

Differences in The Types of Kelingkan Shawls in Malaysia

Norhasliyana Hazlin Zainal Amri^{1,a)} and Hamdzun Haron^{2,b)}

¹*Universiti Malaysia Kelantan, Kampus Bachok, Beg berkunci No. 01, 16300 Bachok, Kelantan, Malaysia*

²*Pusat Citra Universiti, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 43600 UKM Bangi, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia.*

Corresponding author: ^{a)}hazlin.za@umk.edu.my

^{b)}hh@umk.edu.my

Abstract. The art of kelingkan embroidery is a valuable traditional heritage for women. Kelingkan shawls are still worn in the community during important ceremonies, especially weddings. This heritage is a Malay handicraft that is pioneered by women and kelingkan is still made on a small scale in the states of Sarawak, Selangor, and Kelantan. Understanding regarding the types of kelingkan shawls is important for the community, especially those who are kelingkan shawl enthusiasts, so that this form of traditional kelingkan shawl will endure, though some changes have occurred in the creation of kelingkan due to modernization. To conclude this problem, two questions have emerged - What are the types of kelingkan shawls in Malaysia and What are the differences between traditional and modern kelingkan shawls? This study applies the descriptive qualitative approach through fieldwork such as observations, collection studies in Malaysia, specifically the Malay Peninsula in Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, Kelantan and Terengganu, as well as in Kuching, Sarawak, where interviews were held with embroiderers and library research was conducted. As a result, this study has found that traditional kelingkan shawls can be divided into two types, namely square or rectangular ones, using silver or gold kelingkan thread. Meanwhile, modern kelingkan shawls can be divided into 3 types - square, rectangle and triangle, which all still use silver and gold kelingkan thread, as well as colorful metal strips. The implications of this study is that it can provide knowledge and understanding to the community, especially those who are interested in or are studying kelingkan shawls in Malaysia. It will encourage them to know more about the changes that are happening to Malay artistic heritage and how it can be sustained in Malaysia.

INTRODUCTION

Kelingkan embroidery is a traditional handicraft and heritage that is valuable for women. It uses metal thread in the form of gold or silver strips that are embroidered onto cloth. In the past, kelingkan embroidery was worn only by the aristocracy and only made in Malay royal courts. Malay garments for women are incomplete if they are not adorned with a kelingkan shawl, worn over the head or shoulder. Changing times have enabled the masses to wear the kelingkan, but women who wear the kelingkan showcase their status and wealth as kelingkan embroidery is sold at a high price. Kelingkan shawls are still worn in the Malay community, especially during important ceremonies such as weddings. This heritage is a Malay traditional handicraft that is pioneered by women and it is still made on a small scale in the states of Sarawak, Selangor, and Kelantan. Understanding on the types of kelingkan shawls is important for the community, especially those who are kelingkan enthusiasts, so that the types of traditional kelingkan will be sustained, although there have been changes in the creation of kelingkan, in accordance to modernization. In order to solve this issue, two questions have emerged. What are the types of kelingkan shawls in Malaysia and What are the differences between traditional and modern kelingkan shawls? This study will discuss this further.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Kelingkan embroidery creates a unique traditional shawl that is in a class of its own. The creation of these kelingkan shawls requires great detail, focus and creativity to produce a beautiful piece. Kelingkan embroidery is

know by many names and terms, according to the different states in Malaysia. There are many variations in the terms used in describing kelingkan embroidery, which is better known as tekat kelingkan or keringkam. In Sarawak and Terengganu, the term keringkam, kelingkan or teringkam is often used [1]. While, in Selangor and Kelantan, the term kelingkan and terengkam are more common [2,3]. There are two types of kelingkan embroidery in Malaysia, namely the traditional and modern varieties. Rapid modern development has caused changes in the art of kelingkan embroidery in Malaysia and it has given birth to creative embroiderers that are able to fulfil requests by kelingkan enthusiasts. According to the fourth edition of kamus dewan tradition refers to customs, understanding, thoughts and beliefs that continue from generation to generation or something that has become part and parcel of a community [4]. Whereas modern means something that relates to the contemporary.

METHODOLOGY

This study applies the descriptive qualitative approach through field work such as observations and collection studies conducted in Malaysia, particularly Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, Kelantan and Terengganu on Peninsular Malaysia and Kuching, Sarawak, where interviews with embroiderers and library research was conducted. 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, organizations 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.

DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This research has found that traditional kelingkan shawls can be divided into two types, those that are square and rectangular, both using metal strips in gold or silver. Meanwhile, modern kelingkan shawls can be divided into three, those that are square, rectangular and triangular, which use metal strips that are gold, silver or colourful. This study also found that traditional kelingkan shawls and selayah are always in a square or rectangular shape. This form of kelingkan embroidery uses metal strips that are gilt in silver or gold, as seen in Fig. 1, which shows traditional kelingkan embroidery. Normally, traditional kelingkan embroidery is used when attending formal events such as going before the ruler of the state or district. Meanwhile, at the height of the Malay Malacca Sultanate, courtiers were required to wear customary clothing when going before the sultan, including a head covering and one that is usually worn by Malay women was the kelingkan [5].



FIGURE 1. Traditional Kelingkan Embroidery

While conducting research, this study also encountered modern kelingkan embroidery, and it was found that the most noticeable difference was in terms of the colour of metal strips used. Modern kelingkan shawls can be divided into three main types, square, rectangular and triangular, which have retained the two original shapes, but differ in terms of patterns used and the addition of the triangular shape. While modern kelingkan still uses silver and gold metal strips, it also incorporates the use of colourful metallic strips. Modern kelingkan is usually in the form of instant shawls, and the way they are worn can be seen in Fig. 2. This change is not very obvious because not all embroiderers have made shawls in this new form. In Kelantan, embroiderers still retain the traditional shapes but use colourful metal strips, which can be obtained in Sarawak. These metal strips can also be purchased online to meet customer demand. Colourful metal strips for embroidery are sold for RM15 a skein, compared to RM150 for silver or gold metal strips. There are also cheaper alternatives based on their quality. Figure 3 shows examples of colourful metal strips.



FIGURE 2. Modern Kelingkan Embroidery



FIGURE 3. Modern Kelingkan Embroidery and colourful metallic strips

CONCLUSIONS

The implications of this study will be able to provide knowledge and understanding to the community, especially to enthusiasts and researchers of kelingkan in Malaysia to know more about the changes that have occurred to this Malay artistic heritage so that it can be sustainable in Malaysia. The findings of this study also sheds light on the changes in kelingkan embroidery based on the creativity of the embroiderer and the request of enthusiasts. Therefore, kelingkan should be studied so interest in this field will be continued. The changes that have occurred can give a positive impact in attracting the community towards kelingkan embroidery.

There are also efforts from the Ministry of Arts and Culture Malaysia, which has helped to train the next generation of embroiderers in Sarawak, Kelantan and Selangor. Its spirit and determination in upholding this craft has helped to attract the interest of the younger generation. Therefore, we should increase activities related to culture, such as the wearing of traditional Malay garments and the wearing of kelingkan embroidery by women working in the public sector. If this is done continuously, Malay heritage can develop rapidly.

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