



The Appreciation of Nature for the Design Creativity on *Songket* Weaving Cloth

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ABSTRACT: Symbol is a means of non-verbal communication which is generally used in culture. The use of symbols is for the needs of expressing cultural elements possessed by an ethnic or even a nation. For example, various symbols are used on *songket* weaving cloth and the symbols are interpreted having different meaning based on the cultural background of the people where the *songket* weaving cloth is produced. This is qualitative research focuses on the symbols and meaning delivered on the design of Balinese *songket* weaving cloth. The research uses observation method and deep interviews for data collection. Theories of linguistic semantic and linguistic semiotic are applied for the need of the analysis. The analysis highlights on the type and meaning of symbols. The results show there are five classifications of symbol based on the motif design. The interpreted meaning of every symbol is generally to the nature appreciation since the artists life is very close to nature.

KEY WORDS: symbols, meaning, *songket* weaving cloth.

1. INTRODUCTION

Songket weaving cloth is a cultural heritage possessed by the Indonesian people, including the Balinese. The types of *songket* weaving cloth are: cloth 'kamen', kampuh or saput, scarf 'selendang', and headband 'destar'. Like other weaving cloth, *songket* also has various symbols delivered in the motifs originating from the environment, tradition, culture and imagination of designers, craftsmen and also the *songket* weavers themselves. The existence of the art of *songket* weaving cannot be separated from the background of Balinese life which is based on Hindu cultural values. In Hindu religious ritual activities, *songket* has an important role. It is used in various religious activities for example prayers to holy places (temples), ceremonies for examples adolescence ceremony, tooth filing ceremonies, wedding ceremonies, etc. Apart from ceremonial needs, *songket* weaving is also used in cultural parades, one of which is at the Bali provincial government's annual event (Bali Arts Festival). The use of *songket* cloth through the potential of each region (district/city) in Bali is displayed at carnival events. Another thing about using *songket* weaving cloth is to show the status of the people because it is a qualified weaving cloth at a relatively expensive price. In line with current fashion developments, *songket* weaving cloth is used as material for accessories such as bags, wallets, sandals, etc. in combination with other materials. In various types of accessories, *songket* weaving cloth is designed with decorative motifs which have very beautiful aesthetic value (Marhaeni, et al., 2013: 77-79).

Songket weaving cloth is the object of this research since the symbols used and outlined in the motifs make this woven cloth as a communication medium in conveying the social and cultural meanings of certain community or ethnic groups where the woven cloth is made and used. Analysis of the types of symbols expressed in various motifs and meanings on in this research applied linguistic theory in the fields of semantics and semiotics.

Semantic and Semiotic theories are two theories used to analyze the types of motifs and meanings found in *songket* weaving cloth. Semiotic and semantic theories are used to analyze nonverbal or visual elements in various motifs and colors of *songket* so that the cultural information and life values contained in it can be well understood by the public. It is hoped that people will appreciate, preserve, maintain, introduce, and develop more the noble culture inherited from their ancestors. Based on the description in the background, the aim of this research is to examine two aspects related to *songket* weaving cloth, namely (1) types of symbols and (2) meaning of symbols.

2. THEORY AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Semantic and Semiotic theories are two theories used to analyze the types of motifs and meanings found in *songket* weaving cloth. The two theories are used to analyze nonverbal or visual elements in various motifs and colors of *songket* weaving cloth so that the



cultural information and life values contained in it can be well understood by the public. It is hoped that people who have this culture will appreciate, preserve, maintain, introduce, and develop more the moral culture inherited from their ancestors. There are three similar studies reviewed for the purposes of this research. Research entitled 'Buleleng Songket Weaving in the Era of Globalization' was conducted by Sila, I Nyoman and Dewa Ayu Made Budhyani (2017). Three things focus on in this research, namely (1) Buleleng songket weaving motifs as traditional Balinese cultural heritage, (2) the development of Buleleng songket weaving in the era of globalization, and (3) the impact of globalization on craftsmen and their production results. The next research was conducted by Mujaddidah, et al (2016) with the title 'Designing a Visual Book on Balinese Weaving as an Effort to Preserve Weaving. The main content of this book is a variety of motifs and types of weaving. Mujaddidah, et al.'s research emphasizes documenting everything about traditional Balinese weaving. Research conducted by Seprisyam, et al (2021) with the title 'Commodification of Silungkang Songket in Tourism Development in Sawahlunto City'. This research provides information that the development of tourism in an area will have an influence on life where tourism develops. One influence is on the cultural products owned by the area.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This is a qualitative research which applied observation method supported with deep interview for data collection and information. The research was conducted on two weaving businesses, namely Jepun Bali Weaving in the Municipality of Denpasar and Astiti Weaving in Klungkung Regency. There are two key informants who at a time as the owners of the weaving business. The participant observation method was also used in the research. In observation deep interview is conducted on sources by asking things the researcher sees and hears related to the formulated problems in order to gain deeper and more detailed knowledge and understanding. There is a number of aspects involved in the observation such as (1) the circumstances/situations in the informant's house or residence, workplace or environment; (2) people who participate in the situation, including gender, age, profession, place of origin, and etc; (3) activities carried out by humans in that situation; (4) objects existing places where research is conducted along with their location and use; (5) deeds, that is action in process of ongoing activity of the situation observed; face expression which can be seen as reflection of feelings and emotion. Technique of deep interview is used for digging information about individual experience and unstructured questions are also asked. The data collected in this research is qualitative data. The data is analyzed by following qualitative data analysis procedures, namely data reduction, presenting data, interpreting data, and drawing conclusion.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Symbols on *Songket* Weaving Cloth

The design of symbol on *songket* weaving cloth are influenced by cultural knowledge and beliefs that have been adapted to the natural environment and social organization system of the community. Types of cloth with certain motifs and colors are dressed in by people who have certain roles in their environment. Usually, decorative motifs are symbols that have meanings which bring benefit for the position, health and happiness of the people who wear it (Prayitno, 2009: 32).

The motifs and colors of *songket* weaving cloth found in the two research locations are varied. The variety of motifs and colors depends on the knowledge of the sources and sometimes also the buyers or consumers. The types of motifs and colors of *songket* weaving cloth used as data in this research are limited in number. This limitation has a reason because the two informants only allowed some of their work to be documented. This condition also concerns copyright issues which they do not yet own. If they do not have the copyright and the production has already been marketed, it will be easily imitated by other craftsmen or consumers. Based on these reasons, this research only provides less than ten motifs and colors that are used for the need of data analysis. These motifs are in line with the classification of motifs which consists of five classifications, namely (1) classification of figurative motifs, (2) classification of geometric motifs, and (3) classification of floral motifs, (4) classification of fauna motifs, and (5) classification of decorative motifs. which is a combination of two or three classifications of motifs that have been mentioned and are then given a name according to their formula. The following are derivatives of the five motifs found at the two research locations. These motifs are *punggelan* motifs, *boma* motifs, *wajik ukir* 'carved diamond' motifs, *wajik ukir kombinasi* 'combined carved diamond' motifs, *jumputan* motifs, flower motifs, leaf motifs, and peacock motifs. The motif of *songket* weaving cloth is in the *lusi* 'warp' and this differentiates it from *endek* weaving in which the motif in *endek* weaving is in the *pakan* 'weft'.

The symbols delineated in the *songket* weaving cloth motifs are inspired by the environment as well as flora and fauna. Based on the result of the interview it is stated that figurative and geometric motifs are rarely used because these motifs are classified as interruptive motifs. This means that the two types of motifs (geometric and figurative) cannot be presented alone. This means that geometric and figurative motifs require the presence of other motifs, namely flora and fauna motifs as motifs that can stand alone or without the presence of other motifs. Motif making is also inspired by life experience or through observation, the process of imitation accompanied by development or modification and also assisted by using the Koreldo application for the design. However, inspiration for motifs also comes from market or also from buyers.

The process of coloring *songket* weaving cloth goes through four to five process stages because the motif of this cloth lies in the *lusi* threads. The coloring process is done by dipping. After the *lusi* thread has been dyed, the next step is the *nganyinin* process, namely the process of measuring the thread, followed by the stage of brewing it with starch. The next stage continues with injection because the motif is in the *pandalan* and is perfected through the weaving process. There are two types of *songket* weaving dyes, namely natural dyes and chemical or artificial dyes. Natural dyes are produced from fruits such as dragon fruit, noni fruit, tree bark, and the others.

Regarding the type of thread as the main material for weaving, it is known that weaving craftsmen in Gelgel Village mostly use silk thread and a chemical dye called naphthol. The reason for using chemical dyes is because the result of the color is brighter and it is not fade easily. The process does not take a long time because there are no process stages like in making colors which use natural sources such as plants. Red, black, and white or bone white are the three types of colors favored by *songket* weaving craftsmen in general. This is related to the color symbols attached to the Tri Murti, namely the gods in Hinduism. The red color is the symbol of Lord Brahma, the black color is the symbol of Lord Vishnu, and the white color is the symbol of Lord Shiva. The following is a description of the classification of motifs and their derivatives found at the two research locations.

The classification of figurative motifs takes a lot from shadow puppet stories, characters, and also in the form of heads such as barong heads, human heads, *punggelan*, etc. The following are two derivatives of figurative motifs found in both research locations. The two figurative motifs are the *punggelan* figurative motif and the *boma* figurative motif. Explanations from both informants stated that figurative motifs cannot stand alone. This means that figurative motifs must be accompanied by one or two other motifs, namely geometric motifs and flora and fauna motifs. Below is a figurative *punggelan* motif that tells the story of the natural occurrence of a lunar eclipse.

(a) *Punggelan* Motif



(source: research doc.)

Motif (a) above is called the *punggelan* figurative motif which tells the story of a lunar eclipse which in Balinese is called Bulan Kepangan. In Hindu belief, a lunar eclipse occurs due to an attempt by one of God's manifestations, namely Bhatara Kala Rau, to swallow the moon. However, this wish is not accomplished and even Bhatara Kala Rau's head and body are parted so that the moon slowly escapes from his grip.

(b) *Boma* Motif



(source: research doc.)

The figurative motif of *boma* is a motif that has been known since the time of the longest reigning kingdom in Bali, namely the Gelgel Kingdom. The Gelgel Kingdom is in Semarapura City, Klungkung Regency. The figurative motif of the *boma* tells the story of the symbol of the Gelgel Kingdom which functioned as a guard or defender of the kingdom's territory. The figurative motif of the *boma* is represented by a scary and haunted facial appearance with its round eyes and large and very sharp fangs. Representation is in accordance with its function as a defender or guardian.

The next motif is a motif with geometric shapes. The classification of geometric motifs is one of the oldest motifs. This motif uses stripes, triangles, rectangles, *lubeng* or square shapes. Geometric classification motifs also utilize the shapes of objects around human life, such as the shapes of kitchen utensils such as bowls, glasses, plates, cake molds, etc; formulae of home equipment such as tables, chairs, cupboards, etc; One of the building ornaments is a *loster* (wind hole). The motif below is a geometric classification motif with a dominance of rectangular formulae found at the two research locations. The three classifications of geometric motifs and their derivatives are (a) combined carved diamond motifs, (b) carved diamond motifs, and (c) geometric motifs with the *jumputan* type.

The geometric motif of combined carved diamonds is fortified with floral motifs, especially fully flowers, with the aim of making the appearance of the geometric motif give the impression more supple, flexible, beautiful, and no empty spaces. Meanwhile, the *jumputan* geometric motif does not fill all the spaces, meaning there are empty spaces. However, the *jumputan* geometric motif is also fortified with floral motifs, especially flowers, as shown in image (c).

(a) Combination of Carved Diamond Motif



(source: research doc.)

(b) Carved Diamond Motif



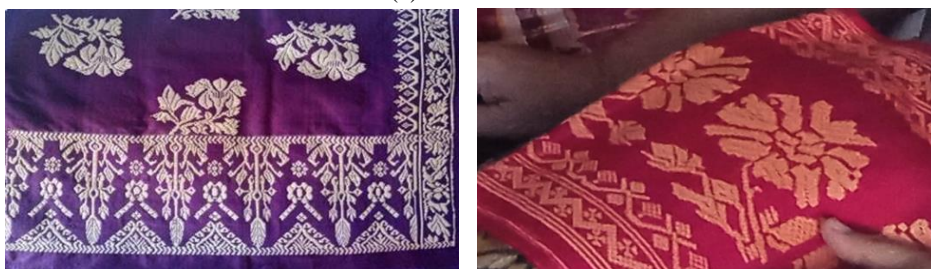
(c) Geometric *Jumputan* Motif



(source: research doc.)

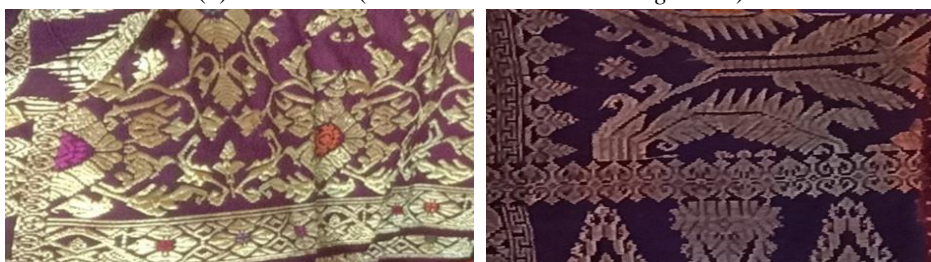
The third classification of motifs is floral motifs. Floral motifs are the only motifs that are independent when compared to the classification of figurative, decorative, fauna, and geometric motifs. It is classified as an independent motif because the floral motif can be displayed without the presence of the other four motifs. The following are two floral motifs found at both research locations. These motifs are flower motifs and leaf motifs which in Balinese are called *bunbunan* motifs or *bun samblung* motifs. Floral motifs combine with geometric motifs and likewise with leaf motifs which also combine with geometric motifs. The use of geometric motifs in the two derivatives of the floral motif classification is to fill the space at the edges of the fabric to make it neater.

(a) Flower Motif



(source: research doc.)

(b) Leaf Motif (*Bunbunan* or *Bun Samblung* Motif)



(source: research doc.)

There are two fauna motifs found, namely the peacock fauna motif and the dragon fauna motif. The peacock fauna motif is found at both research locations, while the dragon fauna motif, which is a mythological animal, is downloaded from the internet. In both motifs, these are combined with geometric motifs and floral motifs. The combination with geometric motifs is mainly to fill the space on the edges of the weaving cloth to make it full, neat, and more beautiful. The peacock motif is very easy to find because the beauty of the peacock itself is very inspiring to use as a motif on *songket* weaving cloth products. Likewise, the dragon motif as a mythological animal is also often included in *songket* weaving cloth.

(a) Peacock Motif



(source: research doc.)

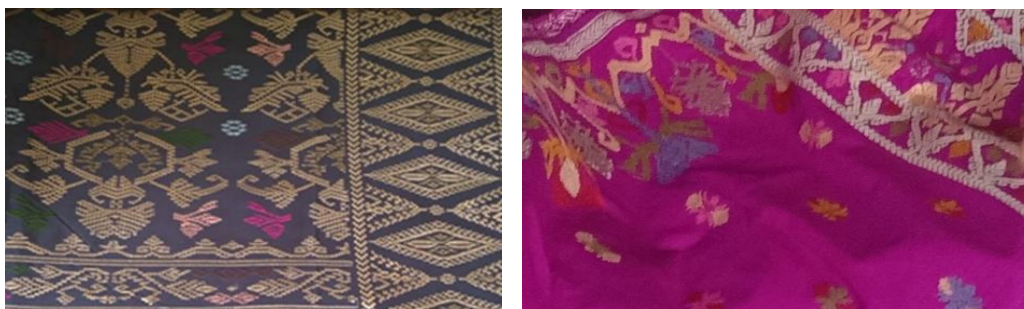
(b) Dragon Motif



(source: <https://twitter.com/tonyrakagallery/status/1200583237669511168>)

Decorative motif is one of the five motifs in *songket* weaving cloth. This motif combines three to four existing motifs such as figurative, flora, fauna, and geometric. As seen in the decorative motif below, it combines three motifs, namely geometric motifs, floral motifs, and fauna motifs. Among these three motifs, floral motifs are generally dominated. It proves that human life is close to the natural environment.

Decorative Motif



(source: research doc.)

4.2 Meaning of Symbols in *Songket* Weaving Motifs

The processing of motifs in *songket* weaving lies in the *lusi* threads, namely threads that stretch horizontally. Meanwhile, the thread that stretches vertically is called the *pakan* thread. The files or motif prototypes are designed by the craftsmen while those who are *songket* weavers usually known as the *sungkit* craftsmen because the process of *nyungkit* 'injecting'. To produce the motifs using this method is becoming increasingly rare because it takes a relatively long time and the size of the motifs is starting to get smaller. Currently, the Koledro application is used, a software for creating designs. The complexity of making motifs on *songket* depends on the number of *guuns* (sticks) ranging from 50 for simple motifs to 250 for complex motifs such as dragon motifs.

The coloring of *songket* goes from four to five stage process because the motif is in the *lusi* which is then lifted into a *guun* to become a motif. The time required is at least three months. The dyeing process goes through three stages, namely dyeing the *lusi* threads, *nganyiin*, and the longest process is injecting (*nyungkit*). Motif making is not only inspired by everything that exists in



nature, life experiences are carried out through a process of observing, imitating, and developing, and motifs have been given by consumers.

Motifs or what are also called decorations on songket weaving cloth are not only the aesthetic appearance or beauty of an art work, but also the decorations have their own meaning which is a characteristic of where the *songket* weaving cloth is produced. These motifs usually take the form of geometric shapes, channels or stripes, plants which show how important nature is for human survival. There are also motifs inspired from fruit and food such as *sari kaya* and *wajik* which are believed to be the favorite foods of noble (royal) families at that time. The reason is because the use of *songket* weaving cloth is limited to noble (royal) families.

Data from both research locations informs that *songket* weaving cloth motifs are determined into five classifications, namely figurative motif classification, geometric motif classification (in the form of stripes, triangles, rectangles, squares or *lubeng*), flora motif classification, fauna motif classification, and decorative motif classification. Each motif classification has its own characteristics which is dominated by that motif classification. For example, figurative motifs will certainly be dominated by the presence of characters or figures designed by weaving craftsmen. The derivative of the motif classification will convey the meaning, message, philosophy that the motif designer wants to deliver through each piece of material, whether it is in the form of *kamen/kemben* 'cloth', *saput* 'cloth for men with the size half of the normal cloth', *udeng* 'headband', and also other accessories such as bags, wallets, masks, etc.

This research data consists of five motif classifications. For example, the *punggelan* motif is a classification of figurative motifs because it takes the story of the natural occurrence of a lunar eclipse. In this natural occurrence, Sang Kala Rau's strong desire to be able to swallow the moon is stated. The moon was swallowed by Sang Kala Rau which caused the universe to become dark because the moon could not reflect light. However, the dark situation did not last long and the universe gradually fell apart because a beheading occurred which caused Sang Kala Rau's head to be detached from his body. Because the head and body are detached, the moon can slowly come out and reflect light. The meaning conveyed from this happening as delineated in the *punggelan* motif is that the universe will not leave this world in darkness caused by negative forces. Positive things must be winners in the universe.

The next motif classification is geometric motifs which is classified as the oldest motif classification (information from the informants). Classification of this motif with its derivative, namely the carved diamond motif. The carved diamond motif is inspired by objects around human life. Carved diamond motifs generally take the shape of parallelograms that line up neatly either in straight lines or form other patterns which are usually used in jumputan motifs. The interpreted meaning of this carved diamond motif is that life must be lived regularly and with discipline and not deviate from the predetermined rules. If these things have been done, life will be lived out beautifully, just like the flora (flowers) that fill the empty spaces with carved diamond motifs.

The next classification of motifs is floral motifs which is referred to as motif classifications that can stand alone or without the presence of other motifs. Floral motifs consist of flowers and leaves which are abundantly available in nature. Therefore, designers, and craftsmen can easily get inspiration from the flora around them. There is one flower motif and one leaf motif which is used for data analysis to find out its meaning. Interpretation based on semantic theory and semiotic theory, flowers always radiate beauty, value, benefits, and are often accompanied by a fragrant smell (except corpse flowers). Beauty radiates from its shape, color, and size. The value and benefits of flowers will be higher if they are categorized as rare flowers. Flora in the form of leaves is no less important as a motif that can also stand alone. Flora in the form of leaves has several colors that can be thought to be almost the same as the colors of flowers. Based on the very diverse shapes, colors, and sizes of both flowers and leaves, it can be interpreted that the meaning to be conveyed is the beautiful colors of life with their own twists and turns.

The next data is a classification of fauna motifs which uses all types of fauna in the universe. In this research, one fauna motif was found, namely the peacock motif. The peacock motif is depicted in a pose that is always facing each other. According to information from the two informants, peacock motifs are often attired by bridal couples (especially newly married people). Peacocks symbolize beauty, luxury, and loyalty. Therefore, it is appropriate for newlyweds to attire it because the aim of forming a bond in a household is to establish a loyal relationship so that the relationship will be blessed with happiness and prosperity.

The fifth classification of motifs is the classification of decorative motifs that combine at least three motifs in one design. Motifs that are always present for decorative motif purposes are floral motifs, whether in the form of flowers or leaves. The meaning conveyed in a decorative motif really depends on the main motif, whether it is a figurative motif with the type of figure (shadow puppet, royal, animal) or a geometric motif. Meanwhile, the floral motif is only a support in the sense of making the decorative motif more festive and beautiful.



5. CONCLUSION

Results of the analysis shows that there are five classifications found on the symbol of *songket* weaving cloth at the two research locations. The classifications are respectively figurative, geometric, flora, fauna, and decorative. Among those five classifications, flora is the only classification which can stand by itself or in other words this classification does not need the present of the other four classifications. In addition, flora classification is needed in all classification with the function to fulfil and beautify the empty spaces. Geometric classification belongs to the oldest one. The meaning interpreted is generally the appreciation to the nature so that there are meanings of beauty, luxury, majesty, and discipline.

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