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Palembang *Songket* Fabric Visual Motif

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Abstract

Palembang *songket* fabric visually has various aesthetic forms that are always changing, but always maintain the value of local wisdom. The purpose of this study was to analyze the visual motifs of the Palembang *Songket* fabric. The method used is a qualitative method with a phenomenological research design. Data collection techniques include observation, interview and document study. The validity of the data in this study uses triangulation, while the data analysis procedure is carried out by collecting data, reducing, presenting, and drawing conclusions. This study was analyzed using De Witt H. Parker's aesthetic theory. The results showed that Palembang *Songket* visually contained two forms of visual classical motifs and modern visual motifs. Visual classical motifs have characteristics; (1) animal and *tumpal* motifs, (2) material used is silk thread and gold-plated thread, (3) the colors used are predominantly dark red and gold. While modern visual motifs have characteristics, (1) motifs are more on plants and geometric but do not leave *tumapal* motifs, (2) materials used are silk thread and copper-coated silk thread, (3) colors used are more diverse, like red, pink, blue, green, and purple. Specifically, the subject of this research was the visual motifs of Palembang's *Songket* fabric, which experienced continuous visual changes in motifs.

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INTRODUCTION

Motifs or decorative types that are applied to Palembang *songket* are mostly plant motifs, especially in the form of flower stilations, besides that there are also other motif compositions such as geometric, decorative and animal. The animal motif found in Palembang's *songket* fabric is very minimal, but there is one Nago Besaung motif which has a high philosophy due to its association with the king. Nago Besaung is one of the motifs commonly used in marriages as today the bride is considered a king. While the floral motifs of Palembang *songket* are roses, cananga flowers, jasmine flowers, henna flowers, tanjung flowers, cino flower and other plants such as bamboo shoots. There are also other motifs such as silver trays, *berante* stars, *tretes*, and *cantek manis*. Based on the quality from the past until now songket fabric is divided into three types, namely *Songket Lepus, Songket Limar,* and *Songket Tawur*.

In the past, the *Lepus* and *Limar Songket* fabric was used by Palembang residents belonging to the aristocracy, while citizens used the *Tawur songket*. *Songket* is also used at traditional wedding ceremonies, and *marhaba* events which are 40-day-old baby hair removal ceremonies. Based on materials and techniques, *songket* fabric was made with weaving technique, *songket* fabric was woven using a loom called *Gedongan*. The material used to make *songket* is silk thread and gold-plated wire thread. The beauty of *songket* in the past lies not only in the motifs but also the meaning and symbols contained in each motif itself. *Songket* fabric color is more dominant in the red and gold colors this gives the impression of luxury and grand on *songket*, as well as being an added value to the beauty of *songket* fabric.

This modern *songket* has undergone development so that there are many changes, especially in shifting functions. At present Palembang *songket* can be used by anyone who can afford it, there are no rules. The material used in *songket* are silk thread, cotton yarn, and ordinary yarn, to produce good quality, the gold thread used is gold-plated silk thread, while for low quality silk threads are only gold-plated. This is clearly done to meet the increasing demands of the community. Today the beauty of *songket* is no longer seen based on the meanings and symbols contained in the motif. But how *songket* fabric apearance itself is reviewed based on the diversity of motifs and colors.

Songket popularity has been going on since the time of the Kingdom of Palembang in Kutogawang around the year 1455-1659, the passion for wearing *songket* fabric by the kings of Palembang and relatives continued until the Sultanate of Palembang since 1663-1823 (Syarofie, 2007: 13-14). The quite good economic development of the community in Palembang caused the elite dress style to be followed by the people, *songket* fabric began to become a commercial commodity, which then created special motifs for the community.

Regarding the visual of the Palembang *Songket* motif, from time to time the *songket* fabric experienced a change in the aesthetic shape of the motif. According to the needs of the Palembang people, *Songket* fabric is now one of the basic needs for several residents who work as *Songket* fabric makers and owners. In meeting market needs, *Songket* fabric has changed its motives. The *Songket* fabric motif no longer contains philosophical elements but only its beauty and the *Songket* fabric function is automatically clearly changing. Palembang Zainal *Songket* Gallery is a gallery and *songket* museum which started its business in the 1980s, which in this modern era openly changed the visual of *Songket* fabric motifs to meet the needs of the people of Palembang. The things that support this analysis are the results of research Purwanti Retno, et al (2016), then the results of research Tahrir Romas (2017), and then research Kurniawan Deky (2016). The results of the study are presented in the form of *songket* history based on archaeological data and symbolic meaning and function of the *songket* motif of Naga Besaung motif in Palembang *songket* fabric, thus the relevance in this study is the visual motif of Palembang *songket* fabric. So, the review of this

research is in the form of visual classical motifs and visual motifs of modern Palembang *songket*.

METHOD

The method used in this research is qualitative method. Data collection techniques included observations obtained in the form of classical songket and modern songket fabric, interviews with Yudhie Sarofi (45th) Palembang Culturalist, Galeh Pramitasari (37th) Palembang Cultural Activist and writer to obtain data and documents obtained in the form of photographs of classical Palembang *Songket* fabric, and modern *Songket* fabric. The validity of the data in this study using triangulation which is done by examining the data that has been obtained through various sources. Data analysis procedures are carried out by reducing, presenting, and drawing conclusions. The research results were analyzed with the aesthetics of De Witt H. Parker.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Palembang *Songket* Fabric visually there are various forms of aesthetics that are always having constant change. Although there is a change in the visual fabric of *Songket*, but still prioritize the Palembang characteristics, especially related to motifs, materials and colors.

Visual Fabric Songket Palembang

According to Iswidayati (2006: 22) that each form has: (1) expression or shape; is an area or mass that has a specificity that is due to contrast or marked by lines or boundary fields, (2) direction and position or position that is marking the placement of shapes in space, (3) size related to proportion, expression and weight/ weight both real and impression or illusion / suggestive. That is, in every work of art still has a form that certainly shows the integrity in every part that is incorporated in the art.

In line with Romas Tahrir (2017) if Palembang *Songket* fabric has at least 3 parts that are interrelated to one another. In addition, the part of the *songket* is intentionally provided by the craftsman because to put the motifs in the *songket* fabric. Parts of the *Songket* fabric include (1) the *songket* head, (2) the *songket* margin, (3) the *songket* body. The three parts of the *Songket* fabric are usually used by the craftman to put the motifs in accordance with the rules which are certainly a standard in the culture of Palembang's fraternity. The researchers included pictures of Palembang Songket fabric parts as follow.

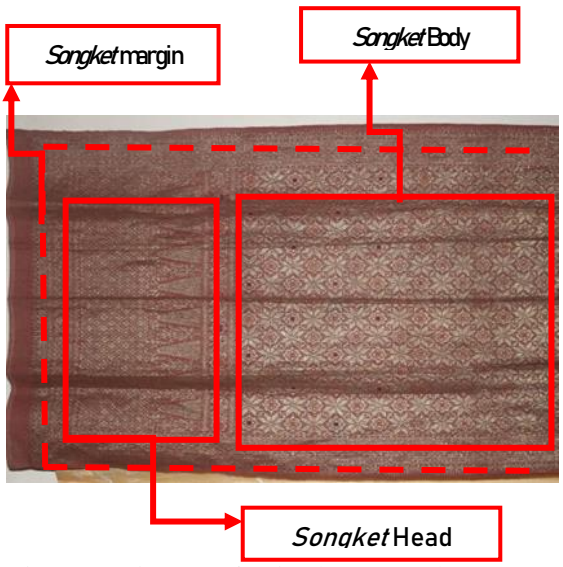

Figure 1. Pictures of Palembang Songket (Documentation: Fitri, 2019)

The pieces of the *Songket* fabric, then modified according to the creativity of the craftsmen, but still consider the standards, as the researchers mentioned in the previous section.

Artwork is a means of aesthetic life, so with works of art aesthetic abilities and experiences become thicker and become a part of the people's breath and soul. Irawan (2016) De Witt H. Parker (1946: 17) revealed that each work of art becomes the base of new experiments that cause the expression of art from life to a higher level. The study of aesthetic forms in Parker's artwork divides into six principles; 1) The principle of Organic unity (principle of unity / whole); 2) The principle of theme; 3) The principle of thematic variation (Principle of variation according to theme); 4)

The principle of balance; 5) The principle of evolution; 6) The principle of hierarchy.

Visual Classical Palembang *Songket* Fabric

In the opinion of several sources, *Songket* fabric is derived from the words *Sonsong* and *teket*. The word teket if in the old Palembang language means embroidery. Meanwhile, seen from the process of working threads that arise that form certain patterns in the *Songket* fabric is made by inserting additional threads, namely by lifting or tipping several strands of warp threads. The principle of inserting additional yarn is so that the naming of *songket* fabric appears, because that is related to the process of tipping the extra yarn (Kartiwa in Sukma Salim, 2016: 92-115).

Therefore, *Songket* fabric can be understood simply that the fabric is woven using the principle of insertion between the cavities of each additional thread. When referring to the shape and model of the classical Palembang *Songket* fabric, the material used is gold-plated wire thread and colored silk thread. Furthermore, the colors that are always used as the principal colors of old Palembang *Songket* fabrics are gold, and dark red.

There is no definitive source why the classical Palembang *Songket* fabric utilizes these two colors, namely gold and dark red. However, according to Yudhie Sarofi (interview, 2019), one of Palembang's culturalists said that the use of the two colors was a type of color that was always used in the Palembang *Songket* fabric which was inherited since the Darusallam Sultanate of Palembang (1659-1823) and its relationship with the previous kingdom, namely the Srivijaya kingdom which adheres to Hindu-Buddhist. The golden color as a picture of the majesty and majesty of King Sriwijaya, while the red color is much influenced by Chinese culture which in the Palembang Sultanate had established good relations, especially in terms of trade.

The Besaung Naga motif is one of the motifs most often used in old Palembang *songket* fabrics. The gold and dark red color that almost covered the fabric body is one of the morphic characteristics, this can also be understood as one of the evidence that shows the Naga motif is the influence of Chinese culture (Chinese) brought by Chinese traders to Malay land. As stated by Yudhy Sharofie (interview, 2019) that the Besaung Naga motif is an influence from China, but the dragon's form is visualized as a Chinese dragon, with the form of a dragon facing and in the middle there is a pearl which is a symbol of power that must be maintained, the dragon itself interpreted as a ruler.

The above is very clear, of course, how the Naga motifs made in the classical Palembang *Songket* fabric symbolize a greatness, and the figure of the Dragon is likened to a leader who controls the territory. Then at this time, the *Songket* motif type of Naga Besaung is functioned as the basic material of Palembang traditional fabricing which is then used as a traditional Palembang wedding dress (South Sumatra). This is also strengthened by the results of research conducted by Romas Tahrir et al (2016) who explain that weaving Dragon patterned *Songket* is an old motif in Palembang *songket* and better known by the people of Palembang in South Sumatra as a common motif when used in weddings. Like, the bride and groom are compared as the King and the queen. The researchers included the Naga Besaung motif on the old Palembang songket fabric as follow.

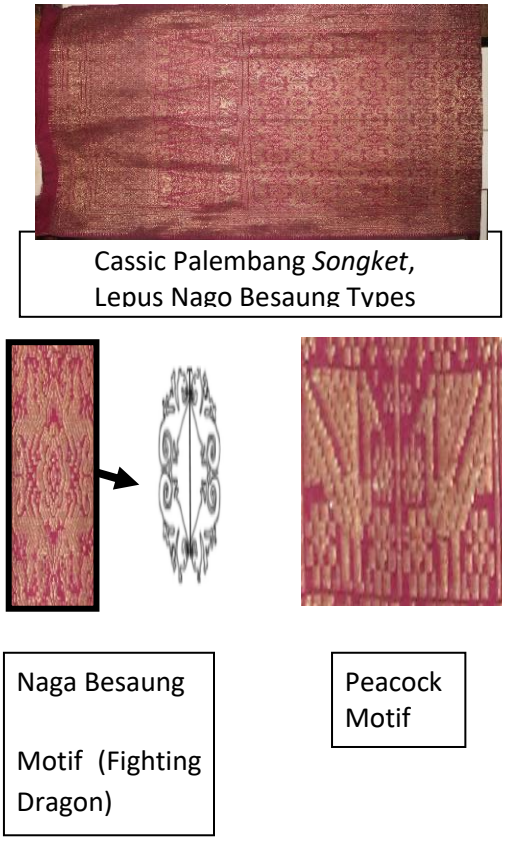

Figure 2. The researchers included the Naga Besaung motif on the old Palembang songket fabric

Kurniawan, Deky (2016) explained that since ancient times until now that the motifs and decoration on Palembang *songket* fabric were passed down from generation to generation. Most of the motifs or ornamental referred to by the author are animal motifs, especially in the form of stylized flowers, in addition there are also compositions of other motifs, such as plants, geometric, and use more concentrated red color, and gold. This opinion is reinforced by Hoop in (Purwanti, et al (2016) who explained that during the Hindu-Buddhist (Indian) influence similar motifs can be found in the fabrices of statues and temple reliefs. The oldest motif allegedly contained in *songket* motifs which certainly got Chinese influence is found on the walls of Mendut Temple, in Magelang, Central Java, the motif is in the form of rounded flower motifs, statues with *songket* motifs are also found at the Bumiayu complex site, Pali Regency, South Sumatra Province, precisely at Temple 1. It means, the motifs currently depicted in Palembang songket are indeed believed to be a form of inheritance that we received from our predecessors, who until now have remained preserved, with a variety of types adopted from objects encountered around us and then contained in the Palembang songket fabric. All these unraveling motifs certainly complement each other in decorating Palembang songket fabric, thus making a characteristic or local identity of Palembang songket woven fabric.

Visual Motif Kain Songket Palemabang Modern

Along with the development of the most populous era shifts in the view of the people in Palembang *songket* fabric, so that sooner or later Palembang songket fabric is experiencing rapid changes. One of the most striking changes lies in the combination of colors, the motifs development, the basic ingredients used, and the way of processing. So do not be surprised if the current *songket* craftsmen are no longer fixated on the use of the best quality raw silk yarn, they are more flexible in responding to market demand and provide more choices related to *songket* the type and quality.

There are several types of *songket* that are packaged using synthetic yarn and the method of workmanship using a machine that is able to produce more connectors in a shorter time and automatically the price required for this type of *songket* is relatively more affordable with the economic conditions of the middle to lower class. Then, there are also *songket* products that use the best quality basic ingredients, namely copper, gold and silver silk threads, *songket* that uses these high quality basic ingredients is usually processed using traditional methods, namely by weaving. That is, in such a position there has been a fairly fundamental development in terms of material in Palembang *songket* fabric, as conveyed by Viatra, et al (2014) that the high demand for *songket* woven fabric needs to be the starting point in the development of *songket* in Indralaya. Weaving expertise that has been

passed down from generation to generation is re-honed by the Indralaya people (Regency close to Palembang City) although this spirit is still only practiced by a few residents, but the weaving culture in this region still exists to meet the considerable market demand.

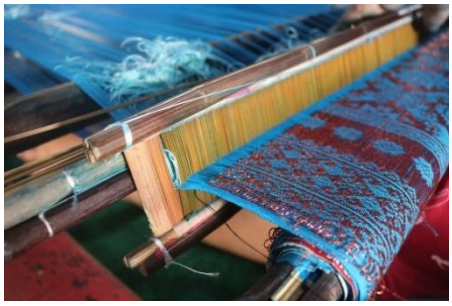

Figure 3. Making Palembang *songket* modern with traditional technology.
(Documentation: Fitri, June 7th, 2019)

Even though *songket* craftsmen are now familiar with modern technology, namely *songket* printing machines, however, it is not uncommon for craftsmen to maintain traditional *songket* processing methods with traditional techniques, namely by weaving. Usually songket that is made with this traditional method remains to be excellent, because it uses the best quality materials, a variety of color choices, and the motifs are calculated with extreme care. Therefore, *songket* which is done by traditional methods is usually priced quite high according to the material and complexity in the process. There are times, many *songket* craftsmen make new breakthroughs by utilizing some old *songket* fabric and re-modifying both the color and motif.

As conveyed by Syarofie (2007: 13-14) that the quite good economic development of the community in Palembang caused the elite dress style to be followed by the people, *songket* fabric began to become a commercial commodity, which then created special motives for the community. With another meaning, this *songket* motif developed following the creativity possessed by the *songket* craftsmen. However, the *songket* craftsmen still consider the original form of the standard grip motives that are in accordance with the norms in each of the Palembang *songket*.

Figure 4. Modern Palembang *Songket,* Silver *Limar Nampan* Type

Nampan Rose Motif Tumpal Motif
Figure 5. Modern Palembang *Songket,*

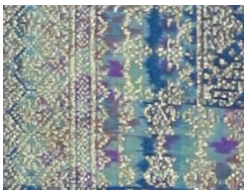

Figure 6. Limar dan Geometris Motif

The picture above, is one type of modern songket that was developed by relying on traditional Limar *songket* fabric. *Songket* development now can be observed with the development of several new forms of *songket* fabric craftsmen produced in *songket* galleries, such as those presented by Galeh Pramitasari (Interview, 2019). a gallery that is quite famous is the Zaenal *Songket* Gallery. There are some *songket* products that continue to use traditional processing methods, such as the *Limar Nampan Perak Cantik Manis songket*, *Limar Bunga Pacar*, *Lepus Bintang Beranante Moder*, and there are also types of *songket* that are packaged or the way how to process them using synthetic yarn. This,

of course, gives an understanding that Palembang *songket* is currently experiencing a fairly rapid development, both in terms of processing and models that are served in marketing the Palembang *songket* fabric. In line with Viatra, Aji Windu & Slamet Triyanto (2014) explained that the development of Palembang *songket*, has increasingly developed following market demand and has changed its function as objects of wear or decoration. There are some fairly basic obstacles in meeting these conditions, namely the problem of creating new *songket* motifs and the quantity of its *songket* products.

Such conditions certainly have positive and negative impacts when viewed from the socio-cultural aspects. However, sociologist Soekanto (2008: 275) says that no human in the world feels satisfied with something at that time, and chooses to be stagnant in that position. People will always experience social change because of their desire to live better. That is, changes that occur in Palembang *songket* fabric must indeed have happened, because if it does not adjust market demand, there will be a stagnation in the process of preserving this culture, without having to leave the main motifs that make Palembang *songket* distinctive, namely *tretes* motifs and *tumpal* motifs, which of course has been agreed together in order to preserve the special characteristics of the original Palembang *Songket*.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussion about the visual motifs of Palembang *songket* fabric. According to researchers, Palembang *songket* fabric is a cultural product of South Sumatra that should be maintained, the beauty of *Songket* fabric can be seen in the visual motif. Palembang *Songket* Fabric has two visual motifs including visual classic motifs and modern visual motifs. Visual classical motifs have characteristics; (1) Animal motifs (*Naga Besaung*) and *tumpal*, (2) Materials used are silk thread and gold-plated thread, (3) The colors used are predominantly dark red and gold. Whereas modern visual motifs have characteristics, (1) Songket motifs are more on plants (*Limar Nampan Perak Cantik Manis, Limar Bunga Pacar, Lepus Bintang Beranante Moder*) and geometric but do not leave *tumapal* motifs, (2) Materials used in the form of silk thread and copper-coated silk thread, (3) The colors used are more diverse, such as red, pink, blue, green, and purple. Moreover, the Palembang *Songket* fabric is one proof of the history of civilization that has been well structured since the founding of the great kingdom in Palembang. Therefore, it is appropriate if the current songket fabric has undergone a fairly complex change.

THANK-YOU NOTE

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