

The Development of Tapis in the Hyperreality Era

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ABSTRACT

This research discusses the development of tapis textile in the hyperreality era. The advance of technology that occurs among the Lampung citizens causes the development and changes in functions of the traditional textiles. The development leads to modifications on the existing motifs, and its application spreads to wearable objects such as bags, clothes, Muslim skull caps (*taqiyah*), and wallets, resulting in a shift in values and functions. The authors employed a cultural studies approach and an explanation of the hyperreality theory by Jean Baudrillard. The theory discusses a contemporary culture in the era of hyperreality, related to the position of material culture values. The development causes the tapis changes in values and functions. Tapis as a sacred thing turns into a profane object for the market commodities.

Keywords: *Tapis, Hyperreality*

1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a rich country for arts and culture because it has a large area and consists of many islands. There are many ethnic groups and different languages on each island; thus, Indonesia has diverse cultural arts. One of the Indonesian cultural arts in clothing is traditional fabrics, one of which is a woven textile. Each region has a unique woven motif that makes it different from one to another. The diversity and uniqueness in woven fabrics found in each region generally reflect elements on the belief in ancestral spirits and their majesty in the surrounding environment. This is related to the value of woven fabrics for the community. Woven fabric is used as a clothing item and a medium to apply sacred signs or symbols. In addition to an aesthetic value that adorns woven fabrics to be more attractive, this application is a symbolic activity for traditional communities to get closer to God Almighty as the creator.

Lampung is one of the areas producing traditional woven fabrics in Indonesia. The traditional woven fabric referred to is tapis. Tapis is a woman's clothing from the Lampung ethnic in the form of a sarong and is usually equipped with a scarf. It is made from the woven fine cotton thread with motifs embroidered using

silver or gold thread. Having a similar function to woven fabrics in general, which is to protect the body, tapis also functions as jewelry, a symbol of purity, religious ceremonial equipment, and a symbol of one's social status.

However, in this era of hyperreality, contemporary culture has also existed and blended with the traditional culture in society. It also happened to the communities producing traditional textiles in Lampung. Consequently, there is a shift in the values of society as a result of the acculturation and development of technology; tapis also experiences changes in function.

2. LITERATURE

2.1. Tapis Textile

The word *tapis* itself comes from the words 'making *tapis*' which means to filter, block, or cover. From the origin of the word, tapis in society has a symbolic meaning as a protector for the wearer from all impurities [1]. In addition to the practical function to protect the

Tapis is considered a traditional textile because it is made using conventional tools, so it takes a long time. Tapis is made of a basic fabric woven with fine cotton thread and then embroidered using gold or silver thread.

The coloring on tapis still uses natural dyes passed down from generation to generation. In the past, girls who were growing up or Lampung women who were approaching the wedding period had to be able to make tapis. The results of their work would be used on their wedding day; the more beautiful the result, the prouder the bride's family, and it was regarded as a shame if a Lampung girl (mulu) wore a borrowed tapis [2].

As mentioned in the introduction, Junaedi Firmansyah explains that tapis is a Lampung traditional textile in the form of a sarong made of fabric woven with fine cotton threads, and it has decorative motifs embroidered using gold or silver threads [3]. Like batik and other typical fabrics, tapis is limitedly used in traditional ceremonies, but it is only worn by the upper class or particularly royal women. Tapis is used as a skirt because of its shape that resembles a sarong. This type of woven fabric varies and differs in each region. There are two major ethnic groups in Lampung, namely Pepadun and Saibatin tribes, which differ in the tapis motif due to their geographical location. The Pepadun people live in inland areas, so the tapis has more geometric and flora motifs, such as modified bamboo shoots. Meanwhile, the Saibatin tribe living in coastal areas wears tapis with geometric and marine fauna motifs. Such tapis can be found with motifs of vessels and marine animals.

However, due to the development of time and technology that enter the people's lives, acculturation occurs. Therefore, the existing motifs experience changes or modifications which produce diverse types of tapis like other woven fabrics.

2.2. Hyperreality Era

At this time, society is no longer regarded as a modern society but has developed into a post-modern community. Modern society has the capability of the industrial world that is able to produce various commodities on a mass scale. When entering the post-modern era, the development of product quality only is not enough. This is because what is needed has changed primarily with regard to lifestyle changes and high consumer tastes.

Changes occur not only in social interaction patterns but also in people's behavior in responding to the social realities around them. Social reality is no longer understood as a mere object that is observed, but rather passes or goes beyond reality itself (hyperreality). The prefix "hyper" means something more real than reality. It is a reality that is reconstructed in a hallucinative similarity to itself [4].

The notion of hyperreality is proposed by Jean Baudrillard. He explains that hyperreality is a symptom of the emergence of various artificial realities that are even more real than the realities. Baudrillard opposes

simulation and representation; for him, a simulation is a simulacrum, which in a special sense, he calls a true simulacrum. The definition is that something does not duplicate anything else as a reference model but duplicates itself [5].

Our world today is full of expanding and increasingly complex imitation, duplication, codes, symbols, and sign-free plays. The presence of cyberspace in people's lives has changed various aspects and existing culture. The new space that creates a new reality is separated from true reality. It makes it difficult to distinguish between reality and fantasy. The reality in hyperreality is related to the three types of physical appearance era in general. First, "imitation" is a presentation of something we see, suppose when we observe a painting. The painting presents a reality in an original way which is based on the concept of authenticity. The second is a "production era" which is dominated by a technical principle that machine has neglected all things. Furthermore, the third is "simulation". In this era, people can create new things that sometimes have no reference in the real world. There is nothing fake and original anymore because we are faced with a reality where we are less careful about what is original and what is real [6].

One of the most visible impacts of taking advantage of hyperreality in everyday life is to drive the masses to consume more than what is needed. Society now thinks that consumption is no longer based on needs, but it has become a culture. This consumer culture often takes advantage of the hyperreality and simulacrum, where the prioritized reason for consuming is not about the use-value but a certain ambition to satisfy the desire.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This is qualitative research with a cultural studies approach. It belongs to a multidisciplinary approach because it always interconnects with subjects in or beyond the discipline itself. Culture is always seen as 'a productive thing', so it can survive the times. Therefore, it is necessary to study culture which requires a relatively and continuously developing approach. The existence of contemporary cultural conditions that present new cultures needs to be studied by the latest approaches. The multidisciplinary characteristic of the cultural studies approach is considered capable of studying culture because it almost always has relevance to socio-cultural developments in society. Cultural studies are considered as having a tendency to think, which combines various existing theories and methods. However, it is still developing and dynamic to find a form as an established discipline. It represents a combination of various concepts and approaches such as cultural theories, ethnomethodology, semiotics, psychoanalysis, text analysis, discourse analysis, deconstruction, schizoanalysis, and genealogy [7].

4. FINDINGS

Hyperreality is a perception model that prioritizes ecstasy on images rather than transcendental values. Jean Baudrillard has explored further the relationship between realities, symbols, and societies, particularly the significance and symbolism of culture and media involved in building an understanding of images.

The term 'simulation' in the context of mass culture is introduced by Baudrillard in explaining how production, communication, and consumption interconnect in a consumer society. According to Baudrillard, society is no longer controlled by a single social class but has developed from things that occur in the socio-culture to a more heterogeneous mass that competes for hegemony. The mass is an expression of differentiation obtained through consumption such as entertainments, amusements, shows, and so on.

The culture of consumerism in the era of hyperreality is the heart of capitalism, which contains illusions, dreams, hallucinations, artificiality, and surfaces in the form of commodities through image strategies. Furthermore, it is socially constructed as the sign strength of a product. In a consumer society, there are (over) production, (over) communication, and (over) consumption; which are considered as a new way to gain power [7]. The power mentioned means that there is a transition from the classical production system to an advanced consumer culture of capitalism. The classical production system of tapis has been displaced by the products produced from capitalism. This causes the disappearance of markers and representations, bringing the simulation process into an era of hyperreality. Baudrillard sees that in the culture of a highly developed society, signs no longer present their references because they are not realities but the sign itself. He also contrasts the simulation and representation.

Similar to batik, which was initially only used by certain people, tapis was also originally worn by the aristocracy. Tapis is an official dress of the Lampung ethnics in various traditional and religious ceremonies, as well as a traditional instrument which is almost the same as a family heirloom [8]. There is a social level in the Lampung tribal community that provides rules on the use of tapis as traditional clothing, which is based on social status. This rule applies and is completed with customary penalties for the violators. So far, tapis has been through changes, productions, and developments in many aspects, such as its function which has transformed from sacred objects closely related to customs and beliefs to profane objects for market commodities. It is worsened by the era of hyperreality where contemporary culture has also penetrated traditional culture. This results in a regulation that allows tapis to be worn by indigenous people or not. In other words, reality has lost in the competition for the

sign-free market because it has been replaced by a world of duplication.



Figure 1 Tapis Textile [9]

Baudrillard's explanation on the representation and simulation of hyperreality, related to the tapis development, lies in the existing changes. In representation, objects function as signs with references that provide the same value. Meanwhile, in the simulation, an object does not function as a sign because the reference value no longer has a different value. In other words, the reference is dead. Due to this condition, there are only markers that duplicate themselves.

Modification or development of the existing motifs on tapis now has no sacred meaning. The reference on the modified tapis uses the existing motif on the original traditional tapis. However, by the time, due to the high interest of the community, large-scale production is carried out on the produced tapis. It results in the dying traditional tapis being used as a reference. It changes to a simulation stage where the tapis motif does not have a special value because people can easily collect and wear it. Tapis has now become a profane object that is in great demand like batik, bags, clothes, wallets, Muslim skull caps (*taqiyah*), veils, wall decorations, and ornaments in the city.



Figure 2 Tapis Wallets [10]

The freedom that makes contemporary culture permeate tapis fabrics can be found in the creation of many new motifs. Designers have explored traditional fabrics combined with their creative ideas to produce new motifs. Even though they want to maintain a motif that has a symbolic meaning, the sacred impression remains different from the original traditional tapis when it has been modified with new media or motif.



Figure 3 Modification in Tapis Textile [11]

The advancement of technology also affects the larger society which is now a consumptive community. The free market causes a more brutal production to meet consumer desires. To meet the market demand, the typical manufacture using traditional tools is replaced by a machine. The basic fabrics used are mostly no longer woven using traditional looms, but machines. The tapis motif made through embroidering has now been processed by machines that perform faster in production. In fact, many printing tapis fabrics are much in demand because they have more economical prices regardless of the meaning and sacredness of the traditional fabric. The sacred tapis is modified and applied to batik or other clothing and objects.

Although the new product is claimed to be batik tapis, bags, skull caps, and so on, the sacred value that exists in the tapis has vanished and only become an aesthetic value that highly attracts the consumer community. It also happens to tapis which is modified into a skirt not a sarong with its distinctive feature. Even though the original fabric physically exists, with the consumer culture of a society in this hyperreality era, the modified tapis is more dominant and desirable. Its marketing is much freer because it is supported by technological developments where consumers from other regions who want to buy tapis do not need to visit Lampung. They can shop online without a direct transaction.

Thus, Baudrillard has directed people to understand the cases that exist in today's society, where many people only accept what is presented and ignore the signs. What is consumed determines social status in the community following the sign image that has been made in such a way through a simulation. In fact, the developments have also provided a positive impact, i.e. providing income for the craftsmen who previously lacked the knowledge to market their products; now the marketing is much easier to do and supports the economy in communities, regions, and the country. Meanwhile, the negative impact is a change in function from sacred traditional fabrics to profane objects and a consumptive society. Therefore, people change their view by observing what must be produced to generate a

high economic value even though it is claimed as one of the strategies to preserve culture.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Hyperreality is an era in which society is no longer claimed as a modern but post-modern society. This clearly shows that when entering the post-modern era, people are not satisfied with the development of product quality only; it is more focusing on an issue that what is needed has evolved especially with regard to changing lifestyles and consumer tastes. The community is associated with traditional culture which has also begun to change. The consumptive lifestyle in society also influences the development of traditional culture such as Lampung woven fabric (tapis). Tapis is now experiencing extraordinary development. The advancement of technology and contemporary culture in the era of hyperreality has begun to penetrate the society; therefore, culture has inevitably undergone changes. Tapis has been through changes and transformations in many aspects such as functions from sacred objects closely related to customs and beliefs to profane objects for market commodities. The value in tapis begins to fade because of the reality that it has lost in the sign-free market competition and it is replaced by a world of duplication, original tapis that has the same value as the modified one that imitates it.

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