

Motif & Design Patterns of Keringkam Embroidery for The Sarawak Malays

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ABSTRACT

This research is conducted to study motifs of keringkam embroidery for the Sarawak Malays in Kuching. The objective of this study is to classify motifs and design patterns of the keringkam embroidery. Sample of study consists of textile collections belonging to Mrs. Salbiah binti Muhi and Miss Zainap binti Muhi, who are amongst the dominant figures in the keringkam embroidery industry in Kuching, Sarawak. Method of study involved Qualitative method through observations, interviews and document analysis to obtain research findings. In doing analysis, the motifs were re-created using Adobe Illustrator CS6 software for each of the motif in the sample of study. It is found that these keringkam embroideries were designed to floral patterns. Floral motifs commonly used for keringkam embroideries are motifs of bamboo shoots (pucuk rebung), roses (bunga mawar), trailing beans (kacang-kacang) and scattered flowers (bunga tabur). It is hoped that these findings can significantly contribute to the study of motifs particularly the keringkam embroidery textile industry.

Keywords: Keringkam Embroidery, Motif and Design Patterns.

1. INTRODUCTION

Traditional costumes and ornaments have been introduced in the syllabus of Form 3 of *Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Menengah* (KSSM) in Year 2019. Referring to the contents of KSSM regarding traditional costumes and ornaments, the primary focus is to enhance comprehension and understanding towards History subject and appreciation of the Visual Arts among students. Hence, this research is conducted to study the traditional costumes and ornaments of the *keringkam* textile embroidery of the Sarawak Malays in Kuching.

Keringkam embroidery is a well-established embroidery art for the Malay community in Kuching, Sarawak. It has long existed since the British colonial period. Meanwhile, other states in Malaysia have also produced *keringkam* embroideries which have different terms in each state. In Kelantan and Selangor, it is known as *keringkan*, whereas in Terengganu, it is known as *terekam*[6].

Additionally, there are two types of *keringkam* head coverings, which are the *selayah keringkam* and *selendang keringkam* respectively[4]. These head coverings have different purposes and styles of wearing, and they are being adorned by the Malay women in Sarawak. In the past, the Sarawak Malay women would wear the *keringkam* scarves during special occasions such as weddings and other formal events. *Keringkam* is typically associated with handicrafts that symbolize luxury.

The idea of a craft comes from selection of natural objects which are inspired by the surroundings. Moreover, motifs are chosen to create symbols or images that evoke aesthetic values on the design patterns to be created. Therefore, the creation of a motif is based on the selection of themes and subjects in making a composition. The types of motif being arranged in a designated space will form a design pattern on a surface (Siti Zainon, 1986)[7].

Based on the research findings, the location of the Malay community in Kuching, Sarawak is close to the riverbed. Most of the Malay women who participated in embroidery activities come from the villages near the Sarawak riverbed. Consequently, the idea for the motif produced is inspired by the natural objects in their surrounding environment. The village river bank is filled with plants such as fruit trees, vegetables, herbs and bushes. One of informant stated they will sketched on a paper first before embroidering the motifs on fabric to make sure the motifs image resembles the actual image.

2. METHODOLOGY

Research methods applied are qualitative methods. Qualitative research is a detailed research method to obtain information based on a situation and an individual. Hence, qualitative research would be able to explain the process, the steps and the reasoning behind it [1]. During fieldwork, the researcher carried out extensive research which required observation through review methods. Among the features of qualitative field research are observations, interviews and analysis of documentations. The observation method is performed by directly recording the collection of *keringkam* embroidery textiles in detailed and more clearly whereas for the interview method, the researcher will be interviewing renowned figures from the *keringkam* embroidery industry in order to gain findings regarding motif and design patterns in the *keringkam* textiles. The interviewing session were conducted with Mrs. Salbiah binti Muhi and Miss Zainap binti Muhi because both them is the professional *keringkam* embroidery maker in Kuching, Sarawak. Lastly, the researcher would analyze the data in the form of documents, books, journal articles which are scientifically related to past researches of the *keringkam* embroidery to improve data collection and dissemination.

The location of the study was based in Kuching, Sarawak. This location of study was selected due to it being the main site for the *keringkam* embroidery industry which is still actively ongoing. In addition to the historical roots of the *keringkam* embroidery industry, the location of the study is home to many renowned *keringkam* embroidery artists, who were particularly chosen to confirm the reliability of their knowledge towards the *keringkam* artistry [8]. Furthermore, the selected figures are the second generation embroiderers, who inherited the *keringkam* embroidery artistry being passed down from one generation to the next.

Therefore, the selection of these figures was intended to confirm the authenticity of the information obtained and their traditional values. The sample of the study is a collection of textiles belonging to the selected embroidery icons. A total of 5 pieces of textiles were selected to study the motifs and design patterns found in the textiles.

On the other hand, the process of analysing the research findings was performed by re-creating the motifs found in the *keringkam* embroidery textiles. The motifs of the selected research samples were extracted and design patterns re-created by the researcher. The process of re-creating the design patterns were carried out using Adobe Illustrator CS6 software. The main purpose of this was to illustrate the types of motifs and design of the patterns of *keringkam* more clearly and detailed. Additionally, there has not been any research which uses this technique to illustrate the types of motifs and design of the craft patterns. This process aligns with the 21st century learning for Visual Arts Education (*Pendidikan Seni Visual*) subjects.

3. RESEARCH FINDINGS

The results from the field study found that floral motifs are more dominantly used in the production of motifs of *keringkam* embroideries. Among the floral motifs identified in the research samples are motifs of bamboo shoots (*pucuk rebung*), trailing beans (*kacang-kacang*), roses (*bunga mawar*) and scattered flowers (*bunga tabur*). Each of the *keringkam* embroidery textiles consists of three parts which are the sides (water canal/ bamboo shoots), the edge (flower motif) and the centre (scattered flowers) respectively. However, elements other than floral motifs may also be incorporated in the embroidery motifs and design patterns of the *keringkam*. The two types of head coverings of the *keringkam*, the *selayah* and *selendang keringkam*, have similar motifs and design patterns. The motifs and design patterns are also arranged in a structured behaviour [5].

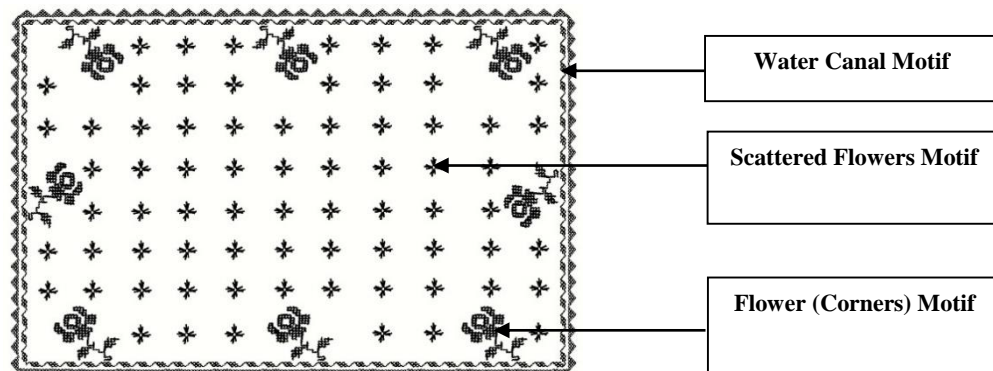


Figure 3.0 : Illustration of The *Keringkam* Embroidery Textile

The process of analyzing the research findings where the investigator has selected a total of five research samples comprising of the *keringkam* textiles which belong to the famous *keringkam* figures in Kuching, Sarawak. Among the factors for selection of the research

samples are the periods of production of *keringkam* embroideries by the ancient Malay community as well as studying the use of motifs and design patterns in the *keringkam* textiles. The selected samples were produced hundreds of years ago by the very first generation which have become personal collections of the *keringkam* embroidery figures themselves, Mrs. Salbiah binti Muhi and Miss Zainap binti Muhi.

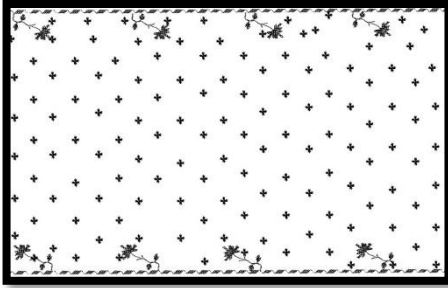


Figure 3.1: Research Sample 1 (*Selendang Keringkam*)
Source: Mrs. Salbiah and Miss Zainap's Personal Collection

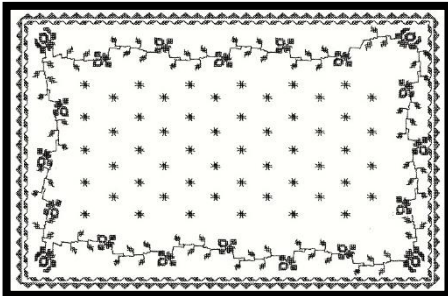


Figure 3.2: Research Sample 2 (*Selayah Keringkam*)
Source: Mrs. Salbiah and Miss Zainap's Personal Collection

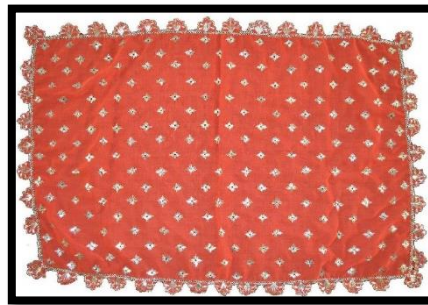
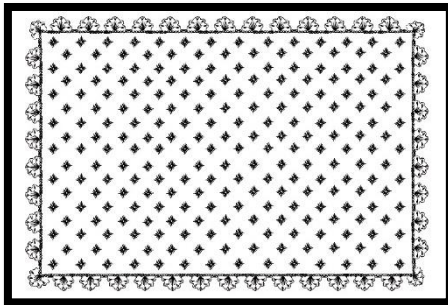


Figure 3.3: Research Sample 3 (*Selayah Keringkam*)
Source: Mrs. Salbiah and Miss Zainap's Personal Collection



Figure 3.4: Research Sample 4 (*Selendang Keringkam*)
 Source: Mrs. Salbiah and Miss Zainap's Personal Collection





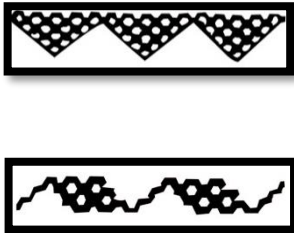
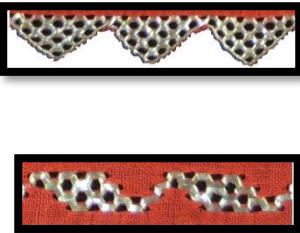
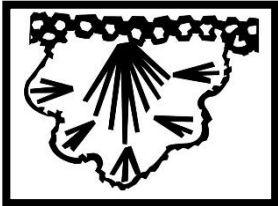

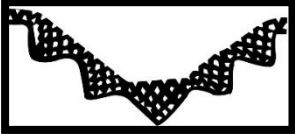

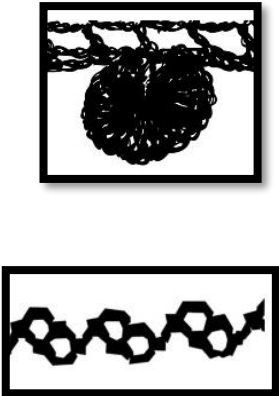

Figure 3.5: Research Sample 5 (*Selayah Keringkam*)
 Source: Mrs. Salbiah and Miss Zainap's Personal Collection

3.1 The Sides of The *Keringkam* (Water Canal Motif)

The sides of the piece of *keringkam* are the first part of the process of making the *keringkam* embroidery textile. Among the motifs typically used in the production of the sides of the *keringkam* are the motifs of bamboo shoots and trailing beans. The motifs will be embedded into a pattern around the edges of the embroidered cloth. The following table lists out the motifs and design patterns around the edges of the *keringkam* fabric.

Table 1: The Sides of The *Keringkam* (Water Canal Motif)

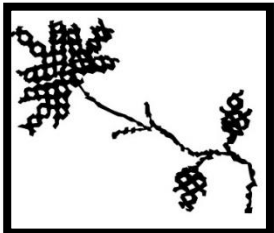
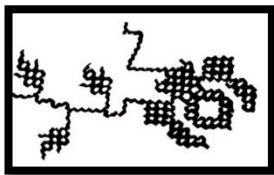

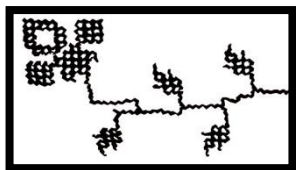


No	Sample/ Type of Motif and Design Pattern	Motif/Design pattern of The Sides of The <i>Keringkam</i>	
		Illustrated Sketches	Original Image
1.	Study Sample 1 3 Levels Trailing Beans (<i>Kacang- kacang 3 Tingkat</i>)		
2.	Study Sample 2 Bamboo Shoots		

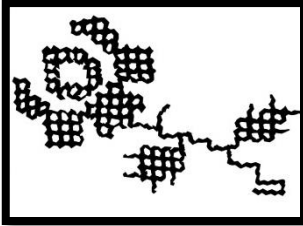

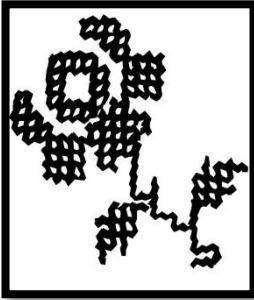

	<p><i>(Pucuk Rebung)</i></p> <p>2 Levels Trailing Beans <i>(Kacang-kacang 2 Tingkat)</i></p>		
3.	<p>Study Sample 3</p> <p>Pleats <i>(Sisi Kipas)</i></p>		
4.	<p>Study Sample 4</p> <p>Bamboo Shoots <i>(Pucuk Rebung)</i></p>		
5.	<p>Study Sample 5</p> <p>Laces <i>(Sisi Renda)</i></p> <p>Water Canal <i>(Tali Air)</i></p>		

3.1 The Corners of the Keringkam (Flower Motif)

The corners of the flower (*bunga sudut*) are the second process of production of motifs and the design of embroidery patterns of the *keringkam*. The size of the *bunga sudut* motif is usually greater. In the past, the Malay community used floral motifs especially rose motifs. According to the figures of *keringkam* embroidery, the main factor being considered in making the motifs is the interest towards a certain type of flower. The interviewed embroidery artist further explained that if she liked a certain type of flower, it becomes her source of inspiration for *bunga sudut* embroidery motif. According to her, the demand of customers would also influence the making of *bunga sudut* motifs since there is a handful of customers who do not prefer flower motifs in the *keringkam* textile embroidery.

Table 2 : The Corners of The Keringkam (Flower Motif)

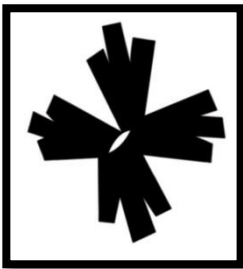

No	Sample/ Type of Motif and Design Pattern	Motif/ Design Pattern of <i>Bunga Sudut</i>	
1.	Study Sample 1 Crapapple Mangrove Fruit (<i>Bunga Pedada</i>)	Illustrated Sketches	Original Image
			
2.	Study Sample 2 Climbing Roses (<i>Bunga Ros Melelat</i>)		
			
3.	Study Sample 3 Orchids (<i>Bunga Orkid</i>)		

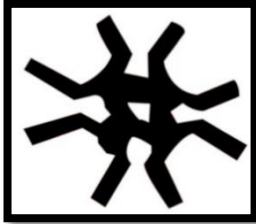

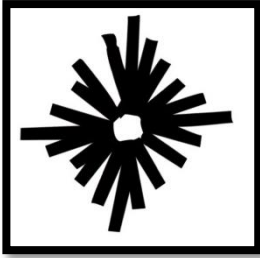



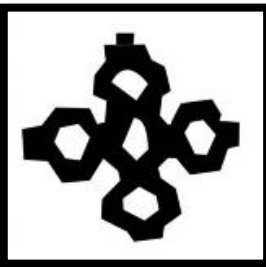

4.	<p>Study Sample 4</p> <p>Blooming Rose (<i>Bunga Ros Mekar</i>)</p>		
5.	<p>Study Sample 5</p> <p>Blooming Rose (<i>Bunga Ros Mekar</i>)</p>		

3.3 The Centre of The Keringkam (Scattered Flower Motif)

The scattered flower (*bunga tabur*) motif is embroidered at this stage after the water canal (*tali air*) and *bunga sudut* embroideries. The size of the scattered flower motif is relatively smaller and is embedded around the centre of the *keringkam* textile. Scattered flower motifs can be embroidered either in structured or unstructured arrangements respectively. The most commonly used patterns for this motif are stars (*bintang*) motif, fine grass (*kepala lalat*) motif, deer (*lepak pelandok*) motif and the scattered insects (*tabur pelayang*) motif. One of the purpose of adding the scattered flower motif is to give an aesthetic touch to the gold-embroidered *keringkam* textile.

Table 3: The Centre of The Keringkam (Scattered Flower Motif)

No	Sample/ Type of Motif and Design Patterns	Motif/Design Pattern of Scattered Flower	
1.	<p>Study Sample 1</p> <p>Scattered Insertion (<i>Tabur Selit</i>)</p>	Illustrated Sketches	Original Image
			

2.	<p>Study Sample 2</p> <p>Fine Grass or Circle (<i>Tabur Lalat atau Bulat</i>)</p>		
3.	<p>Study Sample 3</p> <p>Scattered Insertion (<i>Tabur Selit</i>)</p>		
4.	<p>Study Sample 4</p> <p>Scattered Purple Flowers (<i>Tabur Bunga Engkodok</i>)</p>		
5.	<p>Study Sample 5</p> <p>Scattered Beans (<i>Tabur Kacang</i>)</p>		

4. CONCLUSION

At present, the *keringkam* embroidery is a priceless work of traditional art textile. Based on research findings, motif and design patterns can greatly influence the aesthetic values of a *keringkam* embroidery where the motifs and design patterns are embroidered with golden threads. The interviewed embroidery artists were second generation heirs in their families continuing the legacy of their past ancestors in the *keringkam* textile industry. The researcher has selected to interview these figures as reliable informants and sources due to their extensive knowledge and skills in making *keringkam* embroideries for all generations.

Moreover, a total of five research samples that comprises of *selayah keringkam* and *selendang keringkam* which belong to the *keringkam* artists were selected. Consequently, the researcher has found that the most common motif and design patterns of the *keringkam* is the floral motif particularly roses motif. This is widely used in the process of making *keringkam* embroidery since decades ago. Nevertheless, there are also other floral motifs such as legumes (*kacang-kacang*) and crapapple mangrove fruit (*bunga pedada*) which is part of the culture of the Sarawak Malays. All the motifs and design patterns analysed were re-created using Adobe Illustrator CS6 computer software. Its purpose is to give a more detailed picture in classifying the motifs and design patterns of the *keringkam* embroidery.

In conclusions, it is hoped that this study can significantly contribute to be one of the reference sources research on motif especially *keringkam* embroidery for future researchers. Beside that, *keringkam* embroidery also can be included in Pendidikan Seni Visual syllabus of Form 3 of *Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Menengah* (KSSM) and exposing *keringkam* embroidery to millennial generations nowadays especially to Sarawak youth today so that *keringkam* embroidery can survive in modernizations.

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