

THE DOCUMENTATION OF SELAYAH KERINGKAM EMBROIDERY PROCESS IN SARAWAK

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This study aims to investigate the process of *Selayah Keringkam* embroidery in Sarawak as well as understanding the intricacy of art and expertise in producing the *Selayah Keringkam* embroidery that is now becoming the status of Malay women in Sarawak. This study was conducted to examine several types and processing stages of *Selayah Keringkam*, thus, to understand expertise in producing *Selayah Keringkam* embroidery in more depth in order to maintain the uniqueness of *Selayah Keringkam* art for the people of Sarawak. The study involved Malay women in Sarawak who have experiences in processing and styling *Selayah Keringkam*. The information obtained in order to meet the objectives of this study was taken from websites and journals that have been published and studied further through research methodology and previous studies. Research data were analyzed and displayed quantitatively and qualitatively. From the findings of this study, there are various *Selayah Keringkam* embroidery processes that have been researched and recorded in archives, journals and articles related to *Selayah Keringkam*.

Keywords: *Selayah Keringkam Sarawak*,
Process, Embroidery

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. *Selayah Keringkam* in Sarawak

This study was initiated to introduce the Malay traditional clothes of Sarawak which is the *Selayah Keringkam Sarawak* and proceed by examining more in-depth on the *Selayah Keringkam* embroidery process in Sarawak, which includes evidence that are already available by researchers. In addition, this study will be completed with a discussion and conclusion, in which readers are able to learn more and recognize the processes throughout the production journey of *Sarawak Keringkam*.

2. BACKGROUND

Selayah Keringkam Sarawak is a small, glamorous traditional veil that covers the head. *Selayah* is embroidered with neat and luxurious gold thread. The market for this little head scarf was known to be highly exclusive. It was a must have item for a family of traditional Malay Sarawak. *Selayah Keringkam* is traditionally worn at weddings, receptions, marriage ceremonies, and other formal events. The *Selayah Keringkam* is an invaluable legacy in every Malay household, handed down from generation to generation (Norseha Unin, 2012).

Nowadays, the traditional veil is often worn by Sarawak Malays at cultural festivals and special occasions. *Selayah Keringkam* Malay Sarawak is often seen in dark red, but presently, there are diverse color variations on *Selayah Keringkam* Sarawak as well as attractive embroidery that shows a variety of motifs. According to the Borneo Post (2018), the embroidery found in *Selayah Keringkam* is usually done on rare fabrics such as *kain pelikat*, *kasa rubia*, *kain kasa getah*, or organza silk with a special flat-shaped needle with two holes and a sharp point at the end. Therefore, this *Selayah Keringkam* embroidery process has various ways and needs to be investigated more carefully.

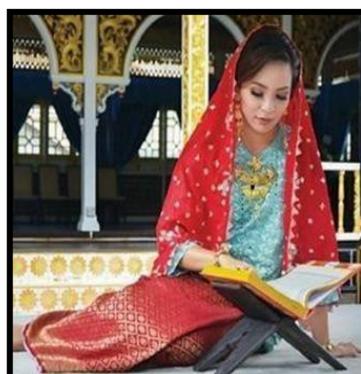


Figure 1: *Selayah Keringkam* used to cover the head

(Source: <https://www.borneotalk.com/the-enduring-allure-of-sarawaks-keringkam-and-songket/>)

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1. The Documentation Process

Sudarsono (2017) says that the meaning of documentation varies depending on different angles. Awang (n.d) defines documentation as a written report that describes an invention, information and ideas in detail until a prototype is successfully produced. Awang (n.d) also said that documentation is crucial because it can be used as references for future needs. According to Aty (n.d), documentation is the work of recording an activity or an important situation to a person. For example, noting the equipment used and the process or stages that needed to be carried out to produce *Selayah Keringkam* embroidery. Next, Herlindah, Ningsih and Prayetno (2019) explain that documentation is an attempt to explain how a system works by using various forms such as flow charts, diagrams as well as other narrative or written forms.

Hartono (n.d) defines a process as a sequence of execution or stages that must be carried out in preparing a job effectively and efficiently. In addition, processes are also defined as activities that are closely related to one another.

3.2. *Selayah Keringkam* in Sarawak

According to Salem (2012), the word *Keringkam* comes from the root word *kelingkam* which has the same meaning as *kerikam*. According to the fourth edition of *Kamus Dewan dan Pustaka*, the word *kerikam* means coarse thread coated with gold or silver thread which often used to create fabric embroidery work. Salem (2012), also explained that most likely the word *Keringkam* comes from a combination of two words namely *keling* and *torn*. The *keling* is a word that has been used by Malays even before the arrival of the Portuguese, Dutch and British in the Malay Archipelago. The word *torn* is believed originated from the Ancient Cambodian language which means a kind of cloth (Salem, 2012). However, the word *torn* or *kham* carries a different meaning in Thai which is gold or something that is unique and beautiful. Amri, Haron, Mutalid and Hamdzun (2019) say that the word *Keringkam* is taken from the name of the gold thread used to do embroidery work.

Amri, Haron and Saiman (2018_a), *Selayah Keringkam* is a very unique handicraft in Sarawak because to produce it, extensive skills are needed in the art of embroidery. Formerly, *Selayah Keringkam* embroidery was popular for its exceptional beauty embroidered on the surfaces of *selayah* or head scarfs, *baju kurung* and *baju kebaya* (Amri, Haron, Mutalid and Hamdzun, 2019).

Rusyaidi (2010), explained that among the important equipment needed to perform *Selayah Keringkam* embroidery is gold thread or silver thread, cloth and special flat needles with two holes and wooden frames or better known as *pemidang* or *pedangan*. According to Josmani, Kibat, Halamy and Chan (2012), gold threads are at a high cost ranging from RM 75 to RM85. This is because the product was imported from the neighbouring country which is Singapore and then resold in retails that can only be found in Indian Street area of Kuching, Sarawak. This clearly proves that there are still a number of Sarawakians who still carry out this *Selayah Keringkam* embroidery work.

Amri et al. al. (2018_a) say that the second material is fabric. The fabric used is the *kain dasar* (base fabric) and *kain penghubung* (connector fabric). The base fabric is *kain rubia*, *kain awal* and chiffon which are available in a variety of different fabric materials such as silk and cotton. *Kain penghubung* is the fabric used to be the connector to the *kain dasar* and the wooden frame (*pemidang*). Josmani, Kibat, Halamy and Chan (2012), stated that the next piece of equipment is a needle or better known as a two-hole flat needle measuring 3 centimeters long and 0.3 centimeters wide. This needle is quite difficult to find and can only be found in some places, such as Sibu, Sarawak. The last piece of equipment is the wooden frame (*pemidang*). There are two types of *pemidang*, namely *pemidang berkaki tiga* and *pemidang berkaki empat*. This *pemidang* is made of *meranti* wood and serves to stretch base fabric to facilitate embroidery work.

3.3 Process of Keringkam Embroidery in Sarawak

Selayah Keringkam embroidery technique in Sarawak depends on the thread count and the wooden frame (*pemidang*) used to facilitate the embroidery process. The size of the fabric must be according to the correct measurement which is (5x5x10) centimeters. The embroidery technique performed should be repeated at least three times to produce high quality embroidery, neat and meet customer satisfaction (Salem, 2012).

Amri, Haron and Saiman (2018_b), explained that there are five stages that must be done to produce high quality *Selayah Keringkam* embroidery. The following are some of the stages that should be implemented (Amri et al., 2018_b; Salem, 2006):

1. The first step is to stretch the fabric to be embroidered. The connector fabric (*kain penghubung*) will be folded in half and then sewn at each end of the *kain rubia* to produce loops. A wooden frame (*pemidang*) will be inserted into each loop of the *penghubung* fabric. The last step of this first stage is to tie the ends of the wooden frame (*pemidang*) to obtain a satisfactory tension.
2. The second step is to create the pattern as well as carry out the basic embroidery which is known as tali air. This tali air embroidery is known to be made on every side of the rubia fabric.

3. The third stage is the renda berguntin embroidery. Renda berguntin is an embroidery that takes the shape of a mountain or a triangle and this embroidery are often seen on most traditional dresses from other ethnicities in Sarawak.
4. The fourth stage is where a high degree of patience is required compared to the other stages. At this stage, a rose pattern will be embroidered to fill the space of the rubia fabric that has been embroidered with renda berguntin. The second step of this stage is to create a flower-patterned embroidery called the strewn flower. This strewn flower is an embroidery motif such as stars, grass and tabor pelayang.
5. After all of the embroidery works are completed, gold thread will be used to make a layer on top of the rubia fabric so that the previously embroidered motifs are neat and of high quality. The second step of the final stage is called the renda berguntin. After being wrapped with gold thread embroidery, the rubia fabric will be separated from the wooden frame (pemidang) by cutting the penghubung fabric from the rubia fabric. The final step at this stage is to tidy up each stitch by trimming and discarding excess threads.

4. METHODOLOGY

Research methodology is the method used to collect, obtain and analyze appropriate information used to complete a study (Othman, 2019). According to Mohajan (2018), research methodology is a development of the process used to produce a theory that is a procedural framework in which the study is conducted. This study was conducted using qualitative methods. In obtaining data to complete this study, there are two types of data used, namely primary data and secondary data. This primary data includes conducting interviews with informant, Miss Khairunnisa Zain which ventured the *Selayah Keringkam* business since 2016 at Miri, Sarawak, as well as observations on the processes of producing *Selayah Keringkam* embroidery. This study was also conducted at Gallery *Songket* and *Keringkam* Kuching Sarawak. In addition to using primary data, researchers have also used secondary data to refer to and find information related to the title of the study by accessing several websites.

5. FINDINGS

5.1. *Processes of producing Selayah Keringkam*

From the findings of this study, the researcher found that the processes of producing *Selayah Keringkam* as well as the embroidery involved throughout the process occurred. The creation and embroidery video is available via QR Code provided by *Songket* and *Keringkam* Gallery in Kuching.



Figure 2: Types of fabrics and tools used to produce *Selayah Keringkam*
(Source: Researcher's photograph 2020)

Referring to figure 2 above, most embroiders will use the *rubia kasa* and chiffon. Besides that, canal motif (*tali air*), mountain, bamboo shoots, scattered stars or *sisipan*, nuts, roses, cananga and orchids are also motifs of embroidery that is most popular.

Besides that, according to Miss Khairunnisa, the name of the tools that needed in the making of *Selayah Keringkam* are *Jarum Pipih* or known as needle with 2 holes, gold or silver thread for *Selayah Keringkam*, side thread which is round thread or thick thread, *rubia kasa*, chiffon and wooden frame (*Pemidang*).



Figure 3: Tools needed provided by informant (2 hole needles, gold thread, silverthread, *rubia kasa* and side thread)
(Source: Researcher's photograph 2020)

First, the fabric will be attached to the wooden frame. The fabric will be tied to the wooden frame on each side tightly to facilitate the embroidery process to achieve the neat *Selayah Keringkam* result.

Equipment such as gold thread, scissors, and special needles made of copper or silver are used to make *Selayah Keringkam* embroidery. Next, the gold thread used to produce the embroidery motifs on the *Selayah Keringkam* fabric such as the water rope motif and the sprinkle motif will be inserted into the needle hole repeatedly until tight. These are the findings that can be found in Gallery *Songket* and *Keringkam*.



Figure 4: Wooden frame (*pamidang*) used to produce *Selayah Keringkam*
(Source: Researcher's photograph 2020)



Figure 5: Process of attaching fabric to the wooden frame (*pamidang*)
(Source: Researcher's photograph 2020)



Figure 6: Processes of stretching the fabric on the wooden frame (*pemingang*)
 (Source: Screenshot from QR Code at Galeri Keringkam Kuching, 2020)



Figure 7: Process of attaching gold thread to the needle
 (Source: Screenshot from QR Code at Galeri Keringkam Kuching, 2020)



Figure 8: Embroidering the motif *Tali Air* (Canal Motif)
 (Source: Screenshot from QR Code at Galeri Keringkam Kuching, 2020)

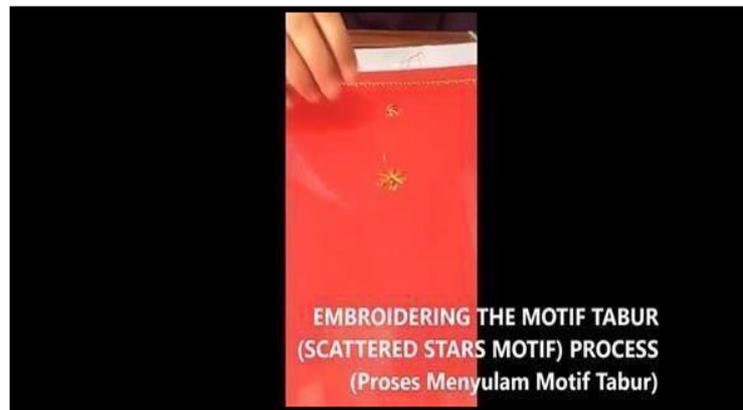


Figure 9: Embroidering the motif *Tabur* (Scattered Stars Motif)
(Source: Screenshot from QR Code at Galeri Keringkam Kuching, 2020)

Furthermore, as mention by Miss Khairunnisa, patterns and motifs of *Selayah Keringkam* embroidery that will be produced must be prepared first for reference. The side part of *Selayah Keringkam* will be embroidered starting with the *Tali Air* embroidery type and finished with the *Pucuk Rebung* side motif. After that, spread neatly the *rubia kasa* on a wooden frame and make sure the thread strand is being plug correctly.

Next, embroidery the fabric by two events which is according to the count of the thread strand or by *tikam tembus* technique which means it will start with 5 count, then another section will also be 5 count and do the motif using the reference provided. Lastly, to end the sewing of the *Selayah Keringkam*, use the side thread to sew the side of *Selayah Keringkam*, cut it from the wooden frame and tidy up the side of *Selayah Keringkam*.

An addition to that, famous embroidery as describe by her are *Pucuk Rebung* for side embroidery, *Kacang-Kacang* for inside embroidery, and for *tabor dalam* is *Bunga Pelayang*. But recently Miss Khairunnisa modernise the pattern in *Selayah Keringkam* and do not have specific name on it as adept sewing motif technique helps her to create her own patterns.



Figure 10: Process of inspecting the strand of the fabric
(Source: Screenshot from QR Code at Galeri Keringkam Kuching, 2020)

Figure 11 below is the result of *Selayah Keringkam* using gold thread. The market price offered for a piece of *Selayah Keringkam* reaches RM 4399 a piece depending on the motive desired by the customer.



Figure 11: The Gold Thread *Selayah Keringkam*
(Source: Galeri Keringkam Kuching, 2020)



Figure 12: The result of *Selayah Keringkam* using gold thread made by MissKhairunnisa.
(Source: Galeri Keringkam Kuching, 2020)

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Finally, the art of *Selayah Keringkam* embroidery which is available in various patterns and embroidered through several important processes, is now known as a textile embroidery art that is highly treasured and exceptionally valued in the state of Sarawak. Based on the findings of the study, several steps or processes to complete the *Selayah Keringkam* embroidery have been carried out. Among them is to provide all the equipment and materials used such as gold thread, two-hole flattened needle, cloth and even a wooden frame or known as the *pemidang*. Through the observations that have been carried out at the Gallery *Songket* and *Keringkam* Kuching, Sarawak, and by interviewing Miss Khairunnisa, the most important process is to attach the fabric on the wooden frame so that the fabric becomes taut and facilitates the embroidering process. Then, after the fabric is tightened, the gold thread is inserted into the needle hole repeatedly until the thread is tight so that the embroidery becomes more neat and precise. Once the thread is inserted into the needle hole, then the embroidery process can be continued to completion according to the motif chosen by the customer.

In conclusion, we hope that this study can aid researchers in expanding their knowledge on embroidery steps and also the embroidery motifs of *Selayah Keringkam* in Sarawak. Apart from being able to gain the knowledge of the researchers themselves, we also hope that this study can be used as reference material for future researchers and also the Sarawak community who read it. Finally, our hope is that these embroidery works will not be forgotten in this era of modernization and also in the future. Therefore, to prevent the extinction of *Selayah Keringkam* embroidery art, this exceptional art must be exposed and applied in the younger generation today at their tender ages. As the saying goes, “*melentur buluh biarlah dari rebungunya*”.

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