

Traditional Wisdom of Malay Community in Coal Songket Cloth in Padang Ginting Village, Talawi District, Coal District

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ABSTRACT

This study explains the traditional wisdom of the Malay community in manufacturing and using Coal songket cloth in Padang Ginting Village, Talawi District, Batu Bara Regency. Songket Batu Bara is a cultural heritage with high historical and aesthetic value. The purpose of this study is to explore, traverse, and understand the practice of making songket cloth, as well as the important role of this fabric in the lives of local people. Research methods used include ethnography, interviews, and documentation. The study results revealed that the Malay community in Padang Ginting Village has inherited knowledge and expertise in making coal songket cloth for generations. The process of making this songket involves many stages that require high skill and accuracy. Apart from being a traditional dress, the coal songket also has social and cultural significance in traditional ceremonies and local celebrations. The results of this study provide insight into the traditional wisdom of the Malay community in preserving cultural heritage and unique handicraft arts. A deeper understanding of Coal songket can make a positive contribution to maintaining the sustainability of the traditions and cultural richness of the Malay community in the area.

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INTRODUCTION

Songket is a traditional woven fabric that can be found in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brunei Darussalam. Songket belongs to the brocade woven family. One of the looms used to weave songket is pressed with feet so that the thread becomes tighter. In general, although similar threads can also be used as ornamental patterns, songket motifs use gold and silver threads. The bride and groom who sit on the throne usually wear jewelry with the theme of gold thread and silver thread. The word songket comes from the Malay and Kampung languages "sungkit" and "songket" respectively, which implies hooking or disassembling, according to the process of its manufacture; hooked and picked up several woven fabrics, tucking them with gold thread.

There are several steps before it becomes a piece of cloth due to the long weaving process. Plants, especially flowers, are a theme in songket art. This is related to their little understanding of the local natural environment. Before the songket was invented, nobles wore it to show their rank and dignity. The wearer is only allowed to participate in traditional ceremonies including marriage, circumcision, birth, and naming. Now, all social classes can use songket cloth according to their

needs. Even in some areas in North Sumatra, songket cloth is currently considered as clothing suitable for formal occasions, suitable wedding receptions, and worn by office employees both public and private. Even in some regions, there are rules for government officials to wear clothes made from the products of their respective districts or cities on certain days in North Sumatra. Coal County is one of them. One of the regions in Sumatra that produces songket cloth is Batu Bara Regency known as Malay songket Bara. The story of a coal songket woven by mothers in the Long village environment before being split into two villages and becoming Padang Genting. Women of all ages, including adolescents and adults, carry out the economic activity of weaving songket to support the family. Although songket weaving is a female activity, some of the songket weavers are men.

Songket Coal has been utilized in various formal activities every day in offices and schools and is likely to continue as the community develops. Songket is a very important part of Malay culture. Songket must therefore be guarded and protected so that it does not become extinct or known by other regions. The Coal region is closely related to Islam. Just like the Minangkabau community, the Coal Society also has a similar philosophy. It seems that this happened because Coal and Minangkabau once had a relationship, as evidenced by the ideology of "adat berjujukanan dan syara", share side by side with the book of Allah" which is also much loved among the Malay community of Coal. Undoubtedly, the statement signifies that the civilization that emerged in the Coal region followed the Sharia and its principles were based on the Quran and Sunnah. Songket cloth entered Islamic culture by making it in a form of Muslim clothing that covers the aurat to cause polite and ethical values. Judging from its application, songket cloth is not a deviation from the Islamic creed, hence it is necessary to show more Islamic modesty in the use of songket cloth, such as the obligation to cover the aurat and not wear tight clothes. Therefore, researchers are here to explain how the history, motives, and functions of the Coal songket.

From the background that the researcher described, there are many Malay communities, especially the Coal Malay community who do not understand how the meaning, function, and value of the Malay Coal songket woven fabric. With this research and exploring the meaning that exists in this coal songket cloth, researchers hope to provide more insight into the functions and meanings contained in coal songket fabric.

RESEARCH METHODS

Types of research methods used ethnography. This study used data collection techniques, namely observation, interviews, and documentation. Padang Genting village was chosen in this study because Padang Genting village is the first and main village where women weaved songket. The interview was intended to find out about the local wisdom of songket, its history, function, and motives as well as the use of Coal songket. The informants taken were women weavers of songket cloth who could be found during the day in their respective weaving places. Researchers use qualitative descriptive methods that are exploratory, namely researching directly into the field to see how the process of making songket fabric and the sales process. Data collected through interviews are analyzed to obtain results which are then reinforced in the form of scientific papers. Data collection is done through primary data and secondary data. Secondary data sources are obtained through literature, journals, and documentation.

DeWitt H. Parker's Aesthetic Theory

Etymologically the word aesthetics comes from the Greek word "aisthetikos" which means "to observe with the senses". The word aesthetics is also related to the word "aisthesis" which means "perception" (Ali, 2011). Thus, aesthetics refers to what is valuable as perceptual experience and that experience leads to what is sensorily pleasing. Broadly speaking, aesthetic studies include three things, namely the investigation of the beautiful, the investigation of the principles underlying art, and related to experiences related to art (Kattsoff, 2004). Examples of aspects related to the experience of art may include such things as problems with art creation, judgment of art, and reflection on art. Aesthetics itself according to DeWitt H. Parker is a systematic effort to get a clear general idea of beautiful objects, an assessment of these objects, the motives underlying the act of creating works of art and increasing the "aesthetic life" from instincts and feelings to a state of

understanding (Parker, 2004). Based on this definition, it can be seen that the task of the philosopher of art is to seek general principles about works of art, in contrast to the task of art critics, which is to deepen and disseminate appreciation of certain works of art (in this case critics need standards derived from general principles). Parker's definition of art above is also understandable from the point of view of substance and has included the points outlined in the aesthetic studies mentioned earlier. The study of aesthetics itself leads not only to art objects but also to "beautiful" objects that exist in nature. However, in further discussion, the author only focuses on the level of art.

Art according to DeWitt H. Parker is an expression that is not just of a mere object or idea but of a concrete experience with its values for its own sake. Art is not merely an inspirational, temporary expression of a personal mood, but a communicative work meant to endure (Parker, 2004). Artwork is an aesthetic means of life, so through artwork aesthetic capacities and experiences can be enhanced or improved and ultimately become common property (part of human spiritual capital). Parker also agrees that art has a cathartic effect because it can give us experience of things that are purified for contemplation (Parker, 2004). DeWitt H. Parker is known for his aesthetic theory which emphasizes the principles on which a work of art is based. These principles can be used as paradigms in the context of connoisseurs' "diving" work as an aesthetic object. Relative to Monroe Beardsley's thinking that connoisseurs should look at the characteristics of what is aesthetically valued, namely "regional quality" and "formal unity". Beardsley believed that attention and pleasure taken from the intrinsic qualities of objects and in what ways they relate to each other were signs of aesthetic experience. Things like color, stress, and rhyme which are qualities in objects that are perceived as part of the whole being experienced are regional qualities. This quality is "regional" because we can designate it and that quality is present in the region of the object. For example, we can show that in an aesthetic object there is a blue stroke in the upper left corner of a painting, there is a long sound at the end of each line or there are five descending notes at the beginning of a song. As for formal unity, that is, it relates to how the qualities are united. It is related to the pattern or organization of parts displayed by an object such as repetition or symmetry (Eaton, 2010). Beardsley also emphasized three characteristics that can make aesthetic objects beautiful, namely unity, complexity, and intensity. The first characteristic is that unity means that aesthetic objects are well-arranged or perfectly shaped. The second characteristic, complexity requires that the aesthetic object or artwork concerned is not very simple, but rich in content and elements that contradict each other or contain subtle differences. The third characteristic, intensity, emphasizes that a good aesthetic object must have a certain quality that stands out and not something empty. It does not matter what quality is contained (e.g. tense or joyous atmosphere, soft or rough nature), as long as it is something intensive or earnest (Dharsono, 2004). Just as Monroe Beardsley's aesthetic theory of aesthetic objects is divided into three features, DeWitt H. Parker's theory of aesthetic form is outlined in six principles.

Both Beardsley's aesthetic object theory and Parker's aesthetic form theory are related to thinking about the intrinsic elements of works of art that connoisseurs should pay attention to in an art experience. Therefore, the two theories can complement each other. The first six principles in Parker's theory are the principles of organic unity (Parker, 1926). This principle is the main principle that has stood firmly since ancient times and is the parent of other principles. This principle means that every element in a work of art is necessary for the work. The artwork is not supposed to contain unnecessary elements and instead contains everything necessary. The reciprocal relationship of the elements of a work becomes a parameter of the integrity of the value of a work. Each element requires, responds to each other, and demands every other element. The second principle is the principle of theme (Parker, 1926).

In a work of art, there is usually one or several main ideas or ideas that have a prominent role. The idea can be a character or characters in a story, a rhythm or melody pattern in a musical composition, or the meaning of a poem. The idea becomes the central point of the overall value of the artwork so that it becomes the key to one's appreciation of a work of art. The third principle is the principle of thematic variation (Parker, 1926). This principle has a close relationship with the second principle because the theme of a work of art must be refined by constantly being developed and becoming more varied. This is so as not to cause boredom. The fourth principle is the principle of balance (Parker, 1926). Often in works of art, there are opposing or contradictory elements

(contrasts). But although they seem contradictory, they need each other because together they create wholeness. What such contradictory elements need is similarity in value. Therefore balance is the similarity of opposing or contradictory elements. The similarity of conflicting values implicates aesthetic balance. The fifth principle is the principle of evolution (Parker, 1926). What Parker meant by this principle was a process in which the initial parts demanded the later parts and simultaneously created an overarching meaning. For example, in a story, there is a necessary causal relationship or relationship and the main characteristic is the growth of the overall meaning. The sixth principle is the so-called principle of hierarchy (Parker, 1926). In complex works of art, there is sometimes one element that holds an important position and has a much greater role than all others.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The existence of Songket as a Malay Cultural Entity in North Sumatra

Songket is an artifact in culture that acts as one of the identities of the Malays. Therefore, a study on songket is needed so that it can be a reference by the Malay community in general. The importance of this study is also based on the fact that the Coal Malay community is seen as strong in expressing songket culture in the Sumatra region, even the Malay World. Clothing usually serves to cover the body, which obeys social norms. Sometimes religion advocates dress manners and manners. In addition, clothing manifested the values of beauty and the ethics of the society that supported it. This clothing is used in various customary activities, for example in marriage ceremonies, circumcision of the Apostle, and certifying leaders (sultans, tuan kadhi, village leaders, and others).

Similarly, what happened in the culture of the Malay community in Padang Ginting village, Coal Regency, North Sumatra Province, Indonesia, became the focus of attention in this study. The existence of culture in Indonesia, songket weaving in the learning system is different from Malay regions and has local cultural characteristics. The learning system from one generation to another is carried out openly, by anyone and from any ethnicity. Songket was not monopolized by Malay noble families. Songket weavers are also according to field observations, not much done by relatives of Malay nobles, more done by ordinary people.

Learning is carried out according to oral tradition, meaning that a prospective weaver comes to see his teacher's house and then immediately does it, not accompanied by teaching instructions through books or other similar media. Some sources mention that the king from the northern part of Sumatra already used silk clothes. However, it is estimated that the clothes are still imported goods from abroad, namely China. In the same decade there also appeared woven fabrics made of cotton in mainland Sumatra, Java, and Bali. Because these three places can thrive cotton plants that produce yarn. Unlike ordinary weaving, songket weaving generally uses gold or silver thread, so not all people make songket weaving.

Generally, songket weaving comes from areas that have access to foreign nations or traders, so it is not surprising that songket weaving skills are partly possessed by teenagers in coastal areas. In the past, weaving skills were only possessed by young women of noble descent. This is because they are difficult to get cotton thread, gold thread, and silver thread as ornamental patterns in songket. The nobles were generally easy to obtain through the relationship of traders from outside because gold thread and silver thread at that time were only found in Penang (Malaysia) which came from India. In addition, in North Sumatra, two cultures produce woven fabrics, namely the Coal songket culture and ulos in Batak culture.

In reality, these two regions also influence each other's songket weaving forms and styles and have various similarities in this weaving, which proves that they are one culture and one family. There are songket motifs that are rounded in ulos. Or ulos makers in Batak Land weave songket, both from coal and especially from Palembang. In this Toba Batak culture, Malay songket (especially those from Palembang) has a high social value. They consider that Palembang songket is of good quality, and reflects the social level that uses it because the price is relatively expensive compared to ulos. Therefore, many of these ulos weavers then weave Palembang songket and Coal songket for the consumption of the Toba Batak people themselves.

The relationship between Batak ulos culture and Malay songket in North Sumatra can also be seen through the widespread use of songket. Songket is not only used in various traditional Malay ceremonies, but also by the Karo, Batak Toba, and Simalungun communities, especially when they carry out wedding ceremonies (both according to Islam and Christianity). Songket is seen as having high cultural values and indicates a high social level for the wearer. Likewise, the Mandailing-Angkola community is mostly Muslim, and usually in Batubara has withered themselves, so their favorite songket is to combine a bit of concepts in Mandailing-Angkola culture and Malay songket.

They usually like to use red and black, as the basic colors of a bit, in chanting. Then line-shaped motifs such as elbow *keluang*, shoot shoots, and bamboo shoots -- not curved line motifs. This motif is close to the form of Mandailing-Angkola *abit* motifs. The characteristic of songket culture in North Sumatra is using three types of looms. The first is *okik*, which is used in the Malay Batubara songket tradition in North Sumatra.

These looms are structurally similar to those found in Peninsular Malaysia. Likewise, the process of making songket, and the terms used have many similarities with those in Peninsular Malaysia. Another similarity is the use of songket motifs, which are the same between the Coal area and Peninsular Malaysia. This proves that Batubara is one of the Malay cultural areas. While the Malay World region itself passes through several countries in this region. Apart from color, motifs/ornaments also play an important role for the wearer, because through motifs can be known social status.

Before the social revolution on the east coast of Sumatra, Malay sultans often used songkets patterned with dragon snakes which at that time became pride. This motif fills the songket field which is often used as a sarong. In general, the ornamental variety in songket uses a variety of ornamental flora. This is because the Malays who adhere to Islam forbid to use of a variety of ornamental creatures that are animate / animals. If in the past there was a dragon motif, it was only done by the dignitaries of the sultanate, but it was not a very dominant motive because not all sultans used this motif. The dragon motif likely received influence from China, considering that the motif was often used on the regalia of kings or emperors in China. The motifs that are still used today include bamboo shoots, *larat*, *Boyan* clouds, and in general sprig flower motifs.

Songket weaving has an important role in society. Songket weaving is usually used during traditional ceremonies such as weddings or those related to religion such as giving names to babies or circumcision. Unlike woven fabrics used in daily activities. At the wedding, the bride and groom use songket with colors, namely yellow, red and green, blue or according to their social status. In addition to marriage, the songket is also used as a sling to give names to babies, and as a sarong during circumcision for boys. Songket is also used by the groom at weddings (sheathed from waist to knee limit). Previously wearing a *belanga bay* (like a koko shirt with three vertical stitched joints on the right and left side of the body pattern) combined with pants (loosely sized using a strap around the waist as a fastening). Other equipment used chains, belts, and *keris terampang* tucked into the waist, the head decorated with *destar* (crown for men). The bride wears a long *kebaya* combined with a shawl made of songket. A shawl made of *yersi* cloth formed with a floral motif is placed on the right and left shoulders as a sign that the wearer is carrying out a wedding ceremony. The head is decorated with *hunting* (crown for women), chains, belts, brooches, and others. Both brides use fans made from songket for the man to hold the right hand, while the bride is on the left hand.

CONCLUSION

This research succeeded in revealing the importance of the traditional wisdom of the Malay community in the manufacture and use of Coal songket cloth in Padang Ginting Village, Talawi District, Coal Regency. Songket Batubara is not just a traditional clothing, but also an integral part of cultural heritage that has high historical and aesthetic value. The process of making songket, which involves many stages, requires great skill and precision, and this practice has been passed down from generation to generation.

This songket cloth also has a deep social and cultural meaning in the lives of local people. Songket Batubara is used in traditional ceremonies, local celebrations, and religious events, identifies

individuals or groups, and is a symbol of Malay cultural identity. The people of Padang Ginting Village actively maintain and care for this tradition, and Coal songket remains an important element in daily life.

With a deeper understanding of Batubara songket and its important role in Malay culture, the results of this study can make a positive contribution to maintaining the sustainability of the traditions and cultural richness of the Malay community in the area. The government and various relevant parties are expected to provide further support and protection to this cultural heritage to keep it alive and developing, as well as provide economic benefits to the local community. In conclusion, Coal songket is a clear proof of traditional wisdom that is valuable and needs to be preserved for future generations.

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