pondok perform a similar role, safeguarding Malay-Muslim identity (Maftuh, 2015; Maduerawa, 2021). These institutions act as custodians of cultural heritage, ensuring the intergenerational transmission of values and practices.

Community involvement further reinforces identity by fostering belonging and solidarity. In both Banten and Pattani, communal prayers, festivals, and performances not only express religious and cultural values but also strengthen resilience and unity. Such participation ensures that cultural fabrics remain intact, even under external pressures.

Despite modernisation, urbanisation, and political tension, the resilience of these communities safeguards cultural heritage. Through technological adaptation, the steadfast role of religious institutions, and strong community participation, both Banten and Pattani demonstrate dynamic strategies of cultural preservation. By remaining rooted in tradition while adapting to contemporary realities, they ensure that their cultural identities remain vibrant and relevant in a rapidly changing world.

Modern Cultural Expressions in Banten and Pattani

Modern cultural expressions in Banten are strongly shaped by the region's historical and religious heritage. Pribadi (2017) highlights the socio-religious interactions among inter-ethnic communities in Banten's coastal areas, showing how cultural events and religious practices remain central to community life. These practices serve not only as reflections of Banten's historical richness but also as mechanisms for sustaining ethnic identity in a rapidly changing world. A notable development in Banten is the integration of traditional practices with modern technology. Digital platforms are increasingly used to document and disseminate cultural expressions such as Debus, ensuring their preservation in contemporary contexts (Muhtarom, 2021). This demonstrates that modernisation need not undermine traditional culture; rather, it can offer new modes of continuity. YouTube channels and social media dedicated to Bantenese arts provide younger generations with accessible ways to engage with their heritage.

Education also plays a crucial role in cultural sustainability. Schools in Banten incorporate local cultural and religious values into the national curriculum, instilling both national pride and cultural awareness (Supriatna, 2017). Cultural days, during which students participate in traditional dances, music, and crafts, nurture appreciation for local traditions, while courses in history and cultural studies reinforce knowledge of regional identity. The

revival of the Jawara identity further illustrates cultural adaptation. Historically regarded as warriors, Jawara have been reinterpreted as cultural ambassadors promoting peace and heritage. Festivals now celebrate them with both traditional martial arts and contemporary performances, ensuring their relevance in modern society (Sururi et al., 2020). The persistence of practices such as Debus underscores the resilience of Bantenese culture. Despite modern influences, Debus remains integral to local identity and continues to be performed at festivals as a symbol of strength and spirituality (Humaeni, 2013). Cultural festivals, including the Bantenese Traditional Arts Festival, serve as platforms for both traditional and contemporary expressions, reinforcing identity while attracting tourism (Binsbergen, 1994).

In Pattani, cultural expression centres on the Malay-Muslim community's efforts to preserve identity through language, religion, and artistic practices. The maintenance of the Pattani-Malay dialect is vital for sustaining ethnic identity within the Thai-Malayu community. Despite state policies favouring Thai, the dialect continues to be prioritised in homes, religious rituals, and local media, ensuring its vitality across generations (Tayeh et al., 2020). This linguistic resilience highlights the community's commitment to preserving cultural distinctiveness in the face of external pressures.

Similarities and Differences in How Banten and Pattani Express Ethnic Identities Today

Both Banten and Pattani communities employ education as a central means of maintaining and expressing their ethnic identities. In Banten, schools integrate local cultural and religious values with the national curriculum, teaching traditional arts such as Debus and music to foster cultural pride among students (Supriatna, 2017). Similarly, in Pattani, Islamic religious schools safeguard Malay-Muslim identity by emphasising Islamic teachings and Malay customs (Maduerawa, 2021). Cultural festivals and events also play a significant role in both regions. In Banten, the Bantenese Traditional Arts Festival features traditional dances, music, and crafts, supporting an evolving cultural identity (Binsbergen, 1994). Likewise, in Pattani, community gatherings and cultural events highlight traditional Malay arts, strengthening unity and pride within the Malay-Muslim community (Arismunandar et al., 2019).

Despite these parallels, the two regions differ in their strategies of cultural expression. In Banten, modern technology is extensively used to preserve cultural traditions. Digital platforms document and share practices such as Debus, allowing younger generations to access and learn about their heritage through social media and online channels (Muhtarom, 2021). By contrast, Pattani's approach to cultural preservation is more deeply rooted in religious education. The Malay-Muslim community relies on Islamic teachings and practices to sustain cultural identity, largely as a response to the historical and ongoing pressures of Thai nationalism, which often marginalises Malay-Muslim traditions (Arismunandar et al., 2019). In this context, religious education functions both as a tool of preservation and

as a form of resistance to cultural assimilation.

Political and social contexts further shape these cultural expressions. In Banten, local government policies actively support cultural preservation, promoting regional identity and tourism through funding for festivals and the promotion of arts and crafts (Pribadi, 2017). In Pattani, however, cultural expression is framed as resistance to assimilationist policies of the Thai state. The Malay-Muslim community's emphasis on religious education, the Malay language, and customs reflects a determination to maintain distinctiveness despite nationalist pressures (Tayeh et al., 2020).

Thus, while Banten and Pattani share common strategies of cultural preservation through education and communal events, their approaches differ due to distinct historical, political, and social contexts. Banten relies on technological innovation and state support to sustain heritage, whereas Pattani emphasises religious education and cultural resistance to defend Malay-Muslim identity. Together, they illustrate the diverse ways in which communities navigate modernisation and globalisation while striving to preserve their unique cultural identities.

Conclusion

The comparative analysis of Banten and Pattani reveals both convergences and divergences in the preservation and expression of ethnic identity in Southeast Asia. Both regions share multi-ethnic histories shaped by trade networks and Islamic influence, with diverse communities such as Javanese, Sundanese, Malays, Arabs, Persians, Chinese, and South Indians contributing to their cultural mosaics. Islam has served as a unifying force, shaping customs, language, education, and communal life, sustained through institutions such as pesantren in Banten and pondok in Pattani. Yet, their trajectories diverge significantly in the modern era. Banten has developed within a context of political stability, allowing cultural traditions to be revitalised and integrated with modernity through festivals, education, and tourism, often supported by government initiatives. Pattani, by contrast, continues to face structural tensions and conflict between the Malay-Muslim community and the Thai state, with cultural practices functioning not only as expressions of identity but also as acts of resistance against assimilationist policies. These findings underscore that while shared legacies of diversity and Islam provide a common foundation, distinct political and social contexts shape different strategies of resilience. Together, Banten and Pattani demonstrate the complex interplay of history, religion, and politics in negotiating ethnic identity in contemporary Southeast Asia.

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