

ABSTRACT

“Examining Multicultural Representation in Lepus Songket of Palembang”

Sriwijaya in the 7th century well known as Svarnadwipa that means island of gold. The Richness of gold made the kingdom produce woven fabric with golden thread called, songket.

Lepus Songket is the ultimate songket in Palembang. Lepus has meaning “covering”, all the gold threads covered the whole fabrics.

This article explains about the multicultural representation of Lepus Palembang songket. The examination of multicultural that influenced Lepus Songket would be presented. Lepus history is interesting, since the origin of it came from royalty family.

The conclusion of this article suggest Lepus songket of Palembang is the precious multicultural legacy. The young generation should be the preserver of Lepus.

Keywords: Lepus, Palembang Songket, Sriwijaya, Multicultural

INTRODUCTION

Sriwijaya Kingdom appeared in several inscriptions that founded around Sumatra island and Malaka straits. One of the inscriptions called Kedukan Bukit dated 16th June 682, stated that Swijaya as kingdom with Dapunta Hyang as the king. I-Tsing in 671 (Weerawardane:2009) stated that the Emperor was led by someone who has title as Dapunta Hyang. The other inscription is Kota Kapur inscription 686 M that described about the dominion of Sriwijaya in Bangka, Belitung & Lampung.



Figur 1 Kedukan Bukit Inscription
source (Razzaq 2017)

Sriwijaya named by China Kingdom as San-fo-tsi, Shih-li-fo-shih or San-fo-qi. Sriwijaya is powerful maritime kingdom, they had the strong army and special strategic of defense called Mandala.

As Mahayana Buddha's kingdom and centre of monks pilgrimage Sriwijaya was rich with golds. Golds could be part of Sriwijaya art and culture. At that time money coin used gold, silver as their currency.

Palembang has been proven as the capital city of Sriwijaya by George Coedes in 1918. Palembang has strategic location and became the central of South East Asian trade and Monks's stop over before India. Although the other historian, Pierre Yves Mangoin in 1933 declared that the

center of the Kingdom was not Palembang, it was between Sabokingking Hill and Seguntang Hill near to Musi river. Soekmono the historian from Indonesia said that the capital city was Jambi. Another historian said that the centre of Kingdom was in Riau near to temple of Muara Takus.

The proof of multicultural relationship between Sriwijaya with another Kingdom is the named of Sriwijaya that given by other Kingdom. Khmer called Sriwijaya as *Malayu*. Arab call Sriwijaya as *Zabaj*. Ptolomeus as the founder of map of the world called Sriwijaya as *Sabadeihei*. The chamber and international relations happened in the Malay straits that managed by Sriwijaya Kingdom.

Sriwijaya has culture, proven by at that time people in Sriwijaya already used perfume on their body. The lifestyle already developed wines that made by flower, honey, fruit and coconut. People using Sanskrit language and Chinese letter for communication. People live in the city but some of them live in the suburb or near to the Musi river. The government already has taxation system but only for those who could afford to pay.



Figur 2 Sriwijaya Kingdom
 Source (Siliwangi 2011)

Since the Kingdom has richness in gold, the art and culture appeared in golden creation. The Sriwijaya people offered the Monks Gold Lotus flower. The richness of gold made them create a golden thread as Royalty symbol. Unfortunately, in that era, 7th-9th of century people in Sriwijaya has not been able to produce the golden thread. They send the gold to Thailand & China and ask them to make it as golden thread. In this stage, the multicultural has been developed. Sriwijaya kingdom citizen had been influenced by the culture of Thailand and China. Gold and silk in South East Asia Kingdom is the symbol of power (Maxwell:2014). Fine textiles one of the symbol of power and social stratification at that time in Kingdom Sriwijaya. Only King or Royalty family who could wear fine textiles which covered by gold. This fine textiles called songket in Palembang language. Songket has many variants according to the patterns. In this article Lepus songket is the primary data of research.

The fine textiles that made in Sriwijaya is songket, or some kingdom in South East Asia called them gold brocade. Songket came form the word, sungkit, to put gold thread in the upright of weaving cotton fabrics. The gold thread appeared in the surface of clothes and shining luxurious and beautiful. Songket crafted by hand made with special skills, through several steps in the making. This precious textile made in a several steps and need a long time, could be a couple months

The Songket Lepus is the most precious one and the first songket that ever made in the history of Palembang Songket. The Lepus created in the palace, by royalty family and made for the King and his family. The maker usually the girl that has not been married, while they waiting for the groom. King has special the experts who came from the royalty family and taught the princess and royalty family to make songket. This expertise was challenging since the one who make songket need to know the step and patiently do the delicate finishing. The process to make one songket around 8 months or more, depend on how complicated the patterns and how much threads would be applied.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This article using historical methods to explain the multicultural representation in Lepus Palembang songket. The Steps of historical methods by Barzun & Graff (2004) with 7 cronological steps as follows:

1. Subject selection
2. Literature review as secondary sources
3. Taking a note as analytical of thought
4. Fact finding from primary data or source data
5. Data verifications
6. Turning facts into ideas

7. Organizing & writing the story

Songket Palembang has many variants, the first songket is Lepus. Lepus songket is so glamorous, there are so many golden thread appeared, it almost covering the surface of textiles. Songket is Palembang language and as a name of fabrics was born at the Sultanate Palembang era in 1659 (Indonesiana:2015). Songket used to be mentioned as “Golden Fabrics” (Maxwell:2014). As gold and silk is the new status symbol in Southeast Asia, King and Queen wear it as festive clothes when they held important ceremony. The Sriwijaya kingdom blessed by the land which has gold mines.

Multicultural definitions by Robert Longley is the way in which a society deals with cultural diversity, both at the national and at the community level. Sociologically, multiculturalism assumes that society as a whole benefits from increased diversity through the harmonious coexistence of different cultures (Longley:2018). Multiculturalism is the key to achieving a high degree of cultural diversity. Diversity occurs when people of different races, nationalities, religions, ethnicities, and philosophies come together to form a community. A truly diverse society is one that recognizes and values the cultural differences in its people.

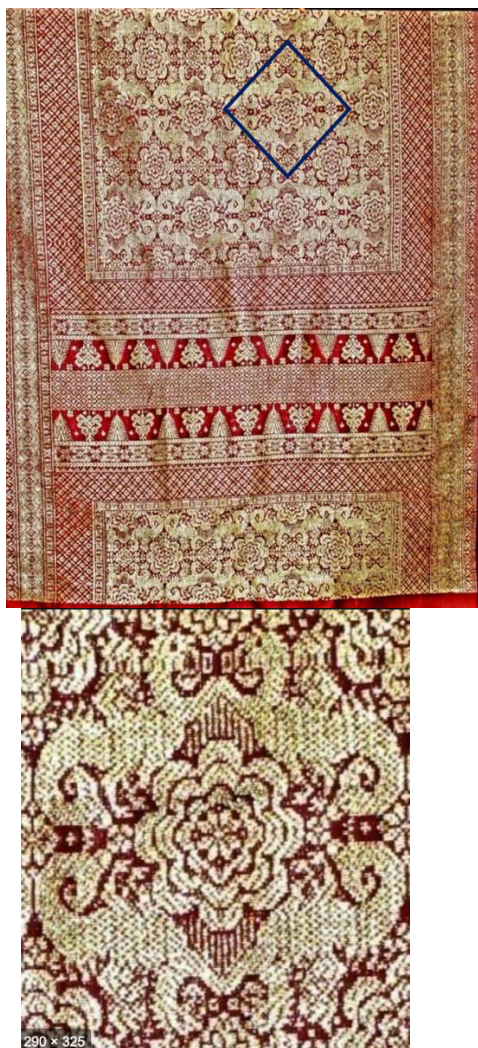
The position of Palembang as the capital city of Sriwijaya made this Kingdom as important port in Asia. The strength of Sriwijaya Kingdom in the Economy before the 15th century is:

1. Product Market. Trading by Chinese sailors happened here (Reid:2011)
2. Trading Center. Palembang as a city of trader visited by many

Arab (Islamic), China, Portugues (Ferrand:1992)

3. Trade Link. The Sriwijaya controlled the Malayan sea. Sriwijaya is a trade hub because of its position which lies in the path in international trade from East Asia to West Asia and Europe (Burger, 1962: 26).

This economic facts is the source of multicultural relations that happened since Palembang has the strength in international territory. The traders brought their culture to Palembang, and vice versa they bought Sriwijaya cultures to their country. Gold trading between Palembang royalty with China trader is one of the important roles in the history of Lepus songket. The methods of producing golden thread was came from China and Thailand. Natural silk fabric is the canvas of golden thread with patterns followed by the daily life of Kings or symbol of power. Tha symbol of power is Dragon, in Palembang called as Nago. Nago besaung (Palembang language) is fighting dragon. This philosophy explained about the hope or prayer to the King who would be powerful, prosper and granted happiness forever.



Figur 3 The fighting Dragon Patterns (Nago Besaung)
Source (Kunian;2016)

Red and gold color of Lepus songket influenced by China. The red colors symbol of power, happiness. Gold color is the symbol of prosperity. The Chinese reported to have made gold thread at 300 BC (Maxwell:2014). The golden thread China has so many development in Tang Dynasty in 7th Century AD, this was the prove of influence of China to Lepus songket in Palembang.

The Lepus Palembang Songket back to 7th – 19th Century AD only allowed wear by King and royalty family but since the economic growth and the Sultanate has been a symbol in Palembang, the ordinary people could wear it. The function of Lepus Palembang Songket is for wedding

ceremony, in Palembang they call it “Aesan Gede”. This is the proof of fashion theory adaptation called “Trickle Down” theory. The "trickle-down" theory offers a straightforward way of predicting fashion diffusion: a hierarchical process whereby individuals with high status establish fashion trends, only to be imitated by lower-status individuals wearing cheaper versions of the styles. Subsequently, high-status individuals become motivated to differentiate themselves by moving on to a new trend (Kaiser:2020). The economic growth of Palembang citizen has made them afford to buy the Lepus Songket which has high cost to consume.



Figur 4 “Aesan Gede”, Lepus Palembang Songket as Bridal Fashion
Source (Hutabarat:2018)

The Loom is another proof of multicultural representation, the loom that has been used in Khmer and Thailand. The procedure of the loom made the result of gold brocade and songket has symmetrical patterning, this become character of golden thread in South East Asia.



Figur 5 The Loom of Lepus Palembang Songket
 Source (Fimela:2014)

The Lepus for the first time made for tanjak or hat for men, but in the development of tanjak, The royalty made Lepus as shoulder clothes. The shoulder clothes influenced by India & Khmer called Sabai (Maxwell:2014).



Figur 6 Lepus Palembang Songket Shoulder Clothes

The fabrics of silk for Lepus songket came from Arab countries, India and China. The trader came to Palembang and offered this fabrics. In Palembang Silk is the luxurious textiles that used by King and royalty family. The expert of Lepus songket took silk as background fabrics for golden or silver thread. The reason why Silk as a background is the shimmering effect that came from silk would be enhanced the golde thread.

Archeological data showed that the multicultural also came from the religion. India as a central of Hinduism brought that to Palembang, Sriwijaya. China brought Buddhist monks to Sriwijaya. The relations between Sriwijaya, China and India happened when I-tsing journey to Nalanda University in India. I-tsing stop over in Palembang while waiting for the good weather or monsoon seasons. In Nalanda, India, Sriwijaya built the doorm for their students who study Buddha in India. This relations also influenced the multicultural and showed in this archeology data.



Figur 7 Archeology Data of Shiva Statue with Lepus Songket Pattern
 Source (Purwanti:2016)

The Data has been showed that multicultural representation in Lepus Palembang songket has many forms. From

7th Century AD until today the influence of multicultural presented. Since the Sultanate of Palembang integrated themselves to Republic of Indonesia and Palembang is the 9th biggest city in Indonesia the influence still there and the young generation in Indonesia is the cultural preserver.

CONCLUSION

Lepus songket Palembang is the precious multicultural legacy owned by not just only Indonesia but South East Asian countries. Multicultural representation in Lepus songket Palembang influenced by internal and external factors whose connected time to time in Sriwijaya Kingdom now Palembang. Gold is the symbol of status

from the Royalty family until nowadays. The red and colors is the dominant colors that appeared at Lepus Palembang songket.

Fashion Leadership Theory applied in the history of Lepus Songket Palembang, in the era of Sriwijaya only king and his family who could wear Lepus Songket, but now people could wear it as bridal fashion. The theory called “trickle down fashion leadership theory”.

This precious legacy should be preserved by young generation of Palembang and Indonesia. The future research needed to find the strategic ideas about how to influence young generation to preserve the legacy of Lepus Palembang songket.

The research would be the cultural preservation project with other countries in the Southeast Asia, China and India.

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