



THE ART OF KELINGKAN EMBROIDERY AS A CATALYST FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CREATIVE INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT

Kelingkan is a unique handicraft that uses metal strips gilt with gold or silver that is embroidered onto the surface of a soft fabric. The intricacy of this type of embroidery requires a high degree of detail and expertise. In Malaysia, kelingkan embroidery is practised on a small scale and sold for a high sum. However, how far is kelingkan embroidery known today and can it become a catalyst for the development of the creative industry? This study is conducted in the descriptive qualitative method via field work, namely observational interviews with embroiderers and studies of collections. As a result, this study has found that there are 3 states with active embroiderers that are still able to sell their kelingkan shawls or selayah for more than RM1000 per piece. In addition, the beauty and creativity of kelingkan embroidery has continued to attract even more members of the community to purchase kelingkan items, as they are used in important official ceremonies. This study has also concluded that an increase in the number of embroiderers will help to generate revenue and increase the production of kelingkan products to aid in the development of the creative industry. As an implication, this study can be used a source of knowledge and income, so that this art form will be sustained and be a source of income for the Malay community.

Keywords: Kelingkan, Creative Industry, Generate, Art of Embroidery and Handicraft

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1. INTRODUCTION

Kelingkan is a unique embroidery handicraft that uses metal strips gilt in gold or silver that is embroidered onto the surface of soft fabric. The intricacy of this form of embroidery requires a high level of detail and skill, causing kelingkan to be very valuable. Kelingkan embroidery can be found on baju kurung, kebaya and head coverings, but it is especially known in two types of headdress - the selendang and selayah. In the past, kelingkan embroidery was worn at historic ceremonies and it was pioneered by royalty and nobility. Today, there have been changes in the development of kelingkan, and it is produced in only a few states in Malaysia. However, it has its own following and is sold at a high price. The price of a piece of kelingkan shawl can reach thousands of ringgit, as it is in a class of its own, and is used during very special occasions such as weddings. This form of embroidery is considered a luxury and owning a kelingkan shawl is indicative of the wearer's status. This study seeks to explain the beauty of kelingkan and the public's knowledge regarding kelingkan as a catalyst towards the development of the creative industry in Malaysia.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This form of gold or silver strip embroidery is known as keringkam, tekatkeringkam or kelingkan. Several other terms are also used in the Malay world to describe tekat keringkam or keringkam. The term keringkam, kelingkan (Siti Zainon, 2019) is used in Sarawak, Selangor and Malaysia. According to Azran (2010:5), the terms Keringkam and Kelingkan originate from the Balinese word 'Keling,' meaning a type of fabric 'kam' or 'kham' that is beautiful. Meanwhile, according to Azah (2009: 128), the term keringkam and kelingkan originates from the French term 'Clinquant' whereas in Malaysian states, the terms kelingkan and keringkam carry the same meaning, but differs in terms of pronunciation.

In an interview with Siti Zainon Ismail, she states that kelingkan embroidery is closely related to gold thread embroidery as the materials used are from gold or silver strips (Siti Zainon Ismail, 15 April 2017). Therefore, all references regarding gold thread embroidery can be used as evidence and the foundation for kelingkan embroidery, as the pronunciation might be different, but the meaning is the same. The difference in terms of pronunciation or terminology is that in Sarawak, it is better known as keringkam (Siti Zainon Ismail 2010, 1996; Dayang Sandrawati et.al 2012; Awang Azman 2010; Norseha 2014; Suhana Sarkawi & Norhayati Ab. Rahman, 2014, 2016). Meanwhile, in Terengganu, the term teringkam or terekam (Siti Zainon Ismail 1994; Zubaidah Shawal ,1994; Suhana Sarkawi & Norhayati Ab. Rahman, 2014, 2016) is more commonly used, while in Selangor and Kelantan, the term kelingkan (Syed Ahmad Jamal,1992 and Rose Dahlina Rusli et.al 2015) and kelengkan (Suhana Sarkawi & Norhayati Ab. Rahman, 2016) are more widespread. In Kelantan, it is also known as kelingkam and kelengkang (Suhana Sarkawi & Norhayati Ab. Rahman, 2016).

Malaysia has 14 states but only 3 states still have active kelingkan embroiderers or producers, namely in Sarawak, Selangor and Kelantan. This finding is parallel to the study for the mapping of kelingkan shawls in Malaysia, the location map for the existence of kelingkan shawls in Malaysia and Indonesia. The findings of this journal study traces the existence of kelingkan shawls and embroiderers in Malaysia dan Indonesia. This journal became a reference for this study, which only focuses on Malaysia. This journal records artifact

discoveries in Sarawak, Selangor, Kelantan, Terengganu and Negeri Sembilan, while the embroiderers can still be found in Sarawak, Kelantan and Selangor (Suhana Sarkawi dan Norhayati Ab. Rahman, 2016). Meanwhile, according to (Norhasliyana Hazlin et.al, 2017) the discovery of states that still have embroiderers is the same within the journal and the findings of this study. According to the latest compilation of mappings of the art of kelingkan in Malaysia, kelingkan embroiderers or producers that are still active can be found in Sarawak, Selangor and Kelantan. The total number of kelingkan embroiderers is 32 people, 16 in Sarawak, 12 in Selangor and 4 in Kelantan.

Therefore, this study was conducted, because there should be more embroiderers and the younger generation should know about kelingkan so that it can be a catalyst for the development of the craft industry.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in the descriptive qualitative method through field work in the form of observational interviews and collection studies. This research applied the descriptive qualitative method with a cultural approach, through field work such as interviews with embroiderers and collection studies. The data collection began with an introduction to the research, exploration, information finding, documentation and understanding of the research objective. The data was collected from observations and visits, formal interviews, photography and video recordings. Through field work such as observational interviews with the embroiderers and collection studies were conducted in Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, Kelantan and Terengganu in Peninsular Malaysia, as well as Kuching, Sarawak. In the Peninsular Malaysia, organisations visited include Malay Ethnology Museum, Department of Museums Kuala Lumpur, Textile Museum, The Selangor State Culture and Heritage Corporation (PADAT), Malaysian Handicraft Development Corporation, National University of Malaysia (UKM), Universiti Putra Malaysia, Universiti Malaya (UM), Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) and Universiti Malaysia Kelantan, while in Sarawak, the site visits include Sarawak Textile Museum, Malaysian Handicraft Development Corporation Sarawak branch and Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS). The interviews conducted were with embroiderers that were still active in Sarawak, Selangor and Kelantan.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this research has found that three states still have active embroiderers who are able to generate income that exceeds RM1000 per piece of kelingkan shawl or selayah sold, while the creativity of kelingkan embroidery has attracted even more members of the community to purchase it, as kelingkan is used in important ceremonies. Through this study, it can also be surmised that an increase in the number of embroiderers can generate income and enhance the production of products to develop the creative industry. Further description on the findings can be found in sections 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3.

4.1. Generation of revenue for kelingkan embroidery in Malaysia

Field studies were conducted in the states of Sarawak, Selangor and Kelantan, because active kelingkan embroiderers can still be found in these three states. The research findings will explain the generation of income from the sale of kelingkan. Each state is differentiated through materials, tools and motifs. The tools typically used to embroider are gold or silver metal strips, voile and a wood frame. In Selangor, embroiderers do not use a wood frame, unlike in Sarawak and Kelantan, where a wood frame is used and the demand for kelingkan embroidery continues to this day even though it is done on a small scale. Malaysians usually commission kelingkan shawls for weddings and they are purchased at a high price of around

RM1000 and above per piece. Tools like embroidery needles are usually custom ordered with goldsmiths or metalworkers, as the kelingkan needle has two holes. Gold or silver strips can only be obtained from Arab Street, Singapore and each kelingkan piece has to be sold at a high price because it is so difficult to obtain these materials. Meanwhile, there is only one shop in Malaysia, located at Jalan India, Sarawak, that sells kelingkan strips and needles, which is Syarikat Salih Ahmah nombor 27 in Kuching. Syarikat Salih Ahamad sells gold and silver strips at RM20, RM40 and RM 140, but to make a high-quality kelingkan, it requires a good metal strips that cost RM140.

In an interview with active embroiderers from Kuching, Sarawak, namely Dorris Hilda, Sharifah Zuriana, and Nora Syamsiah, they state that the motifs and patterns in selayah have not changed except the type of cloth, which are gauze, voile and gossamer that are difficult to obtain, so to make things easier, kasa rubia or bawal no 2 fabric is used instead. These embroiderers typically have motifs that reflect their own style, but they also maintain the use of certain motifs, such as the trimming for the edges of the selendang and selayah. Although they may create them according to their own creativity, they still use the pucuk rebung or gunung beranak motifs that have been used for years. These three embroiderers have more than 8 years of experience in the field of kelingkan embroidery. Dorris Hilda has practiced from 2004 till today and is the only non-Malay and non-Muslim kelingkan embroidery, but she is deeply passionate about this Malay craft and has joined Kraftangan Malaysia to teach students who are interested in keringkam embroidery. Meanwhile, Sharifah Zuriana is also an entrepreneur and keringkam teacher like Dorris Hilda. Nora Syamsiah on the other hand learnt and inherited this skill from her aunt. Through these interviews, the researcher was able to see many pieces of kelingkan embroidery. Most of them feature the edge trimming, which is ubiquitous in keringkam. It is often requested by the local Malay community to be applied to their selendang or selayah that are used at weddings, official ceremonies, as gifts and personal collections, despite kelingkan commanding a high price. The price of each kelingkan shawl is determined based on the complexity of design, as seen in table 1.

Table 1 Infrastructure statement

Embroiderer	Income From 1 Kelingkan Shawl	Sarawak	Selangor	Kelantan
Embroiderer 1	RM1500	√		
Embroiderer 2	RM2500		√	
Embroiderer 3	RM3000	√		
Embroiderer 4	RM10000			√
Embroiderer 5	RM1800			√

Source: Field study 2018

4.2. Opportunity to generate side income through kelingkan embroidery

The income for each kelingkan shawl is based on its complexity and how long it took to complete it. If there is more exposure through training workshops, there will be more kelingkan embroiderers. An increase in the number of embroiderers will be able to meet demand and a higher amount of products can be made to develop the creative industry. Income can also be generated by students, the unemployed, single mothers, and also part time workers who are interested in kelingkan.

4.3. This embroidery as a catalyst for the development of the creative industry

The creative industry is a catalyst for growth as it can produce products that can be commercialised among local and international communities. Kelingkan embroidery is one of the creative industries carried out by the Malay community. Kelingkan embroidery, especially selendang and selayah, are used by the Malays on special occasions such as weddings and formal events. Therefore, demand for kelingkan embroidery is continuous, but it takes a long time to complete. If there are more embroiderers, this will ease production and increase national revenue.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1. Summary of Findings

The implication of this study is that it can be used as a source of knowledge and income, so that this art form can become a sustainable aspect in the Malay community, as well as become a form of sustenance. Kelingkan embroidery has a good potential to become a catalyst for the creative industry, because it has a complex identity and each piece is highly valued. Problems in unemployment can be reduced and single mothers who are interested in making kelingkan embroidery can take it on as a full-time or part-time occupation. The community's livelihood can be continued and this tradition can be sustained and inherited.

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