



## Transformation of Malay Manuscript Illumination as Embroidery Motif on *Baju Kuruang Basiba*

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**Abstract.** This study proposes creative industry products with decorative motifs inspired by antique illuminated manuscripts collected by the Leiden University Library. Three illuminated Malay manuscripts were taken, namely: the manuscript with the number Or. 1703 entitled *Sejarah Melayu*; Or. 1768 entitled *Collective Volume with Texts in Malay*; and Or. 1967 entitled *Hikayat Iskandar Zulkarnain*. A descriptive qualitative method was used in this research. Field observation was conducted by interviewing an expert in decorative motifs to achieve the harmony of motifs and aesthetics in *baju kuruang basiba*. The motif was created using the CorelDrawX7 software. This study created embroidery motifs that can be classified as naturalistic ornaments. The design of decorative motifs for *baju kuruang basiba* can be embroidered with the *suji* and *kapalo samek* techniques. Meanwhile, the material used is a material that does not show because the sewing of *baju kuruang basiba* does not use furring. The decorative patterns that can be used are rasp patterns and fringe patterns. *Baju kuruang basiba* is a typical Minangkabau shirt that must be preserved as a cultural heritage object. The addition of this embroidery motif can add to the aesthetic appearance of the shirt to make it more attractive and luxurious.

**Keywords:** *baju kuruang basiba; creative industry; decorative pattern; illumination; motif.*

### 1 Introduction

Illumination or manuscript decoration is an art form created with various colors to frame the text in ancient manuscripts. This type of painted art, known as illumination, was first made in the 6th century and became popular in Europe in the 15th century as a marker of medieval modernity [1, 2]. In addition to serving

as decoration, the paintings in illumination contain important information about their age, artistic techniques, and the cultural context of the illuminator [3].

This is also the case with the manuscripts in the collection of the Gdańsk Library of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Poland. The illuminations in the Gdańsk Library's collection also feature flora motifs from plants they refer to as *incipit* leaves. These illuminations provide information about the aesthetic prowess of the illuminator, thus creating a strong Gdańsk character [4]. Thirty-four illuminations in the collection of Iran's National Library from the Qajar period were also inspired by floral motifs and *khatai* leaves [5].

The flora motifs from the illuminations of these manuscripts are important to be revitalized as inspirations that can be developed in the creative industry. These illuminations carry the philosophy of the owners' community, encompassing aspects of life, fertility, and traditional lifestyles built in the past [6] and they serve various functions in the lives of their communities [7]. That is why the development of illuminations into various works of the creative industry has been widely pursued, starting from the creation of vector designs that can be further expanded to a broader scope [8] expended to the production of motif-based products [9].

West Sumatra has not been left behind in the transformation of illuminations into batik. The collection of manuscripts from Pariangan, considered one of the most beautiful villages in the world and known for its high aesthetic illuminations, has inspired many researchers to design batik motifs. The result has been the creation of numerous batik motifs, including 25 batik motifs [10] and 10 additional motifs of batik [11]. In addition, one of the illuminations from the Surau Mato Aie Pakandangan manuscript has been transformed into five batik motifs [12]. In further developments, Pramono collaborated with two batik house businesses, Dewi Busana, and Canting Buana, to transform various batik motifs into fabric designs that contribute to the development of the creative industry [13].

Apart from batik or the traditional dyeing culture in Pariangan, the development of illuminations can also be pursued through another distinctive Minangkabau art form, which is embroidery. Since the early 20th century, Minangkabau women have been actively involved in embroidery and sewing through education at specialized girls' schools established by Roehanna Kooeddoes, known as Kerajinan Amai Setia (KAS), on February 11, 1911 [14]. Under her guidance, many Minangkabau women became enterprising creative entrepreneurs. These women produced valuable embroidered commodities that were in demand among Dutch officials' wives at that time [15]. With the issuance of Decision Number 31 on January 16, 1915, KAS was officially recognized as a legal entity (*rechtspersoon* in Dutch). In its development, there were three prominent

embroidery techniques, namely *tarawang*, *suji caia*, and *kapalo samek* [16, 17]. Over time, these hand embroidery techniques have been applied to various Minangkabau products, including headscarves, shawls, clothing, table covers, and *uncang*, a type of Minangkabau women's purse. All of these hand-embroidered products have successfully become cultural identity markers and have had a tremendous impact in both economic and social domains [18].

It is appropriate that the embroidery technique, which has been a traditional skill passed down through generations in Minangkabau, is also incorporated into the realm of clothing. One of the traditional Minangkabau clothing types is the *baju kuruang basiba* [19]. *Baju kuruang basiba* is characterized by loose-fitting designs for both the sleeves and the body, with a length that reaches the knees. Along the edges of the garment, there are *siba* and *kikiek* in the armpit area. The pattern of the garment is cut in a continuous line without breaking the fabric at the shoulders. To put on the garment, a hole is made at the neck area. This hole lacks a collar but is merely split in the front for buttoning [20]. In the past, this garment was left plain without any ornaments [21]. The use of *baju kuruang basiba* has become one of the programs of the West Sumatra Cultural Office as an effort to preserve Minangkabau cultural values [22]. This program has received support from the Governor of West Sumatra through the issuance of Regulation Number 36 of 2022 on the Procedure for Implementing and Developing Local Curriculum Content. In Article 20, there are regulations regarding the attire to be worn once a week, which includes *baju kuruang basiba* and *tikuluak balilik* for women.

A few researchers focused on the transformation of illumination into batik motifs. There is no researcher concern on the decorative variety for traditional Minangkabau embroidery patterns. In fact, this form of creative work is the heritage from Minangkabau ancestors. Therefore, this research focused on the transformation of ancient manuscript illuminations into decorative *baju kuruang basiba* in the form of embroidery. This research aimed to preserve the illuminations of three digitized manuscripts – Or. 1967; Or.1767; and Or. 1703, stored at <https://digitalcollections.universiteitleiden.nl/> – into decorative motifs that were applied to *baju kuruang basiba* with typical Minangkabau hand embroidery techniques, namely *suji* and *kalapo samek*.

## 2 Method

This research utilized a qualitative descriptive method [23] with research data consisting of illuminations from three manuscripts accessed digitally. The selection of these three manuscripts was done randomly by browsing every 10 pages displayed on each screen. The research process began by inventorying Malay manuscripts using the keyword 'Malay' within the Manuscripts, Archives,

and Letters collection. These manuscripts were sorted to identify those with illuminations. The second stage involved transposing the illuminations onto paper to create decorative pattern designs. In the third stage, the resulting decorative pattern designs were presented to motif experts. The fourth stage included applying the decorative pattern designs to *baju kuruang basiba* patterns.

The use of the term ‘Malay’ refers to the broad group of manuscripts from the Malay region, including Minangkabau. There is a complex relationship between the Malays and the Minangkabau. The influence of the successful Malacca Sultanate in the 14<sup>th</sup> century led the Minangkabau people, including those in Lampung, Pattani in Thailand, and Kelantan in Malaysia, to identify themselves with the Malays. Islam also became an identity marker of the Malays as the Malacca Sultanate grew stronger during that time [24]. The mention of Minangkabau has always been associated with the Malay world due to this strong identity relationship [25]. That is why the term ‘Malay’ was used in searching for manuscripts to obtain Minangkabau manuscripts within the broader group.

This research project was carried out over a period of two months, from May 10 to July 15, 2023, and involved an expert resource person, Dr. Yenni Idrus, M.Pd., who specializes in decorative pattern design. The final outcome of this research were hand-embroidered products applied to the *baju kuruang basiba* fabric.

### **3 Result and Discussion**

This discussion is presented in two subtopics, namely the stages of transforming manuscript illuminations into decorative patterns and copyright and manuscript identity. The incorporated styles provided and used in this paper were:

#### **3.1 Transformation of Manuscript Illuminations into *Baju Kuruang Basiba* Decorative Patterns**

The following subsection describes the process of transforming ancient manuscript illuminations into decorative motifs that can be applied to *baju kuruang basiba*.

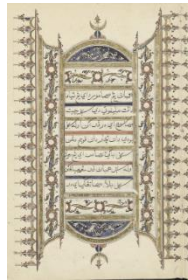
##### **3.1.1 Manuscript Inventory**

Inventorying is a crucial process as it marks the beginning of the philological work. The researcher must assess themselves and their knowledge before analyzing a manuscript [26]. The ultimate goal of this research was to create decorative patterns to be applied to *baju kuruang basiba*, the traditional attire of Minangkabau women. These decorative pattern designs were derived from illuminations found in ancient manuscripts. The inventorying process was conducted on digital manuscripts from the Leiden University Library collection.

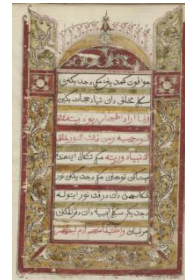
Using the keyword ‘Malay’ within the Manuscripts, Archives, and Letters collection, 160 Malay manuscripts were identified. From these 160 Malay manuscripts, 3 manuscripts with illuminations were selected. They are identified as Or. 1967 (Figure 1), Or. 1767 (Figure 2), and Or. 1703 (Figure 3), respectively. These manuscripts are titled: (1) *Hikayat Iskandar Zulkarnain*, (2) *Collective Volume with Texts in Malay*, and (3) *Sejarah Melayu*. Below are illustrations of illuminations from these respective collection numbers.



**Figure 1** Or. 1768 [27].



**Figure 2** Or. 1967 [28].



**Figure 3** Or. 1703 [29].

These three illuminations were selected with consideration of the clarity of the motifs and the aesthetics of images that can be distilled into decorative pattern designs to be applied to *baju kuruang basiba* using the *sulam suji* and *kapalo samek* embroidery techniques.

### 3.1.2 Stylization

Stylization is the process of selecting a group of images to be adapted based on desired image criteria [30]. Rubani defines stylization as decorative pattern designs that alter or simplify the original form of an object from a designer's perspective [31].

The stylization process began with drawing the original shapes from various perspectives. The designer carefully examined printouts of the illumination pages and selected motifs to create a pattern for decorative pattern designs. In this stylization process, the designer simplified the illumination motifs to create decorative pattern designs. Simplification was done to facilitate the embroiderer because the entire embroidery process is done by hand. The results of the stylization of the three illuminations mentioned above can be seen in Figure 4.

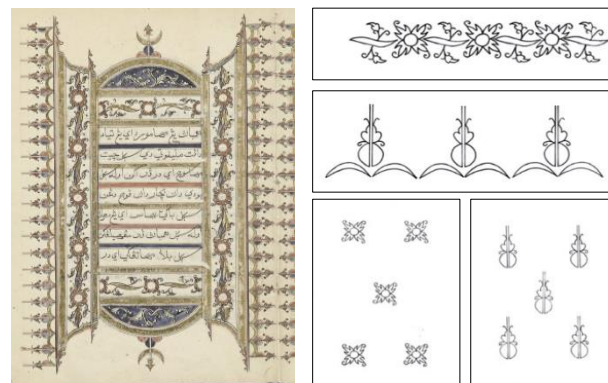
The manuscript illumination in Figure 4 yielded three decorative patterns, namely, the *serak* pattern and the symmetrical border pattern. The *serak* pattern, also known as the *tabur* pattern, is a decorative pattern with uniform sizes, allowing them to be placed rhythmically. The *serak* pattern can be designed to face in one direction or two directions while maintaining the same size and shape.

On the other hand, the symmetrical border pattern is a decorative pattern with a parallel arrangement and equal dimensions at each bend. This pattern is usually used on the edges of clothing or sleeves [31].



**Figure 4** Stylization based on manuscript Or. 1768.

The results of stylization for the illuminations in manuscripts Or. 1703 and Or. 1967 is almost identical to the stylization of Or. 1768. Both manuscripts also yielded *serak* patterns and symmetrical border patterns as shown in the following images.



**Figure 5** Stylizations based on manuscript Or. 1967.

In Figure 5, the stylization process resulted in four decorative pattern designs: 2 *serak* patterns and 1 symmetrical border pattern, as well as 1 upright border pattern. These 4 stylized outcomes can be applied to the base fabric of the *baju kuruang basiba*. Unlike Figure 5, Figure 6 yielded 2 decorative patterns during the stylization process. These two patterns were *serak* as well as a symmetrical border pattern.



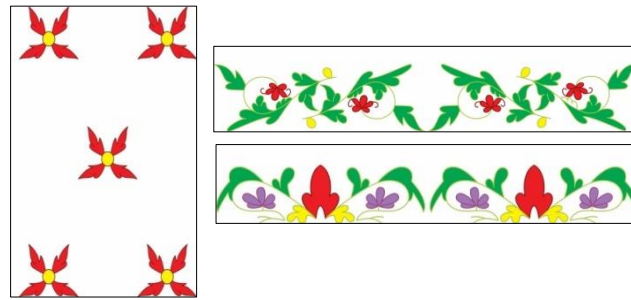
**Figure 6** Stylizations based on manuscript Or. 1703.

All the stylized results of the manuscript illuminations were then presented to a motif expert for discussion and input. The selected validator was Dr. Yenni Idrus, M.Pd., a lecturer in the Family Welfare Education Program, Department of Family Welfare Science, Faculty of Tourism and Hotel Management, Universitas Negeri Padang. The validation process took place on July 8, 2023. Yenni Idrus suggested enriching the patterns with walking border patterns and climbing border patterns. These patterns can fill the elongated *siba* on the garment. The symmetrical border pattern can be combined with the *serak* pattern to create more luxurious and beautiful embroidery results.

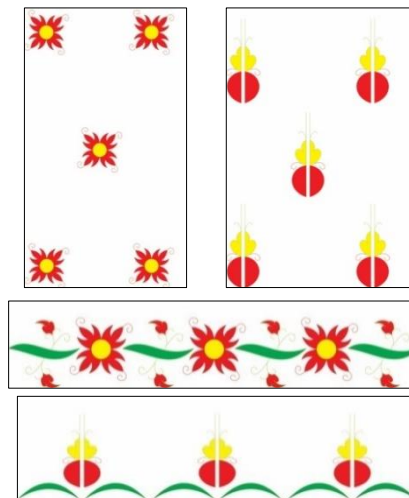
### 3.1.3 Motif Digitalization

The digitization of motifs involved the transfer of stylized designs into digital format. During this stage, the decorative pattern designs were colored to make them more vibrant and aesthetic. In this context, color selection was a crucial factor, with the chosen colors combined within a single motif [32].

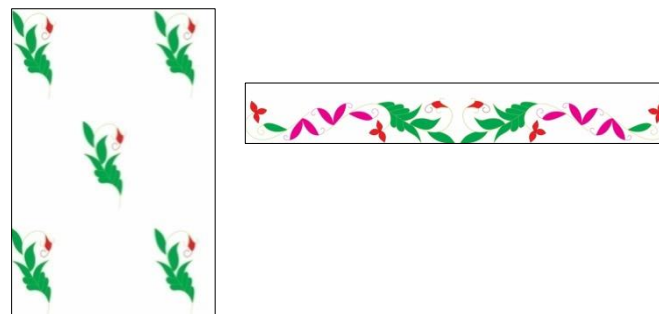
In this paper, digitizing this motif was done using the CorelDRAW X7 application because it has many features that can be used for design purposes, including the selection of color combinations. The chosen color combination was a contrasting color combination that involved three opposite colors: red, green, and yellow. Four contrasting colors were used for one decorative pattern design, including red, green, yellow, and purple. This color selection method was employed to achieve a color gradient that aligns with nature. Furthermore, these primary colors were highly suitable for application to *baju kuruang basiba*, which carries profound philosophies. Figure 7, Figure 8, and Figure 9 show images of digitized motifs based on the previous stylization results.



**Figure 7** Digitizations of motifs from Or. 1768.



**Figure 8** Digitizations of motifs from Or. 1967.



**Figure 9** Digitizations of motifs from Or. 1703.

The color selection in the digitization of the motifs on Figure 7, Figure 8, and Figure 9 mentioned above included red, yellow, green, and blue. However, the color combinations used primarily consisted of a trio of colors: red, yellow, and green. These three colors belong to a color group with psychological significance



that aligns with the philosophy of *baju kuruang basiba*. Red symbolizes struggle, courage, strength, power, freedom, and happiness. Yellow signifies optimism, hope, joy, wealth, and luck. Meanwhile, green represents life, fertility, health, nature, the environment, and hope [31]. The symbolism of these three colors corresponds with the philosophy of *baju kuruang basiba*, which embodies wisdom, honesty, justice, and warmth.

### 3.1.4 Application of Decorative Pattern Designs to *Baju Kuruang Basiba* Patterns

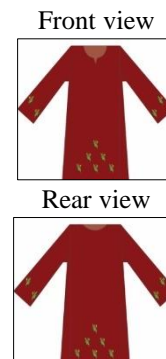
The digitized decorative pattern designs mentioned above were applied to pattern designs and fashion illustrations for *baju kuruang basiba*. The colors selected for applying these motifs were yellow, red, and black, i.e., the *marawa*, or traditional flag colors, in Minangkabau, referring to the flag colors of each *luhak* or region within Minangkabau.

The designs presented below include pattern designs and fashion illustrations. The pattern designs refer to the basic structural form of the garment, explicitly depicted here. Meanwhile, fashion illustrations comprise visual representations in the form of images, sketches, or illustrations of fashion designs to facilitate people visualizing and understanding the design [33].

As examples, the application of decorative patterns based on illuminations from Or. 1703 are presented in Figures 10 and 11 below.



**Figure 10** Fashion illustration of design from Or. 1703 with a scattered pattern.

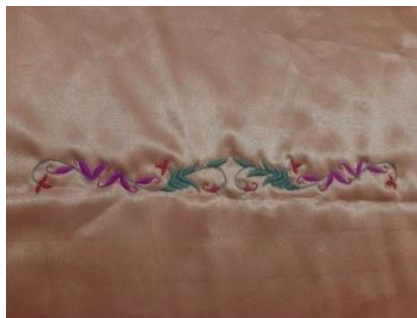


**Figure 11** Design from Or. 1703 with a scattered pattern.

In the fashion illustration above, the decorative patterns from all the illuminations were applied to the fringes of the garment, specifically on the lower part of the dress and the sleeve cuffs. As the name suggests, the symmetrical edge pattern decorates the garment's edges uniformly. No decorative pattern was added to the

neck area, assuming that *baju kuruang basiba* is more suitable when worn with a *kerudung balilik* or *mudhawarah*, which always covers the chest. Upon validation by Yenni Idrus, she suggested adding a scattered pattern that can be applied on top of the symmetrical edge pattern and a climbing edge pattern for the *siba* area.

According to her, in terms of appearance, the scattered pattern at the bottom of the dress will make the embellishments more vibrant, allowing the garment to be used for both formal and informal occasions. This decorative pattern enhances the overall look, making it more beautiful and luxurious, which can justify a higher price for fabrics with this motif. The higher price for fabrics with this pattern is also in line with the more time-consuming traditional manual embroidery technique.



**Figure 12** Result of *suji* embroidery.



**Figure 13** Result of *kapalo samek* embroidery.

The embroidery was done manually to preserve the tradition of embroidery that has been passed down through generations in Minangkabau. *Suji* embroidery, also known as flat embroidery, is sewn with flat stitches using a single thread color that fills the entire surface of the motif (see Figure 12). On the other hand, *kapalo samek* embroidery is a technique that resembles thread coils resembling pinheads (see Figure 13). This embroidery technique produces luxurious embroidery that is well-suited for *baju kuruang basiba*.

### 3.2 Copyright and Manuscript Identity

Manuscripts serve as cultural identity markers. They symbolize one's heritage and evidence that the manuscript owner has a rich culture. Anything derived from the manuscript should preserve the culture and uniqueness of its owner. Therefore, in every creative work inspired by manuscripts, it is essential to showcase this identity marker to ensure it is not lost. Every creative work produced should include a document about the manuscript as evidence of its source. Creative works like the illuminations in this study should also be accompanied by such documentation.

As described above, the final product of this research was a decorative pattern motif applied to *baju kuruang basiba*. As an identifier for each motif, each fabric will be equipped with a QR code containing comprehensive information about the patterns' source manuscript and its contents. This QR code can be scanned, allowing the buyer of the artwork to access information about the motif's source manuscript and its contents. The generated QR codes can be scanned using Google Lens or similar tools to retrieve the product information.

The three QR codes (Figure 14-16) serve as the author's and motif creator's accountability to the Malay community who own the manuscripts.



**Figure 14** QR-code for the *Hikayat Iskandar Zulkarnain* manuscript (Or. 1967).



**Figure 15** QR-code for the *Collective Volume with Texts in Malay* manuscript (Or. 1767)



**Figure 16** QR-code for the *Sejarah Melayu* manuscript (Or. 1703).

With the QR codes, information about these three manuscripts can be widely accessed and known. These QR codes are currently straightforward, directing readers to the source link of the digital manuscript. In the future, these QR codes will be improved and presented in a more user-friendly format. However, through these QR codes, it is hoped that users and appreciators of this art will develop a greater love for local products and gain knowledge and insight into the intellectual heritage of their predecessors.

#### 4 Conclusion

Manuscript illuminations are a critical aspect of codicological study closely linked to the development of creative industries for the communities that own them. Various creative works inspired by these illuminations have emerged, including decorative pattern motifs. Stylized results from illuminations can produce a variety of decorative pattern designs applicable to local products that reflect the local genius. *Baju kuruang basiba* is one of the cultural heritages of the Minangkabau people that must be preserved. The application of decorative patterns with traditional Minangkabau embroidery techniques will *make baju kuruang basiba* more aesthetic and valuable.

Three illuminations from Leiden University's digital manuscript collection yielded nine decorative pattern designs. Five of these stylized results were formed into symmetrical edge patterns, while the other four became scattered or *serak* patterns. By combining three contrasting colors, red, yellow, and green, these pattern designs became even more aesthetic when applied to a fashion illustration of *baju kuruang basiba*. The fabric colors chosen for these motifs were red, yellow, and black, symbolizing the traditional flags of the Minangkabau regions. The decorative patterns produced in this research were not limited to *baju kuruang basiba* only but they can also be applied to other creative products in the Malay region, such as bags, key chains, prayer mats, wallets, cushion covers, scarves, and women's sandals. The presence of these decorative patterns is expected to enrich the motif variety for various creative works in Minangkabau.

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