



Aesthetic Study of the Function of Damar Kurung Craft in Gresik Regency

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Abstrak

Damar Kurung adalah lampion kayu berbentuk segi empat dengan sudut menyerupai segi tiga di bagian atasnya dan keempat sisinya berhiasan lukisan. Merupakan akulturasi budaya Jawa, Thionghoa, Arab.. Pembuat Damar Kurung terakhir di Gresik adalah Sriwati Masmundari (Januari 1904 – 25 Desember 2005). Damar kurung pernah diambang kepunahan, namun Tahun 2017 oleh Menteri Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan ditetapkan sebagai warisan budaya tak benda (WBTB). Adapun tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui estetika kerajinan Damar Kurung dari segi fungsi. Keterkaitan antara seni tradisi dengan tradisi lain sehingga dapat tetap eksis. Penelitian ini menggunakan penelitian multidisiplin dengan pendekatan antropologi dan budaya. Teknik pengumpulan data dengan observasi, wawancara dan dokumentasi. Wawancara, 10 sample narasumber masyarakat Gresik, Budayawan komunitas Mata Segar dan 2 Guru di Sekolah Dasar Negeri 4 Petrokimia Gresik dan Taman Kanak-Kanak Insanuz- Ziyen.. Teknik analisis data dengan cara reduksi data, mengolah data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Validasi data dengan ketekunan pengamatan dan triangulasi data.

Hasil yang didapatkan fungsi awal Damar Kurung adalah sebagai penerang/ lampu, dengan adanya perkembangan zaman maka muncul fungsi lain. Fungsi tersebut: (1) Damar kurung sebagai Ikon Kabupaten Gresik, (2) Damar kurung sebagai fungsi estetika, (3) Kerajinan Damar Kurung Sebagai Identitas Masyarakat Kabupaten Gresik, (4) Damar kurung sebagai fungsi Informasi, (5) Damar kurung sebagai muatan lokal dalam dunia pendidikan.

Kata Kunci: Damar kurung, Estetika fungsi, Ikon.

Abstract

Damar Kurung is a rectangular wooden lantern with corners resembling a triangle at the top and all four sides decorated with paintings. It is an acculturation of Javanese, Chinese and Arab cultures. The last Damar Kurung maker in Gresik was Sriwati Masmundari (January 1904 – 25 December 2005). Damar Kurung was once on the verge of extinction, but in 2017 the Minister of Education and Culture designated it as an intangible cultural heritage (WBTB). The aim of this research is to determine the aesthetics of Damar Kurung crafts in terms of function. The relationship between traditional art and other traditions so that it can continue to exist. This research uses multidisciplinary research with anthropological and cultural approaches. Data collection techniques using observation, interviews and documentation. Interviews, 10 sample resource persons from the Gresik community, cultural figures from the Mata Segar community and 2 teachers at the State Elementary School 4 Petrokimia Gresik and the Insanuz-Ziyen Kindergarten. Data analysis techniques using data reduction, data processing and drawing conclusions. Data validation with diligent observation and data triangulation.

The results obtained were that the initial function of Damar Kurung was as a light, with developments over time other functions emerged. These functions are: (1) Damar Kurung as an icon of Gresik Regency, (2) Damar Kurung as an aesthetic function, (3) Damar Kurung crafts as an identity for the people of Gresik Regency, (4) Damar Kurung as an information function, (5) Damar Kurung as content local in the world of education.

Keywords: Damar Kurung, aesthetic function, icon.

Introduction

Indonesia is a country that is rich in culture. In every human life, art cannot be

separated. In the past, during the Dutch East Indies government, economic progress was one of the benchmarks for the success of development at that time. In terms of maritime or shipping, the port is a place for interaction between traders, residents and local communities. One of the communities whose economy was advanced at that time was Gresik district in East Java Province.

In the 16th to 17th centuries the ports on the coast of East Java developed rapidly. The existence of the Twin City Port "Gresik" consists of the Grisse/Gresik port and the Jortan Port (Jarwanto, 2019, p. 42). Gresik Regency directly borders the city of Surabaya and the Madura Strait. Gresik is a trade center visited by many Chinese and Arabs. Gresik is known as the city of Islamic students and the gateway to the spread of Islam. Gresik Port is growing and important because of its strategic location.

One of the figures who spread Islam in Gresik was Sheikh Maulana Malik Ibrahim. Islam continues to be embedded in society with the formation of Giri Kedhaton by Sunan Giri. A quite influential Chinese figure was a rich widow, namely Nyai Ageng Pinatih (Sunan Giri's adoptive mother). According to history, the development of Islam on the island of Java was brought by the saints who spread Islam in the city of Gresik. Sunan Giri has great services in the field of education with the Islamic boarding school system in Gresik. As a group of wali songo people believe that wali are people who really love Allah and have deep knowledge of religion. The way religion is spread can also be through politics and culture. One of them is a da'wah media with local culture, namely Damar Kurung.

Damar Kurung is a metamorphosis of Wayang Beber. The motif of the Damar Kurung painting is more inclined towards the painting style of the Sunan Prapen era, which uses the fiber of the Sindujoyo chronicle. Or it also resembles batik and woven cloth motifs from Sasak, West Nusa Tenggara. However, in its development it became its own painting style which was

naive and narrative or childlike. As explained by (Istanto, 2022, p. 179), Damar Kurung painting is a narrative painting.

Damar Kurung was on the verge of extinction. However, thanks to an artist who cared and held an exhibition of Damar Kurung by Masmundari in Jakarta. Damar Kurung has become widely known, even in 2017 it was designated by the Minister of Education and Culture as an intangible cultural heritage (WBTB). Damar Kurung continues to be developed and preserved. There are various conservation efforts. You can find developing Damar bracket works, some of which are made in a creative form so that they can be folded and there are also those whose four sides use acrylic material so that the light shines brighter. Therefore, the author wants to research further and raise the topic "Aesthetic Study of the Function of Damar Kurung Crafts, Gresik Regency".

In general, the aim of this research is to find out the aesthetics of Damar Kurung crafts in terms of function. The relationship between traditional art and other traditions is due to changes in time and technology. The low market demand for industrial products has forced the Government and the people of Gresik Regency to try to ensure that the Damar Kurung Craft continues to exist. One of them is by understanding more deeply the aesthetics of Damar Kurung from a functional perspective.

Method

As explained by Rohidi, research is a process of investigation from a discipline that is relevant to the activity (Rohidi, 2011, p. 169). The method used in this research is a multidisciplinary approach, namely anthropological and cultural approaches. The data collection technique was by interviewing several communities in Gresik Regency, in this case 10 samples of sources were taken from native communities living in Gresik Regency. Next, the researcher conducted interviews with cultural figures in the Mata Segar community (Damar

Kurung) and 2 teachers who each taught at the Petrokimia Gresik State Elementary School 4 and the Insanuz-Ziyan Kindergarten. Researchers carry out direct observations and collect data in the form of photos, videos and documents.

Data analysis techniques by means of data reduction, data processing, and drawing conclusions. The research instrument is the researcher himself as the instrument with the help of interview guidelines, observation and documentation. For the validity of the data, the researcher used diligent observation and triangulation, the data obtained from the sources were checked for correctness and linked to each other. Patton emphasized in (Moleong, 2011, p. 330) that source triangulation means comparing and counter-checking the degree of trustworthiness of information obtained through different times and tools in qualitative research.

History of Damar Kurung

Damar Kurung is a rectangular wooden lantern with corners resembling a triangle at the top and all four sides are decorated with Damar Kurung paintings. So literally, Damar Kurung is a lamp (damar, Indonesian) that is caged. In his statement, (Koeshandari, 2009, p. 88) explains that the decorative art of Damar Kurung from Gresik, East Java, is one of the remnants of ancestral traditional art in the form of decorative lanterns which are commonly called Damar Kurung.

The Damar Kurung painting it self was popularized by the late Masmundari. The Maestro who succeeded in illustrating the aspects of Gresik people's life in a 2 (two) dimensional painting. According to the story, Damar Kurung is used as a toy for children when entering the fasting month of Ramadan. These typical Gresik lanterns are also used as ornamental lighting for home terraces.

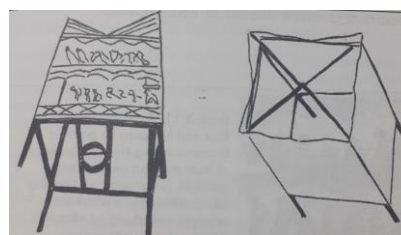


Figure 1. Sketch of Damar Kurung
Source: (Koeshandari, 2009, p. 89)

Initially, Damar Kurung was made using oil paper and dye, then switched to using canvas and oil paint. Changes in the tools and materials of Damar Kurung were introduced by the modern painter Imang A.W. There are many assumptions that Damar Kurung was adopted from Chinese lanterns, but actually Damar Kurung is more inclined towards Japanese lanterns. The Japanese lantern, which is more similar to Damar Kurung, is called Toro, which means lantern with a frame. The Damar Kurung paintings created have meaning and purpose, and are aimed more at those who are still alive. Damar Kurung depicts the daily life of the Gresik people, such as farming, fishing and religious activities.

The last Damar Kurung maker in Gresik was Sriwati Masmundari or Mbah Ndari (January 1904 – 25 December 2005). The eldest of 4 siblings, his painting ability was passed down to him by his father, who is better known as a puppeteer. After the death of his father, Mbah Masmundari used his painting skills to meet the family's daily needs. Initially, Mrs. Masmundari used bread paint or food coloring and leftover paint. From this simple combination, a work called Damar Kurung was born. Currently, Damar Kurung has also become an icon of Gresik district.



Figure 2. Masmundari (alm)

Source: <https://www.ngopibareng.id/read-premium/tradisi-damar-kurung-tak-sekedar-lentera-penerang-kubur-3-habis-1693289>

Result and Discussion

Damar Kurung are a work whose initial function was as "Damar" (light/lamp) or what is often known as a lantern or lantern. The resin Kurung are square-shaped like bird cages for decoration, made of bamboo and wrapped in white paper decorated with motifs depicting people's daily activities. In this case there is a visual language displayed in Damar Kurung. This work is an acculturation of Indonesian (Javanese) culture with Chinese culture. Gresik City, as a coastal city with a port, was often visited by ships from China and Arabia. The shape of the lantern itself is adopted from the shape of Chinese lanterns. However, as a santri city or guardian city that is very steeped in Islamic culture, the decorative ornaments were developed into naive pictures but can depict people's lives such as trading activities, reciting the Koran, prayer, etc.



Figure 3. Lanterns from China



Gambar 4. Lampion Damar Kurung

The original function of Damar Kurung was created as a light, but with the development of the times, other functions have emerged as an effort to ensure that the presence of Damar Kurung continues to exist and its culture is not lost.

1. Damar Kurung as an icon of Gresik Regency.

In 2017 Damar Kurung was recognized as an intangible cultural heritage (WBTB), therefore to this day the Gresik Regency Government continues to make efforts to preserve Damar Kurung. One of the efforts made is to make it an icon of Gresik Regency. As an icon, Damar Kurung still functions as a road light, namely along the main road starting from the Jalan Veteran border (Surabaya-Gresik border), - Jalan Kartini - Jalan Wahidin Sudirohusodo (Gresik-Lamongan border). The next icon is the damar bracket monument which is located in the Wahidin Sudirohusodo roadside park which is adjacent to the Gresik Grand Mosque.



Figure 5. Damar Kurung as street lights (a), as monumental on Jalan Wahidin Sudirohusoso (b)

Damar Kurung lanterns were also installed on Jalan Ahmad Yani, as lights. There are 1000 damar Kurung installed by PT. Petrokimia Gresik on the occasion of anniversaries or birthdays. In Gresik Square there are also Damar Kurung that decorate the street in front of the Regent's office pavilion. At the Tourism and Culture Service Office, at the Communications and Information Service, at the Public Works Service Office. In the old city, Bank Gresik also installed several Damar Kurungs in the outer yard.

2. The function of Damar Kurung is aesthetic

Works of art can be enjoyed with taste. The beauty and emotions felt internally by society in general. From the results of the researcher's observations, it can be explained that Damar Kurung also have

another function, namely as an aesthetic (beauty) complement to a work in a real or visual way. This can be seen from the data that researchers have taken to find the shapes and decorations depicted on the corner walls of the city of Gresik. Apart from that, we can also find visual images of Damar Kurung as an aesthetic filler in public places that people often encounter, such as bus stops, malls, cafes, historical places (sunan Giri) and public services such as hospitals, libraries, WEP Building, Pudak Gresik Gallery, parks. GKB and places of worship. Damar Kurung can also be used as inspiration for creating art, one of which researchers found was a street vendor shop in the Giri market area who made their shop in the form of Damar Kurung complete with visual decorative images.

The aesthetic form of Damar Kurung can also be seen in front of the WEP building as an aesthetic support in the field of building architecture. The Pusponegoro Expression Forum Building (WEP) is a public facility located on Jalan Attorney General. This building can be called a multi-purpose building because it can be used for exhibitions, sports, vaccine services, car free days. The medium used is iron which is arranged to resemble the shape of a resin bracket and has a volume or three-dimensional work.



Figure 6. Application of the form of Damar Kurung in the architectural/building sector.

3. Damar Kurung Crafts as an Identity for the People of Gresik Regency.

With the recognition of Damar Kurung as an Intangible Cultural Heritage, the

people of Gresik Regency are also starting to actively preserve their culture again. Several villages and alleys install Damar Kurung as decoration and street lights, this is proof of identity that Damar Kurung are present and emerged from Gresik and the community also preserves them. These alleys are along the alley on Jalan Pahlawan, the alley on Jalan Sidokumpul, the alley on Jalan Veteran, the alley on Jalan Usman Sadar, the alley on Jalan Proklik, the alley on Jalan Sunan Giri, the alley on Jalan Akim Hayat, the alley on Jalan Kartini.

In the month of Ramadan, to be precise, people have a tradition of holding Damar Kurung ting-tingan, namely a procession at night carrying Damar Kurung. The community also has a desire and effort to preserve Damar Kurung by installing 1 Damar Kurung on each house, even though it is only a part, but this is an effort that needs to be appreciated, one of which is in Sidokumpul village.

4. Damar Kurung as an Information Function.

In order to survive, the Damar Kurung craftsmen created a new innovation, namely making multifunctional Damar Kurung. Apart from being a street light, he is also a provider of information. The information conveyed can be in the form of village names, office names, shop names and house numbers.

5. Damar Kurung as a Local Load in the world of education

One effort to survive the progress of the times is to introduce children as early as possible to the craft of Damar Kurung. The practice is to make local content in schools. At the kindergarten level, children are taught to color, while making a frame until the finished product starts from elementary school to high school.

The school also installed Damar Kurung within the school environment. This is intended so that students get to know more

closely what the typical forms and visual images of Damar Kurung look like. The education department itself held educational exhibitions and competitions for Damar Kurung works, and the Damar Kurung Jamboree.

Conclusion

Currently, the damar bracket is a city icon and its presence is always presented at major events. And little by little it undergoes a metamorphosis both in terms of manufacturing materials, motifs, colors and the function of the resin Kurung themselves. These changes include city street lights and other objects that identify the city of Gresik. The city of Gresik has become popular with its characteristic damar Kurung which only exist here, various festivals starting from the damar kurung camp jamboree. Lantern festivals and street lights exist to preserve the resin Kurung from generation to generation.

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Profil Penulis

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