

Conference Paper

Acculturation of Palembang Songket Cloth Culture

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Abstract.

This article discusses cultural acculturation related to Palembang songket fabric. The study reveals how Palembang songket cloth experiences cultural acculturation through interaction with various elements of local, regional, and global culture. Through this study, the authors identified various factors that influence acculturation of songket fabric, such as migration, trade, and cultural interaction. The approach used in this study is a qualitative approach. Qualitative approaches are often used in cultural studies to understand and analyze acculturation processes, cultural interactions, and the role of songket cloth in Palembang society. Qualitative research methods involve data collection through observation, interviews, and text analysis, as well as in-depth interpretation to understand complex cultural phenomena. The results of the study are in the context of acculturation; Palembang songket cloth has experienced the influence of Malay, Chinese, Arab, and Indian cultures, which is reflected in the patterns and motifs that exist on songket cloth. In addition, the acculturation of Palembang songket fabric culture also reflects adaptation to global market trends and demands. This article contributes to an understanding of how cultural acculturation can shape and influence a region's distinctive textile traditions, with a case study of Palembang songket fabric as a relevant example.

Keywords: cultural acculturation, Palembang songket cloth, cultural identity

1. Introduction

Palembang is the capital city of South Sumatra Province which has a long history, starting from the glory of the Sriwijaya Kingdom to the Palembang Darussalam Sultanate. The Srivijaya Kingdom, during its heyday around the 7th century, became the forerunner of the city on the banks of the Musi River. There are many priceless relics originating from the Sriwijaya kingdom, one of which is the beautiful wastra (cloth) culture, namely songket. Referring to the opinion of historians John Maxwell and Robyn, it was revealed that the Songket weaving tradition was brought by Chinese and Indian traders through the Malacca Straits to the ports of Sumatra and the north coast of Java Island around the 7th-15th century, which controlled trade in the Southeast Asian region [1]. This is

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similar to the theory put forward by Syarofie [2], which states that songket originated during the Sriwijaya Kingdom in the 13-15th centuries.

The existence of songket cloth shows a high level of culture, because songket cloth contains various things such as the material used, how to do it, the meaning contained in it as well as how it is used and the level of the person wearing it. Andaya revealed that songket was very popular during the Palembang kingdom around 1629, because at that time songket was the clothing of royal members according to their position. It was also stated that in the era of the empire (16-17th century) cloth with gold thread and silver thread was very popular among the nobility [3].

The series of threads arranged neatly through various geometric patterns show that Songket cloth is made with the skill of a loom craftsman who understands the various methods and absolute precision needed to make quality songket cloth, which is at the same time able to decorate the cloth with various songket motifs. This knowledge is usually obtained by passing it from generation to generation. The sparkling gold threads that radiate on the songket cloth, provide its own aesthetic value and show the greatness of the people who wear and weave the songket cloth.

Most of the motifs or decorations applied to Palembang songket are mostly plant motifs, especially those in the form of floral stylizations, besides that there are also compositions of other motifs such as geometric, decorative and animal. There are very few animal motifs on Palembang's songket, but there is one Nago Besaung motif that has a high philosophy due to its connection with the king. Nago besaung is one of the motifs commonly used in weddings as today the bride is considered a king. While the floral motifs on Palembang's songket are rose, ylang, jasmine, henna, pacik, henna, cape, bungo cino and other plants such as bamboo shoots. There are also other motifs such as silver trays, star ante, tretes, and sweet cantek. Based on the quality, from the past until now, songket is divided into three types, namely Songket Lepus, Songket Limar, and Songket Tawur.

In the past, the Lepus and Limar songket types were used by Palembang residents who belonged to the aristocratic circle, while ordinary residents used the Tawur songket type. Songket is also used at traditional wedding ceremonies, and the marhaba event which is the 40 day baby's hair cutting ceremony. In terms of materials and techniques, songket cloth at that time was made with woven techniques, songket cloth was woven using a loom called Gedongan. The materials used to make songket cloth are silk thread and gold-plated thread wire. The beauty of songket cloth in the past lies not only in the motifs but also in the meanings and symbols contained in each motif itself. The color of

songket cloth is more dominant in red and gold, this gives the songket a luxurious and majestic impression, as well as an added value to the beauty of songket cloth.

Palembang Songket cloth is one of Indonesia's cultural heritage which has high historical and aesthetic value. Palembang songket is known for the beauty of its intricate motifs, bright colors and skilled craftsmanship. This cloth is not only a symbol of beauty, but also represents the identity of the people of Palembang. Songket Palembang has a long history that reflects its rich cultural acculturation. In the past, Palembang was a strategic trading center in Southeast Asia [3]. Through this trade, foreign and local cultures interact, resulting in a unique acculturation in the development of songket cloth.

Cultural acculturation in Palembang's Songket cloth occurs through a process of exchange and adaptation. Over time, the Palembang Songket craftsmen integrated new motifs from other cultures, such as India, China, Arabic and the Netherlands. These motifs are adapted and combined with Palembang's original motifs, creating interesting combinations that reflect a rich mix of cultures. In addition, Songket Palembang also describes differences in social status in society. In the past, Songket Palembang was only used by the royal and aristocratic families as a symbol of power and luxury. However, over time, the Palembang Songket cloth began to be used more widely by the people of Palembang, both for formal and non-formal events.

Technological developments and international trade also have an impact on the production of Palembang's Songket cloth. With the existence of modern looms, Palembang's Songket production has become more efficient and faster. However, even though there are changes in the production process, the craftsmen still maintain the quality and authenticity of the Palembang Songket cloth. However, although Songket Palembang has high historical and cultural values, this traditional cloth industry faces various challenges. One of the main challenges is competition from imported fabrics and modern fashion trends. Efforts need to be made to increase awareness of the importance of preserving Palembang's Songket cloth culture and to encourage the use and appreciation of this cloth among local and international communities.

In this article, we will discuss further about the cultural acculturation that occurs in Palembang's Songket cloth, the history of its development. It is hoped that this article can provide a better understanding of the importance of preserving and appreciating the cultural heritage of Palembang's Songket cloth.

2. Research Methods

The method used in this research is descriptive method. According to Sugiyono [4], that the descriptive research method is a method that aims to make systematic, factual, and accurate facts about the facts and characteristics of a particular population or area. The main data source for this research can be obtained through interviews or direct observation in the field, which can then be recorded through written notes or through a voice recorder or by taking photographs [5]. Retrieval of main data through observation and interviews is a combination of activities to see, hear, and ask informants. Informants in this study were several songket woven fabric craftsmen in Palembang City, traditional leaders who participated in songket cloth in Palembang City. In addition, this research also uses qualitative data analysis methods because the data obtained is not in the form of numbers.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Philosophy of the Palembang songket motive

3.1.1. Dragon besaung motive

One of the most well-known motifs in Palembang's personnelgketan culture is the dragon besaung motif. The local people interpret the dragon which is understood as one of the giant mythological animals and besaung means to fight. So dragon besau means a dragon that is fighting. Alam [1] explains that the Dragon is a general term for mythological creatures in the form of reptiles that have large sizes. This creature also appears in several cultures, and in general the form of the dragon is often depicted as a lizard animal that has wings and can breathe fire. In some cultures that recognize this mythological animal, the point of view is also very far adrift, for example Retantoko, Syarofie [2] adds that in European culture, familiarity with dragons is described as mustard, tends to destroy. On the other hand, in the view of Chinese (Chinese) culture, the dragon is considered a wise and majestic figure like a god.

Differences in views in interpreting a phenomenon are actions that often occur. As Syarofie[2] asserts, this is due to past habits and experiences which are the background for the emergence of different interpretations within the group, because in everyday life, humans always get stimulation from outside. However, in the culture of South Sumatra, especially Palembang, the interpretation of a mythological animal, namely the dragon, seems to be closer to the views held in Chinese culture, which views dragons as a

majestic figure. In the view of Palembang culture, dragons are regarded as animals that are considered noble. It was this understanding that later during the Darussalam Sultanate of Palembang, the figure of a dragon contained in songket cloth was still used and inscribed in the various decorative motifs of songket cloth, with the hope that the good qualities found in dragons would be manifested in the culture of the people of Palembang who believed that dragons would bring influence positive in life. This is in line with Decky's writing [6] which explains that the dragon can be interpreted as the personification of goodness, happiness, profit, prosperity, fertility, might and is more associated with all things that are good. In addition, the dragon is one of the sacred symbols that represents growth, hope, and a better life.

3.1.2. Burning star motive

One of the traditional motifs that has been preserved to this day is the shooting star motif. "Star" is one of the objects created by Allah SWT, and while "rakam" in Malay means other colored lines that form a round pattern between roses. Bintang berakam is the term for the name given to this songket by traditional Palembang songket craftsmen which was developed when Islamic teachings entered the royal environment of the Darulssalam Palembang Sultanate. The emergence of the star-rooted motif is not immediately without reason, as the researchers explained in the earlier section that the star-rooted star motif was created because it avoided the original pattern that existed beforehand, namely the dragon motif. Where the dragon motif is not allowed considering that the majority of Palembang people's beliefs at that time were Muslim and in Islamic teachings it is not permissible to depict animate figures. This phenomenon then encourages songket craftsmen to create new songket pattern patterns [1].

The name of the songket lepus bintang berakam is taken based on the basic motif pattern used in this songket. Almost every surface of this type of songket, bintang trinkets spread over the entire surface of the songket. The star motif is taken based on deep contemplation of every object that we often observe, the splendor and beauty of this one God's creation, namely the star is the result of the manifestation of craftsmen on the basis of their love for the creator of the universe, namely Allah SWT. The influence of Islamic religious teachings which occurred very rapidly when the Darulssalam Palembang Sultanate was founded, one of the influences of Islamic religious teachings did not only occur in social life in society, and the rules applied in society. One of them is the rules that are applied in art, almost in several arts follow these rules as well as the way

to dress, and the depiction of an object that is applied in the medium of art, namely traditional woven fabrics [2].

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In another meaning, Decky [6] said that the star is the power of God with all its benefits and beauty, so that the star motif is believed to be a spiritual light for every human being, and the jasmine flower is believed to have a meaning as an antidote to disaster. Jasmine flowers are the dominant motif. This view was then interpreted and understood by Palembang songket craftsmen at that time and stylized into songket streaks, with the hope that the bijak, tough, and noble qualities of one of the celestial bodies created by Allah SWT. The use of star motifs in songket motifs is not only used in Palembang songket, Syarofie [2] explains that in Riau Malay songket culture the use of celestial bodies is also one of the main motifs in Riau songket. The use of celestial bodies to become one of the ornaments in this work of art is evidence of public recognition at that time when the teachings of Islam began to develop in Malay lands.

3.1.3. Silver tray pattern

Trays in Palembang Malay are usually called trays or trays. A typical traditional tool in society. Syarofie [2] explained that trays are commonly used as kitchen tools. Mainly to put objects that will be given to someone to make it look more polite. The contents of the tray may vary depending on the context and location. Sometimes the contents are in the form of food, and drinks when serving food when guests arrive. There are times when a tray is also used as a medium for placing objects that are considered important which will be given to officials or guests who are considered important. In the tradition of South Sumatra, especially Palembang, tray also has a philosophy which

means nampa or nerimo. In the traditional dance culture of South Sumatra, the tray is also seen as a tool that is considered important as a picture of the circle of human life. For example, in the traditional Fence Bride dance, trays or trays are used as a foothold to depict the world around the bride.

Alam [1] added advice on trays or trays in Palembang culture, of course this can be understood starting from the development of the complexity of the functions of trays in a variety of situations and adapting to conditions in the midst of society. In this case, songket craftsmen try to incorporate traditional values as a foundation, ideal expectations, and then pour them into an image that is applied to one of Palembang's songket motifs, which is named the silver tray motif. The silver tray is one of the motifs incorporated in the Palembang songket, the Lepus songket type. The emergence of this type of motif, of course, began with the results of reflections carried out by some songket craftsmen who were trying to develop the latest types of songket motifs.

The Sultanate of Darulsalam Palembang adheres to the teachings of the Islamic religion which does not want the creation of living works of art. Departing from there, Palembang songket craftsmen developed many songket motifs by taking several objects that are often used by local people and one of them is the silver tray motif, as Decky [6] in the book *Kifâyah al-Atqiyâ'* explains that humans are animals that think (*Hayawan an-Nâtiq*) who have many desires and talents. One that humans want to develop is the field of art. So it's no wonder that Palembang Songket artists succeeded in developing the songket motif, namely Nambat Silver, which means tray in Palembang language, *dulang* or *talam*, while silver in the Indonesian dictionary is a metal element which is a type of luxury item commonly used as a jewelery material.

3.1.4. Fall flower motif

The motif that is quite old in the lepus songket type is the falling bungo. Flowers are often also called by the name of the flower, is one part of the plant to produce seeds and is often used as a symbol of beauty and beauty. According to Decky [6] various people judge the usefulness of the flower itself, but one of the most basic things about flowers is the type of plant that symbolizes elegance. During the time of the Darulsalam Sultanate, the Bungan plant was also one of the plants favored by the king's consort and several women who lived in the royal environment. Flowers are usually often planted on a plot of land with various types of flowers that adorn the land page. Plants that never go unnoticed in royal circles are flower plants. This also happened in the Darulsalam

Sultanate of Palembang, land that has been planted with flowers is usually used as a place to relax, and is commonly referred to as a flower garden.

Starting from this phenomenon, the Palembang songket craftsmen at that time took the initiative to make patterned motifs with the theme of plants, namely flower plants, so that falling flower motifs were created. Bungo falling is interpreted as a falling flower, falling here is not just anywhere, but a flower that falls on the water. Falling Bungo is a beauty, especially the flowers that fall on the water. Syarofie [2] explained that water is an element that has an important role in the life of every living creature on this earth. If scientifically water can be interpreted as a chemical compound consisting of two elements, namely the element H₂ (Hydrogen) which binds to the element O₂ (oxygen) which then produces the compound water (H₂O). This means that water is one of the most important elements and becomes an inseparable part of this life. Water is very important, and there are various kinds of uses, ranging from self-purification, plantations, liquid filling in the human body and so on.

3.2. Acculturation of Palembang Songket Cloth Culture

The development of the textile industry, namely the Palembang songket cannot be separated from the influence of the times which indirectly made the songket undergo many changes both in terms of the basic materials used, the method of processing, and the motifs used in the Palembang songket. This can be observed easily in terms of the price variance provided from each songket gallery that provides typical Palembang woven fabrics. Starting from a unit price of IDR 200,000 per share, up to a unit price of IDR 10 million and above, it is available in songket galleries that are spread throughout the Palembang area. Initially, there were only three types of Palembang songket, namely the Lepus songket, the Limar songket, and the Tawur songket. If you look at the methods and materials used, they are indeed different, so people don't have much trouble distinguishing them. Of the three types of songket, both lepus, limar, and tawur songket are the parent of Palembang songket [3].

The form of development of Palembang's classic songket which is meant by researchers lies in the aspect of the pattern of motifs used in the type of songket cloth in this region. At the beginning of the emergence of Palembang songket, namely from the heritage of the Sriwijaya kingdom and the influence of Buddhist teachings, the basic motif contained in songket in this area was only animal-themed, namely the Dragon or the people of Palembang are more familiar with calling it Naga Besaung. This is of

course related to the influence of Buddhist teachings which often juxtapose this type of mythological animal as a type of animal that has good and noble characteristics [1].

However, after the arrival of Islam to Palembang, to be precise during the Darussalam Sultanate (1659), the lepus type songket with the Nago Besaung motif could not be worn by the people of the sultanate because at that time, in the view of adherents of Islamic teachings, it was not permissible to use objects which contained a variety of decoration depicting living creatures with blood, so that the lepus songket with the Nago besaung motif underwent a change in motifs to motifs of inanimate objects and plants.

The view of religiosity adopted by the people of Palembang, does not only have an influence on the regulation of social and cultural life. Furthermore, the influence also has an impact on the handicrafts produced within these community groups. Such as the stylization and distortion processes contained in the Songket motif. The Naga Besaung motif, which was originally in the form of almost resembling a real animal, and when influenced by the Islamic religion, the dragon motif was slightly modified in shape. This phenomenon also occurs in several traditional arts in Indonesia. Summerfield [7] writes that the presence of the Islamic religion in the spirit of the development of the Setrek art in Magelang seems to have enriched its performance, so that the presence of this art in people's lives has increasingly fostered qualities to strengthen the deepening of Islamic teachings. For this reason, it is not surprising that later Palembang songket craftsmen have also succeeded in developing new pattern patterns and not just fixating on the dragon besaung motif, such as shooting stars, silver trays and falling bungos.

In principle, Palembang songket is a type of applied art that is processed using traditional methods, namely by weaving. During the Darulsalam Sultanate of Palembang (1659-1823) woven fabrics were widely used to show and support the social status of community members from social groups in society, especially the royal family. It can be observed that the basic material used in making clothes for royal officials and aristocrats who are widely spread in the Palembang region also uses songket [2]. That is, in conditions like these, songket cloth has become an integral part that cannot be separated from following the development of clothing culture in the Palembang community for a long time. Next, the researcher includes a picture of making Palembang songket in a semi-finished position.

Figure 1 is the process of making songket using the traditional method, namely by weaving. The songket that is being made is the modern dragon besaung songket, this can be seen from the selection of colors used in this songket, namely the dominant blue color. Decky [6] explained that since ancient times until now, the motifs and decorations on Palembang songket have been passed down from generation to generation. The

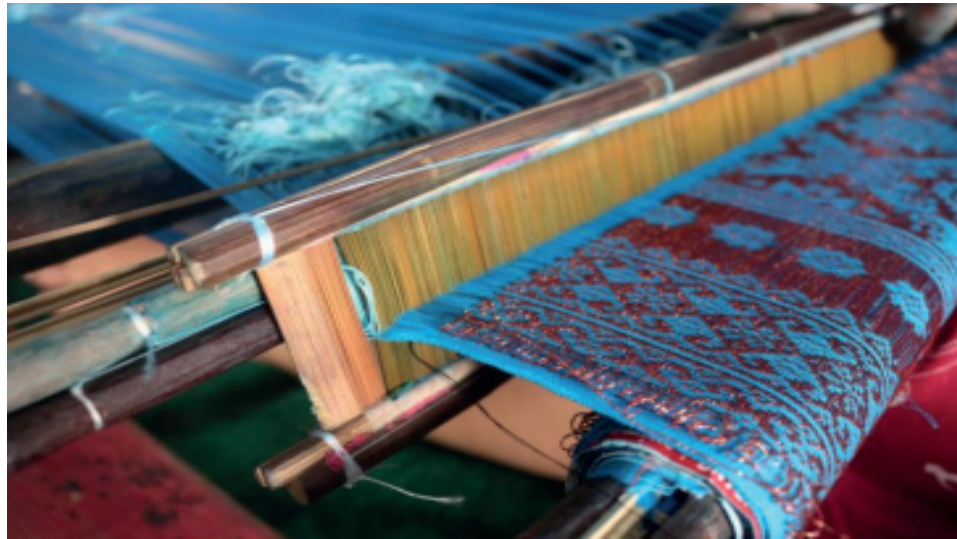


Figure 1: Making Songket Palembang. Source: Personal Documentation (2023).

motifs or decorations referred to by the author are mostly plant motifs, especially those in the form of floral stylizations, besides that there are also compositions of other motifs such as geometric, decorative, animalistic, and make more use of contrasting colors of deep red, silver, and gold. . All of these unraveled motifs are of course combined to complement one another in decorating Palembang songket, thus making it a distinct characteristic or identity of Palembang woven fabric. As Zainal Arifin [8] said, each region has different cultural characteristics. One form of cultural characteristics of each region is manifested in dance or it can be in the form of traditional art that is typical of its culture.

The description in the paragraph above is an overview of Palembang's songket journey to date, but if the researcher observes further there are changes and developments that have occurred in Palembang's songket culture. As explained by the researchers who explained that Palembang's classic songket uses more red, silver and gold colors. The current condition, Palembang songket has changed a lot along with the times, one of the most striking changes lies in the color combination, the basic ingredients used, and the processing method [9]. Songket makers today are no longer just fixated on using high-quality silk thread as the main ingredient, they are more flexible in responding to market demand and provide more choices related to the type of songket and the quality of the songket.

There are several types of songket that are packaged using synthetic yarn as the basic ingredient and the processing method is using a machine that is capable of producing more songket in a shorter time and automatically the price required to obtain this type

of songket is relatively cheaper. Then, there are also songket products that use high-quality basic ingredients, namely copper, gold and silver-plated silk threads, songket that use high-quality basic materials, usually the craftsmen still use traditional methods, namely by weaving and automatically. The time required for the process takes a long time, but usually this type of songket is priced at a fairly high price of 12 million – 20 million. It seems that songket crafts are currently being produced according to the wishes of the songket customers, and not infrequently because there are too many orders for goods, so that many craftsmen now use technological assistance in making songket cloth. In the following, the researchers include one type of songket that is produced using modern tools, namely songket printing machines.



Figure 2: Machine Processed Type Songket. Source: Personal Documentation (2023).

Figure 2 is a type of songket that is mass produced, and how it is made with a machine. This type of songket is usually sold at quite affordable prices for people with a lower middle class economy. Because, for this type of songket, the processing method is usually not too complicated, the basic ingredients used are standard threads, in one production there is a lot. However, in terms of its usefulness, this songket is still the same, which is usually used as a bottom and one part is used as a shawl. This means that currently the role of songket in the community has experienced a shift, where songket used to show the social status of the community, while currently Palembang songket can be owned by all members of Palembang society.

The narrative above explains that the development of the times in the current era has slowly brought changes in the perspective of the people who support the traditional songket art, thus forcing songket craftsmen to be more creative and innovate in meeting customer demands. Starting from this explanation, Maran [10] understands the phenomenon of society in the modern era as it is today which is examined through the process of change from society itself that society is trying to form better economic fulfillment in its life, for that society will always do new things. For example, the songket Limar Cantik Manis is never heard of in the classical Palembang songket group, even though this type of songket is relatively new and seems far from the standards of Palembang's classic songket, the community doesn't make a big deal about it. Apart from that, many Palembang songkets today are crosses or combinations between the lepus songket and the limar songket, the limar songket with the dragon besaung motif. This condition shows that the form of change or development of culture or art in certain communities is an alternative in maintaining the songket tradition in the midst of this current of globalization. As stated by Mislina [11] in her writing, she said that based on experimental results, the batik process can be applied to Palembang songket cloth which is made from natural silk and gold thread. The batik is done by waxing, with Indigosol and Naphtol staining.

Budiwirman (2005) adds that "nothing remains unchanged in this world, except for eternal change". This is a wise sentence that reminds people that the essence of life is change and that change is an idea in humans both as individuals and as a community group. Often these changes are not realized by individuals or a society because the changes that occur take place in an evolutionary or gradual manner. On the other hand, a change in society can also occur quickly with a broad effect, for example the occurrence of a social revolution. The same thing was conveyed by Soekamto [12] that there is no community that stops developing because every community experiences changes that occur slowly or quickly. This means that changes will always occur with the times. In its development, it is not uncommon for cognitive aspects or people's perspectives to shift in seeing symptoms in their environment, such as the people of Palembang in seeing Palembang songket.

The process of shifting the way people see songket cloth does not necessarily come by itself. This change is indeed reinforced by the style of dress or dress model in the modern era which has developed a lot. In this case there is an interaction between the people of Palembang and the various things they encounter that affect their perspective. In line with Purwanti [13] who emphasized that in social interaction, there is a relationship of mutual influence between individuals with one another, there

is a reciprocal relationship that also influences the behavior pattern of each individual as a member of society, either directly or indirectly.

The symptoms that the researcher conveys are indeed only a small part of the form of transformation in seeing this Palembang songket cloth, for that more clearly Boskoff (14) argues that transformation is a change that occurs gradually, when it begins to end is unknown and the transformation produces an unknown form. identical but still related. The changes that occurred in songket cloth did not only occur now, during the glorious Darulsalam Sultanate the style in Palembang songket also changed. For example, changes that occur in the dragon besaung motif, the emergence of new motifs such as the shooting star, silver tray and several other motifs.

Furthermore, Boskof [14] also states that the theory of changes that occur in society is due to influences that come from within (internal), and there are also influences from outside (external). Such as increasing or decreasing population, new discoveries, community conflicts, revolutions. This was preceded by an element of openness, whether forced or not, due to the distinctive characteristics of certain cultures that easily accept the presence of Soekanto's foreign culture [12]. Such a phenomenon is in line with the transformation of the form of the Palembang songket, where it is not detected when and who started the direction of its development. The changes that occur in songket are not significant, but they are very visible from the visual form, such as the use of color and the collaboration between songket lepus and limar which is the choice in creating in the current era. In this case the researcher believes that related to the change in Palembang songket cloth, there must be interaction between the people who own the traditional art, which, as stated by Soekanto [12], that social interaction is not possible if two conditions are not fulfilled, namely social contact and communication (communication). Social contact is the action of an individual or group and has meaning for the perpetrator, while communication is a process of making sense of what is done by someone towards information, attitudes and behavior of other people.

One point that must be understood by all of us, even in terms of color, combination of motifs, and the amalgamation of songket lepus and limar in Palembang's songket culture which has spread widely and has finally been in great demand by its supporting community. Yudhie Sarofi emphasized that colors, basic materials, and shapes may change in Palembang songket, but the motifs that are the basic standard in Palembang songket must still appear, namely the tumpal and tretes motifs in Palembang songket are suggested to remain.

4. Conclusion

In the context of acculturation, Palembang's songket is clear evidence of the influence of various cultures, including Malay, Chinese, Arab and Indian. These influences are clearly visible in the patterns and motifs decorated on the songket. Each pattern and motif reflects a harmonious blend of various cultural elements that provide a distinctive visual richness. However, not only retaining its original cultural roots, Palembang songket cloth has also adopted adaptations to global market trends and demands. In its quest to remain relevant and competitive in the global market, Palembang's songket has incorporated modern elements and contemporary styles into its designs. Thus, the acculturation of Palembang's songket culture not only reflects a rich historical heritage, but also demonstrates adaptability and flexibility to changing times.

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