

Palm Brick As A Media For Malay Art: Aesthetic and Functional Design of A Bridal Giving Place

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study explores the aesthetic and functional design of bridal gift containers crafted from woven palm fronds, emphasizing their potential to sustain and revitalize Malay cultural heritage. Malay art, rich in philosophical and symbolic meaning, serves as the foundation for this exploration, reflecting the life and traditions of the Malay community. **Method:** A Research and Development (R&D) approach was employed, beginning with cultural exploration through literature reviews and interviews to identify the values embedded in Malay art. Initial design concepts were developed via sketches and material experimentation. The prototypes were tested with users to evaluate their aesthetic and functional qualities, followed by iterative improvements based on feedback. **Results:** The study produced a bridal gift container that harmoniously integrates traditional Malay aesthetics with modern design innovations. This product not only enhances the wedding procession but also narrates the cultural richness of the Malay community, particularly in Mekar Sari Village, Maro Sebo Ulu District. **Novelty:** By utilizing palm fronds as a medium, this research bridges traditional craftsmanship and contemporary design, presenting a sustainable and culturally relevant art form that reinforces Malay identity in a modern context.

INTRODUCTION

A comprehensive study of the social and cultural landscape of pre-Islamic Arab is a critical research domain that requires a multidisciplinary approach to uncover the complexity of social structures, cultural dynamics, and mechanisms of interethnic interaction. The pre-Islamic period in Arab civilization was not just a chronological representation, but a fundamental phase that shaped a complex and dynamic social architecture. The construction of cultural identity in pre-Islamic Arab societies shows a highly intricate social system, in which ethnic categorization and stereotyping mechanisms play a significant role in shaping the boundaries of intergroup interaction. Ethnographic research shows that the process of social categorization is not just a differentiation mechanism, but a fundamental instrument in building social relations and hierarchies.

The perspective of multiculturalism offers a productive analytical framework for dissecting the complexity of the social structure of pre-Islamic Arab societies. The cultural hybridization that occurs in this context cannot be understood as a linear phenomenon, but rather a continuous dialectical process, in which cultural identities are constantly redefined and negotiated. The significance of this research lies in the efforts to deconstruct mainstream narratives that are often essentialist and deterministic. Through an interdisciplinary approach, this article aims to explore the fundamental mechanisms

of social identity formation, by paying attention to the complex factors that affect cultural dynamics.

The geographical and sociological context suggests that pre-Islamic Arab societies had a sophisticated system of social stratification. Social practices, local wisdom, and knowledge transfer mechanisms between ethnic groups form a dynamic and responsive cultural ecosystem to environmental changes. This study adopts the framework of self-categorization theory to analyze the mechanism of collective identity formation. This approach allows for an in-depth investigation of the psychosocial processes underlying the construction of ethnic and cultural boundaries in pre-Islamic Arab societies. Social categorization is not just a cognitive mechanism, but a fundamental instrument in forming the structure of intergroup relationships.

The complexity of interethnic interactions in pre-Islamic Arab societies reflects strategies of adaptation and survival in harsh desert environments. The social system formed is a sophisticated response to ecological and geographical challenges, where ethnic groups develop sophisticated mechanisms of collaboration and competition. The methodological approach of this research is qualitative-interpretive, using an interactive analysis method developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. Data collection techniques include literature study, analysis of historical documents, and reconstruction of cultural narratives through a multidisciplinary approach.

The theoretical significance of this study lies in its contribution to unraveling the complexity of the social structure of pre-Islamic Arab society. This article is not just an attempt at historiographic reconstruction, but a critical investigation that aims to present a more nuanced and comprehensive social mapping. The conceptual framework of this research is built through the integration of anthropological, sociological, and historical perspectives. The multidisciplinary approach allows for an in-depth exploration of the mechanisms of cultural identity formation, taking into account the complex factors that surround it.

In the global context, this research makes a significant contribution to understanding the dynamics of the formation of ethnic and cultural identities. This article argues that the construction of social identity is a complex dialectical process, which cannot be understood through a reductive or essentialist approach. The main objective of this study is to explore the fundamental mechanisms of social identity formation in pre-Islamic Arab societies, with a focus on: 1) Analysis of social structure and ethnic categorization mechanisms. 2) Investigation of cultural practices and hybridization processes. 3) Deconstruction of the mainstream narrative about cultural identity. Through this comprehensive approach, the journal article "Crossroads of Civilizations" intends to make a significant academic contribution in understanding the complexity of the pre-Islamic Arab social and cultural landscape.

An epistemological analysis of the construction of cultural identity in pre-Islamic Arab societies reveals the complexity of the multidimensional social knowledge formation mechanisms. The paradigm of social constructivism offers a theoretical framework that allows the deconstruction of dialectical processes between social

structures, cultural practices, and mechanisms for the formation of collective identity. In this context, knowledge is not understood as a static entity, but rather as the product of a dynamic interaction between social genes that continuously negotiates the meaning and representation of identity. The Foucauldian genealogical perspective makes a significant analytical contribution in exploring the mechanisms of power underlying the establishment of boundaries of ethnic identity in pre-Islamic Arab societies. Power relations are not just structural manifestations, but complex systems that shape and are shaped by discursive practices. The mechanism of social categorization operates through symbolic discrimination strategies that form the hierarchy and regime of truth in social structures. This process involves the production of knowledge that systematically constructs a collective representation of ethnic identity.

The ecological context of the Arabian desert plays a fundamental role in shaping social and cultural adaptation mechanisms. Extreme environments encourage the development of social systems that are flexible and responsive. Survival strategies between ethnic groups depend not only on physical capacity, but also on cultural negotiation skills and the formation of strategic alliances. The concept of "cultural resilience" is a critical analytical instrument in understanding the dynamics of interactions between groups in a complex social ecosystem. The process of intersubjectivity in pre-Islamic Arab societies shows a sophisticated epistemological transformation mechanism. The exchange of knowledge, cultural practices, and belief systems between ethnic groups is not just a linear transmission process, but a complex dialectic that constantly deconstructs and reconstructs the boundaries of identity. The cultural constellation that forms represents a space of negotiation where various identity narratives interact, conflict, and are integrated in a dynamic social structure.

The complexity of the object of study requires the development of an innovative and comprehensive methodological framework. A multidisciplinary approach is not just a methodological strategy, but an epistemological imperative to understand socio-cultural phenomena in their complexity. The integration of anthropological, sociological, historical, and socio-psychological perspectives allows for a deep deconstruction of the mechanisms of cultural identity formation. Methodological triangulation is a fundamental instrument in producing a more nuanced and reflexive construction of knowledge.

This research does not only make an academic contribution in the realm of pre-Islamic Arab studies, but also offers a conceptual framework that can be transformed in a global context. A comprehensive analysis of the dynamics of ethnic and cultural identity formation has significant theoretical relevance in understanding the complexity of interactions between groups in various social contexts. This article proposes a new paradigm in understanding identity as an ongoing dialectical process, which goes beyond essentialist and deterministic approaches. Malay art is a cultural heritage that is rich in aesthetic and philosophical values and also functions as an expression of beauty, but is also full of symbolic meanings that reflect the life of Malay society. In line with what was stated by [1] the field of arts is one of the components of culture, which includes

works such as poetry, paintings, music or creations that have aesthetic values, beauty and beauty. In writing [2] art as a craft also has a connection and similarity with the word 'manual' or a style of work that uses more hands. In Malay arts, art is a branch of folk art and is also a stimulus for the development of decorative arts which are more 'non-verbal' (without words) and three-dimensional (Siti Zainon, 1986: 88).

Based on the above opinion, Malay art not only displays physical beauty but also contains philosophy, traditional values, and symbolic meanings related to the beliefs, customs, and outlook on life of the Malay people.

One of the Malay traditions that is often carried out, especially in the Jambi area, is the tradition of bridal delivery, which is a symbol of respect, commitment and family values. Bridal gifts are not just gifts, but also reflect neatness, beauty and deep cultural values.

Therefore, it is not uncommon for the groom to prepare with great wisdom in choosing a place for the bridal shower so that it looks neat, beautiful, special and full of respect for the bride. Likewise, as stated by (Huda, 2015: 205), this wedding gift is a symbol of the prestige of the groom who proposes to the woman he wants to marry. In writing [3]

In the 20 wedding ceremonies observed, it was found that all the grooms gave gifts to the bride in the form of money, personal necessities (such as clothes, shoes, jewelry, sejadah, telekung and make-up tools) and food. This gift from the groom's side is called hantaran by Kelantan Malays. (Aishah@Eshah Hj et al., 2010:107)

Referring to the opinion above, bridal gifts are something that is a tradition in various cultures in Indonesia, including Malay culture, which is given by the groom with the agreement of both parties, and does not specify the amount so as not to burden the groom. Gifts symbolize love and commitment to fulfill the needs of their partner. Therefore, it is important to prepare the gifts neatly so that they look beautiful. so that there is a need for a bridal gift place that can support the intention of the gift, by considering the suitability with tradition and culture, the quality and durability of the container, the aesthetics and the desired impression, the cost, the message and symbolic meaning related to the intentions that the bride and groom want to achieve when getting married. In line with [4]

Creativity in wedding gifts is not only aimed at fulfilling tradition, but also creating memorable visual and emotional elements. In a cultural context, gifts are a symbol of commitment and respect between the families of the bride and groom. However, in the development of the times, gifts have also become a medium to display the identity, values, and preferences of the couple. By adding creative elements, such as thematic designs or personalization, gifts can reflect the personality of the couple, so that they become more than just a formal ritual. (Aviyanti and Masnun: 2024)

However, in its application, especially in Mekar Sari Village, Maro Sebo Ulu District, Batang Hari Regency, Jambi Province, there are many bridal gift products that prioritize aesthetics but pay less attention to functional aspects, making them less practical to use. For example, a gift place that has too many decorations that cover its

contents so that it is difficult to see, making the recipient have to dismantle some of their jewelry to be able to see its contents. Then, a bridal gift place that does not match the cultural theme such as glass, acrylic, metal, and is too large so that it is difficult to lift or move may look aesthetic, but does not reflect the Malay cultural values that are identical to traditional carving motifs or natural elements such as bamboo or palm fronds. This makes the selection of a bridal gift place unbalanced between aesthetics and function,

The lack of public knowledge about the balance of aesthetics and function so that they prefer to choose a makeshift bridal shower place or one that only has aesthetics, this causes the cultural values that are expected to be inherited from generation to generation to gradually become extinct. This happens because there is no and it is difficult to find a traditional bridal shower place in the local area.

This imbalance is a challenge for creators to think of an idea to create a bridal gift place that is not only aesthetically appealing but also fulfills its practical function, namely protecting and delivering the gift items in a comfortable and safe way. and is traditional from local wisdom, especially in Mekar Sari Village, Maro Sebo Ulu District, Batang Hari Regency, Jambi Province.

The surrounding environment is an oil palm plantation, resulting in abundant palm frond waste because it is not optimally utilized, even though palm fronds have great potential to be used as a basic material for aesthetic and functional art by weaving. In line with [5]. Weaving is a part of a craft that can be made from materials derived from natural and artificial materials, examples of natural materials used are pandan, rattan, and fronds. (Nuh et al., 2021) in his writing also stated that local plants that grow naturally have long been used by the community to support daily equipment because they are very economical and easy to find.

Based on the above opinion, woven palm fronds are a natural material that can be woven and used as a medium for Malay cultural art.

The choice of palm oil sticks as an art medium in creating the design of the bridal shower offers a unique and innovative approach. In line with what was stated by [1] local wisdom refers to the element of intelligence of the Malay Islamic community which can be seen in their artistic output.

The purpose of creating a bridal gift place from palm fronds is to develop innovation from palm frond weaving through the design of an aesthetic and functional bridal gift place. As well as presenting works of art that represent the philosophy, values, and traditions of Malay culture.

RESEARCH METHOD

The method used in this research is Research and Development (R&D). Research and development method or in English Research and Development is a research method used to produce certain products and test the effectiveness of the product. The R&D approach involves: 1) Preliminary Research: Conducting cultural exploration, such as literature studies and interviews to identify Malay art values. 2) Prototyping: Developing initial design concepts through sketching and experimentation. 3) Testing and

Validation: Testing the design with users to ensure functionality and aesthetics are met and 4). Product Improvement: Improving results based on feedback. (Sudikan et al., : 2023)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Exploration

In the Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language, exploration is a field exploration with the aim of gaining more knowledge (about the situation), especially the natural resources found in that place. Based on this understanding, the creator has conducted exploration in Mekar Sari Village, Maro Sebo Ulu District, Batang Hari Regency, Jambi Province, regarding the surrounding environment which is a palm oil plantation, and seeing that there are several community groups that utilize Palm Oil Rib Waste to make plates. Based on this exploration, the creator thought of a new idea to make a bridal gift place from palm ribs with decorations that are typical of the Jambi area. This occurred to the creator because he remembered that the bridal dowry is a tradition in the Malay wedding procession and is a symbol of respect between the families of both parties.



Figure 1. Initial Design

Design

In making a bridal gift box from palm fronds, the creator made 3 alternative designs, including the following:

Rectangular in shape with a stem and decorated with angso duo ornaments which symbolize the characteristics of Malay culture, especially in Jambi. This design has a meaning as well as a prayer that the household of the bride and groom will be harmonious, because in Malay tradition, angso is often associated with noble values, loyalty and purity of heart.

According to what is written in the journal [6] with the title "*Analysis of Cultural Values in the Historical Folk Tale Book 'The Origins of Angso Duo Jambi'*" there are cultural values that are classified into eight: (1) Divine Values, (2) Human Values, (3) Life Values, (4) Spiritual Values, (5) Ritual Values, (6) Moral Values, (7) Social Values, and (8) Intellectual Values. based on the statement above, the place for the bridal gift made of palm fronds with angso duo ornaments which are Jambi regional folk tales. It is a

historical symbol for a pair of brides and grooms to establish a family that has all eight of these values.

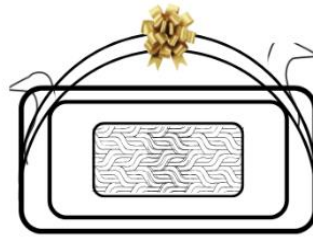


Figure 2. Alternative Design 1

Oval shaped with a stem, and equipped with an ornament in the shape of a mangosteen calyx. This design symbolizes the perfection and balance of life in the household, as well as mutual respect and obedience to carry out God's commands. This is in line with the philosophical meaning of the mangosteen stem by [7] In terms of thematic form, the mangosteen petals look beautiful, resembling flowers, and the number of petals attached to the fruit may reflect the number of fruits inside.

Based on Roesli's writing, the bridal gift container made from palm fronds and decorated with mangosteen stems is a symbol of the marriage of the bride and groom, which symbolizes balance in living a married life and promises to be honest and open in their attitudes, what is seen on the outside is also what is inside

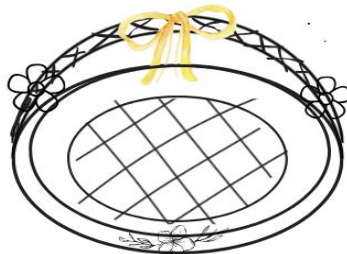


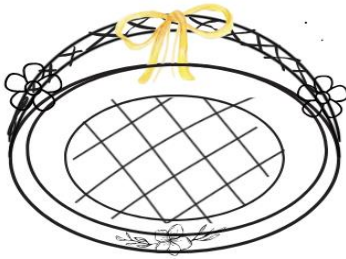
Figure 3. Alternative Design 2

The bridal gift box is round in shape, with a cross-woven pattern, and decorated with Jambi batik tied around the gift box, with handles on the left and right sides of the circle in the shape of a curve that resembles traditional Jambi carvings. Then give it a light brown color.



Figure 4. Alternative Design 3

Selected Sketch Designs



Design Image



Image after forming

Application of bridal shower



Optimizing the Utilization of Palm Kernels

Palm fronds produced from post-harvest collection were previously considered waste and have now been successfully transformed into basic art materials that have high economic value. With the right processing techniques, palm fronds are proven to have strong, flexible and durable characteristics, making them very suitable for use as craft materials.

Increased Aesthetic Value and Functionality

The resulting gift packaging products not only emphasize beauty but also pay attention to functional aspects. The ergonomic design ensures that this product is practical to use in traditional wedding ceremonies. The addition of local ornaments with Jambi's distinctive culture also provides a strong cultural identity, so that it can be a representation of modern Malay art.

Social and Economic Impact

The use of palm fronds as the basic material for bridal gift containers has a positive impact on the people of Mekar Sari Village, Maro Sebo Ulu District, Batang Hari Regency, including: in the economic sector, increasing orders for bridal gift containers from consumers, thereby increasing the income of the local community, especially Mekar Sari

Village, by opening up new business opportunities. Such as opening a service for taking fronds from the tree, frond cleaning services, weaving services, and marketing services.

According to Mrs. Soimah (owner of a palm frond weaving business in Mekar Sari Village, interviewed on August 20, 2024), "there are so many orders that she doesn't have time to pick up and clean the fronds herself, so she needs help from other people."

impact of palm frond utilization increases public awareness of the importance of optimally utilizing local resources. For the environment Reduces previously unused palm frond waste. And for education, palm frond weaving can be taught to students as a work of local wisdom.

Compliance with Local Customs

The bridal gift products are designed to suit Malay wedding traditions which prioritize symbolic value in every element of the wedding. Palm frond delivery containers are an attractive alternative compared to plastic or glass products which are more expensive and less environmentally friendly.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding : This study highlights the cultural significance of bridal gift containers made from woven palm fronds, emphasizing their symbolic meanings rooted in Malay traditions, such as the mangosteen stem symbolizing balance, honesty, and openness in married life. The use of palm fronds as a primary material reflects the Malay community's close relationship with nature and commitment to environmental sustainability. These containers serve as symbols of respect and politeness, vital elements in Malay wedding customs. **Implication :** By involving the younger generation in the creation process, this study fosters intergenerational knowledge transfer and cultural pride, promoting the integration of traditional craftsmanship into modern educational settings and traditional ceremonies. **Limitation :** The study's focus was limited to Mekar Sari Village, potentially constraining the generalizability of the findings to other Malay communities with distinct cultural practices. **Future Research :** Further exploration should examine the adaptation of palm-frond artistry across diverse Malay regions and its applicability in other cultural contexts. Additionally, investigating innovative techniques to enhance durability and versatility of palm-frond crafts could expand their relevance in contemporary art and design.

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