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Designing Contemporary Karawo Motifs for Teenagers

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ABSTRACT

The development of the ornamental textiles of Karawo Gorontalo has not been able to attract teenagers by which it leads to a situation where the teenagers seem to not appreciate their traditional clothing. It is assumed that the ornamental design of Karawo does not look appealing to the teenagers. This experimental research is intended to produce contemporary ornamental textiles of Karawo that will be used in teenagers' fashion. It consisted of three stages, i.e., 1) exploring the ideas and determining the design concept; 2) experiment on designing of ornamental textiles variants, and; 3) experiment on the application of the design in fashion. Furthermore, the design produced were evaluated to determine its quality for the production. The data were generated from observation and experiment, and were further analyzed interactively through processes, such as data reduction, data display, and summing up. The result of the idea exploration shows that the combination of traditional and urban culture through adaptation concept is able to produce an attractive design of ornamental textiles. In addition, the implementation of the aforementioned concept produces the designs of ornamental textiles of contemporary Karawo. Traditional wedding dress of Gorontalo (Bili'u) and modern social media icon are used as the basis of the design concept. The design is used to produce a contemporary Karawo clothing, e.g., Moslem attire and party dress for girl. These designs not only show physical beauty (visual), but also represent individual and social values from a combination of traditional and modern elements. The evaluation result shows that the designs meet the preference of teenagers as it represents the characteristics of teen, i.e., dynamic, energetic, unique, and fashionable. The result further shows that the development of Karawo possess a chance to maintain the sustainability of other traditional textiles.

Keywords: Contemporary, Design, Karawo, Ornamental Textiles, Teen Fashion.

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1. Introduction

Karawo refers to embroidery technique (Sudana, 2015, p.272) where the results of the embroidery are well-known as Karawo. This textile is often used in the production of Karawo dress,

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especially in Gorontalo where most people call it as Karawo Gorontalo. Although the development of the design of Karawo has been done, it seems that the result is not significant since the embroidery does not look appealing to the society, specifically teens. A survey by Bank Indonesia, Gorontalo branch on respondents whose age is varied reports that wearing Karawo cloth is not suitable to the teenagers (18%). Moreover, the other 33% asserts that the motif of Karawo looks monotonous (Bank Indonesia, 2011, p.3). Such problems raise concern in terms of the sustainability of the existence of Karawo since there are only two designers of this embroidery (Jdm, 2011, p.2). This problem indirectly involves designers and embroidery Karawo (Raa & Adv, 2012, p.3).

One of the efforts that must be done to increase youth participation in Karawo textile development is through the design of contemporary Karawo decoration. The design is tailored to the tastes of teens to attract their interest to use Karawo in their fashion. It is expected that such effort promotes the participation of the teens in the production of Karawo. The production of the new the motif and the style of Karawo cloth also function to attract the teenagers since most of the design of Karawo is formal with conventional pattern and decorative: such design may look elegant, but it makes the cloth looks less dynamic. As a result, the Karawo textile market fell by around 30%. This is because the less-dynamic design of Karawo. Such a design is also not in accordance with the tastes and demands of the trends (Purnama, 2011).

Psychologically, teenagers whose age ranges from 12 to 21 are mostly dynamic and moody since this condition is the part of their process of self-development (Monks et al., 1982, p.258-262).

To raise teenagers' awareness to appreciate and wear Karawo cloth and its accessories, various fashions specifically designed for teens are essential; one of the examples is designing contemporary Karawo. The term contemporary refers to a dimension of time, the present or contemporary time, which keeps running and following the development of a society. Contemporary artworks develop in the post-modern culture in which the diversities are being acknowledged (Sabana, 2014, p.142). The elements of traditional culture can be adapted and combined with symbols or icons of popular urban culture with certain techniques in contemporary design. This creates a variety of decorative and contemporary Karawo motif that suits the preference of teenagers.

Muslim clothing is predicted to have promising market prospects, because 85% of Indonesia's 250 million occupations are Muslim (Saefullah, 2018). Since 2000 Muslim clothing is popular in Indonesia and even being a part of lifestyle (Amrullah, 2008). On the other hand, teenagers often show their identity as a fashionable people during a party or other events, such as a reunion. This is a potential market opportunity for party dress for teens. Market opportunities and needs are crucial as designs are made according to market demand. Calamari and Hyllegard (2015) argue that designers must understand market needs as the designer's personal creativity does not contribute to the concept of design.

This experimental research is intended to produce contemporary ornamental textiles of Karawo that will be used in teenagers' fashion. This research is expected to increase adolescent awareness as the next generation to be involved in Karawo textile development either as a user or producer. It also aims to preserve and develop the heritage of traditional art techniques of Gorontalo people.

2. Research methodology

This experimental research was conducted in three stages, i.e., 1) exploring the ideas and determining the design concept; 2) experiment on designing of ornamental textiles variants, and; 2) experiment on the application of the design in fashion. It explored several sources of ideas through field observations of elements of traditional cultural artifacts, elements (symbols or icons) of popular or urban cultural, and fashionable, youthful outfits. The sources of these ideas are used in determining the most suitable concepts or designs. The verbal design concept was implemented through a series of experiments on the creation of contemporary Karawo decoration. The design is used to produce a contemporary Karawo clothing, e.g., Moslem attire and party dress for girls.

Data were collected through observation (field research) and experiments (studio research / lab.). Furthermore, the data collection was also conducted after the accomplishment of the experiment. The collected data during the experiment referred to the process of designing while experimental results (product design) were the post-experiment data. The data were generated from an interview with some participants, i.e. Karawo designers, artisans, fashion designers, and teenagers

(as the main target of the Karawo design). The participants' age ranges from 16 to 57 years old as people in such ages are capable of assessing a design and providing information as much as possible. The data were further analyzed qualitatively by employing interactive analysis method based on the Huberman and Milles analysis (Denzin and Lincoln ed., 2009, p.592). This method consisted of steps, i.e., data reduction, data display, and summing up or verification. Data reduction was made by categorizing, retrieving and summarizing the data required according to the research focus. Unnecessary data were further discarded. The resultant data is then arranged in a systematic order to structure and organize the data clearly. Following this step was summing up the conclusion based on the data displayed.

3. Sources of ideas and concept of design

The source of ideas or inspiration refer to a concept that is still vague (Lee and Jirousek, 2015). Inspiration plays a vital role in determining the characteristics of new designs and in providing the information regarding its creation (Malik and Azhar, 2015). With that being said, a designer always begin this process by exploring the source of ideas. The source of ideas for the design of Karawo comes from elements of local (traditional) cultural artifacts of Gorontalo and symbols or icons of popular urban culture. The source of ideas for the design of Karawo comes from elements of local (traditional) cultural artifacts of Gorontalo and symbols or icons of popular urban culture. Sudana et al. (2015, p.125 - 127) manage to take advantage of traditional forms of ornaments Gorontalo as a fashion decoration by combining geometric with non-geometric motifs. Its application can be seen in clothing created through batik, embroidery, or Karawo techniques. This proves that the traditional cultural elements of Gorontalo can be adapted as a fashion decoration.

Traditional cultural artifacts of Gorontalo, especially traditional bridal clothing are used for the manufacture of decorative Karawo textiles. The uniqueness of the form and ornaments on the wedding dress of Gorontalo (called *Bili'u*) is a source of inspiration Karawo ornament. The ornament is deconstructed to be relevant to the mindset of today's youth (Isnawati et al., 2017, p. 341-342). "The elements of ornament on the customary garment (*Bili'u*) not only have a unique shape, but also many symbolic meanings related to marriage counsel" (Sudana et al., 2015, p.127). To put it simply, the elements of ornaments on *Bili'u* are suitable to be adapted into a variety of ornamental contemporary Karawo textiles for teen's clothing. A design is considered fail if it is unable to provide satisfaction to the user (Gregory, 1996).

The wedding dress of the bride in Gorontalo, or *Bili'u*, is rich with ornaments on each that can adapt into motifs of contemporary Karawo. Motifs on the crown in *Bili'u* represents a symbol of the marriage customs of Gorontalo people. The motifs on the crown of *Bili'u* are harmoniously combined in symbolic meaning. The unity of such motifs is reflected in the meaning (Sudana et al., 2015, p.127). Although the motif on the crown is unique and interesting, the use of the motif in contemporary Karawo is believed to be less successful. This is due to the assumption that not all Gorontalo people accept the concept of design.

Motifs on the lower part of *Bili'u* are best suited to be adapted in designing contemporary Karawo. Such motifs resemble the shape of a leave arranged vertically from the upper to the lower part of the dress. The motifs are designed in three parts with a borderline on each part. The middle part of the ornament, which is where the main motive, is made the largest. While the ornament on the left and right, serving as a place of additional motifs, is smaller; all attached motifs are gold in color. Although the motives in the lower part of *Bili'u* does not represent a particular customary symbol, the motif functions to show the elegance of the bride of Gorontalo. These motifs are suitable to be adapted into a variety of contemporary Karawo ornaments.

Elements of urban culture also suit the design Karawo contemporary decorative textiles on teen's



Figure 1: Gorontalo Traditional Wedding Dress (*Bili'u*)
Image by: Isnawati Mohamad, 2017

clothing. Ian Chambers (as cited in Machekk, n.d., p.2) argues that popular culture contributes to the development of urban culture. In other words, pop culture and urban culture is without question an inseparable matter. The result shows several characteristics of urban society, such as 1) rejection of conventional activities and traditional cultural icons or symbols, which are being inherited from generations to generations, since such aspects are old-school; 2) the massive existence of modern social media on the Internet, e.g., Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram; 3) aiming a glamorous life or hedonism lifestyle which is represented by the food (menu and tableware) or a luxury house with its facilities, such as sport centers and private vehicles; 4) pursuing freedom and efforts to show self-identity reflected in one's appearance which sometimes looks unusual; 5) ever-changing lifestyle, embedding a dynamic characteristic to be able to adapt to the rapid growth of the situation of a particular era (Isnawati, et al. 2017, p.345).

The traits portraying the life of the urban society are represented in the form of symbols or visual signs, e.g., popular social media symbols in public spaces. These motifs are suitable to be adapted into a variety of contemporary Karawo ornaments. Facebook is among social media whose symbol fits to be adapted as the motif in contemporary Karawo. This social media is the oldest of the other where almost all people in the world use it. For teenagers, Facebook has been used widely in interacting with each other virtually. As a result, they familiar with visual symbols on that social media, i.e., the Facebook logo, hashtag (#), asterisk (*), and other icons. These icons are unique by which it seems fit to draw teenagers' interest to wear the contemporary Karawo clothing.

The source of ideas for the design of Karawo comes from elements of local (traditional) cultural artifacts of Gorontalo and symbols or icons of popular urban culture. Such symbols are considered to best suit the teen's preference. In such a context, adaptation is regarded as a process of creating a new cloth design from a base design with some modification or adjustment. Adaptation can be made by stylization technique or drawing technique with the style of objects drawn to display a certain impression or image (Kartika, 2007, p.71-72). This technique can be used in designing motifs or the model of contemporary Karawo for teens through a series of the experiment.

4. Contemporary karawo design

Implementing the concept of contemporary Karawo motifs is conducted by experimenting or by drawing the sketches on millimeter block paper. This process begins by drawing alternative sketches to help design the most suitable motifs. Adjusting the pattern to the abstract ideas visualized is to be concerned to produce sketches that represent the concepts. This also helps to track the connection between the ideas and the patterns. Following the above step is selecting the best alternative sketch.

Determining the sketch involves a number of elements, such as 1) Karawo motif designers (in determining the technical characteristics and technical quality of the sketches made); 2) Karawo artisans (in exploring the possibility of a sketch design to be applied in producing the attire); 3) fashion designers (in estimating the feasibility of sketch designs to be applied to clothing); 4) selected teenagers (to find out the design that suits their preference). They are also involved during the final evaluation of the process. The selected sketches are further applied in designing the final motifs of contemporary Karawo clothing. Some of the outputs are the contemporary Karawo adapting the motif of wedding dress Bili'u and the clothing with the motif of social media icon unique to contemporary Karawo design. Each design is explained in the following sections.

4.1 Contemporary karawo design with bili'u motifs

The design of contemporary Karawo adapted from the motif on the lower part of Bili'u is created by using the stylization technique. The motifs consist of the main and additional pattern arranged in three parts resembling the parts on Bili'u. Furthermore, the main motif is positioned on the center part with the additional motifs surrounding it (these additional patterns are also positioned between the main motifs). All motifs are arranged vertically to make the motifs positioned upward on the dress.

The main motif is made triangular-shaped resembling the shape of leaves while the additional ones are made rectangular-shaped. These motifs are positioned repetitively and arranged vertically according to the shape of the fabric. Filling motif is made on both the main and additional motifs as it is

aimed to decorate those motifs (Dharsono, 2015, p.44). The motifs are designed in a straight line resembling the ornamental textiles of Gorontalo Karawo. Such ornament is created from the long and straight line that resembling a particular pattern (Sudana, 2015, p.279). This is to ease the application of the design by Karawo embroidery.

A Karawo designer, JK (57 years old) said that Karawo motifs that represent the culture of Gorontalo look appealing to people as it differs from most of the prior concepts of Karawo. He further adds that the creation process is in accordance with the procedures by which it eases the designer to conceptualize it into textile products. This signifies that the quality of the product and it is suitable to the trend of the teens' fashion.

4.2 Contemporary karawo design with social media symbol

The visual structure of contemporary Karawo pattern adapted from social media symbols consists of several simple motifs. The main motif is the stylization of the letter "f" or an adaptation of the Facebook logo. This motif is designed on a big scale and is positioned in the middle of the composition as it functions as the main pattern of the design. Two asterisks (*) and hashtag (#) symbols serve as the additional pattern which is positioned on the right and left sides of the main pattern. The arrangement of the asterisk symbols represents a rectangular-shaped motif with the size varied. The bigger symbol is positioned in a rectangular pattern and is placed on the right side of the pattern while the smaller ones are put on the upper right and left parts. All motifs are composed in a bold and thin line serving as the frame; this is also to highlight the unity of the varied motifs.

Such variation of the motifs is considered as the implementation of the adaptation process in contemporary Karawo. It represents the characteristics of Facebook through the icons and symbols from the social media that are popular among the teens in expressing their feelings. The contemporary value embedded in such Karawo design is reflected from the combination of modern symbols applied in designing the ornamental motifs of the traditional Karawo embroidery. It also marks the situation where traditional and modern culture associates with each other forming the concept of contemporary design. The design is depicted in the following figure.

A Karawo artisans, KD (53 years old) states that the Karawo with Facebook logo design holds a potential to attract the teens' interest as most of teenagers are familiar with this social media. The informant further claims that the design is quite easy to be conceptualized as the process of producing the Karawo is basically the same.

5. Implementation of karawo motifs on teens' fashion

Although teens' fashion seems to ignore the social norms, teenagers actually concern to such norms including the regulation in their religion. However, the way they practice to follow the norm is different from the adults with their conventional approach given that adults are psychologically mature. Teenagers are energetic and dynamic by which it shapes people's paradigm that they seem to break the rules. This is because of the fact that teenagers want to express themselves in a lifestyle which might differ from the lifestyle of most adults.

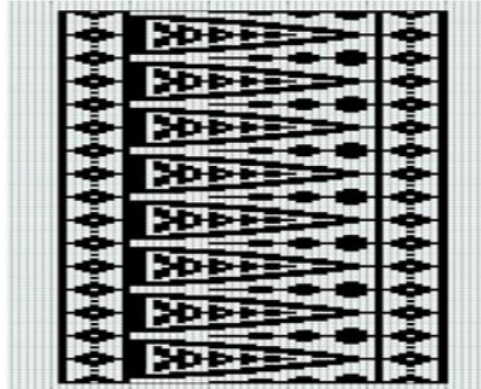


Figure 2: Karawo Motifs adapted from Bili'u Motifs
From: Output of Research, 2018.

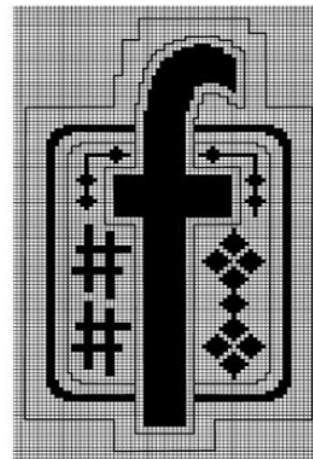


Figure 3: Contemporary Karawo Motif adapted from Social Media Symbols
From: Output of Research, 2018.

For instance, teens prefer the trendiest fashion to keep them up-to-date. Fashion styles of teenagers often highlight the beauty of body shape with striking colors with minimalist but dynamic style. They often wear unique and over-prone accessories (eyeglasses, purse, and veils) to show their different identity (Isnawati, et al., 2017, p.344). The teen's preference on fashion can be adapted to designing contemporary Karawo to produce outfits that suit their style. Wearing Muslim attire is not only a practice of religious teaching, but also reflects individual and communal identity and a part of lifestyle (Amrullah, 2008). Implementing Karawo motifs on the attire aims not only at improving the structure of the dress, but also to emphasize its uniqueness and cultural values. This resonates to the argument by Glăveanu (2014).

This can be done in two steps, i.e., designing the pattern and the application of the design on the Karawo outfits. The first step, designing the pattern, is aimed at finding out the relevant silhouette or the basis of the outfits. Proportion and the relevancy of the design to the teen's outfit are the concern of this process. The application of the design on the Karawo outfit is aimed at adjusting the ornament with the basis of the outfits. This experiment focused on producing contemporary Karawo clothing, e.g., Moslem attire and party dress for girls.

5.1 Contemporary Karawo: Moslem Attire for Girls

Muslim attire has been a popular fashion trend due to the increase in understanding and practice of Islam. Moslem girls practice the religion by wearing Moslem attire; they also try to look fashionable by wearing such outfits. This further creates a number of fashionable Moslem attire for girls by which such attire can be adapted into the design of contemporary Karawo motifs.

The procedures of adapting the attire in contemporary Karawo involve experiments and evaluation. The attire consists of a dress and trousers along with its accessories, e.g., veils and shoes. The dress is stylized from the women dress and the simplified version of women's Moslem attire called *gamis* to design a modern attire resembling a short cape. The trouser is designed to show the shape of the leg of the women. This is to adjust to the preference of teens who want to show the beauty of their body without ignoring the norm. Wearing additional accessory, i.e., veil shows the identity of Moslem attire. All in all the design of the attire and its accessories enables the wearer to show their identity as a modern, fashionable Moslem girl.

The motifs of contemporary Karawo are applied to the right part of the dress. This is to create a dynamic impression for people which also represent the characteristic of teens. The acculturation of modern and popular culture on the Moslem attire produces a contemporary Karawo dress for teenagers as it is echoing the arguments by Anyana et al., (2018, p.254).

The contrasting colors of the part of the dress, i.e., red for the dress, black for the trouser, and blue for veil and shoes suit to the energetic and dynamic of teenagers. Furthermore, adding sunglasses to the style functions to show the identity of teenagers as well as practicing being a good

Moslems. It is assumed that such style of Moslem attire suits the preference of teens as they demand a modern outfit that functions to show their religious identity as stated in Ibrahim (2007, p.246). Ibrahim argues that the recent Moslem attire shows the identity of being Moslem and to keep up with the modern fashion.

5.2 Contemporary Karawo: Party Dress for Girls

For teenagers, throwing party functions to show friendship and intimacy between friends as well as their identity. The way teenagers show the existence or identity is represented by their appearance and style of fashion. This explains why teenagers wear a unique and contrasting dress that also show the beauty of their body during a party. The idea of a party dress is used in designing contemporary Karawo for girls.

The outfit consists of a mini dress, a stole along with bags and shoes as an accessory (complimentary) fashion. Mini dress functions to show the beauty of the body of the wearer as teens favor such style. However, some people consider that the outfit breaks the law of the society.

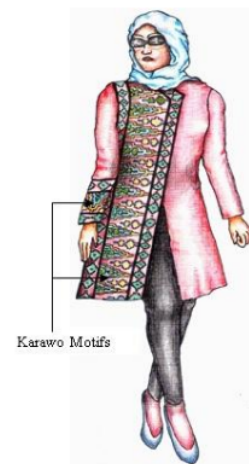


Fig. 4: Contemporary Karawo: Moslem Attire for Girls
From: Research Result, 2018.

Therefore, the stole is used to change people's perspective; the stole functions to close the shoulder parts of the women by which the wearer can wear the dress without any concern. The design represents the way people implementing urban culture.

Additional accessories, e.g., sling bag and shoes enable the women to be fashionable. The social media logo as the main supporting motifs is applied symmetrically on the sling fabric, the lower part of the dress, and the bag. This is to promote the contemporary style of the fashion which satisfy the preference of teens. This is echoing the statement by one of the respondents, OL (16 years old); she said that "I am very interested in these Karawo fashion designs, unique and fashionable [...], I want to be the first person to wear the dress [...] and will show my friends". This statement signifies that the designs meet the needs of the people.

It can be said that the objective of this research, i.e., to produce contemporary Karawo for teens, has been met. The ideas for the design are generated from field observation. The implementation of the concept of the design is done through a series of the systematical experiment. This shows that, in addition to imagination and creativity, scientific research contributes to designing contemporary fashion. This resonates with the result seen in Adnyana et al., (2018, p.254) that science of art is also required in producing the contemporary design.

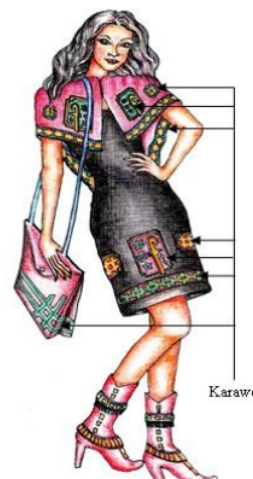


Fig. 5. Contemporary Karawo: Party Dress for Girls
From: Research Result, 2018.

6. Conclusion

Combining urban culture in traditional art and adapting symbols or icons of modern culture can produce a contemporary art style that draws people's interest. Furthermore, the implementation of the aforementioned concept produces the designs of ornamental textiles of contemporary Karawo. Traditional wedding dress of Gorontalo (*Bili'u*) and modern social media icon are used as the basis of the design concept. Both visual technique and motifs are adapted by stylizing to produce a new pattern and straight-lined design on the textiles of Karawo.

The design is used to produce a contemporary Karawo clothing, e.g., Moslem attire and party dress for girls. The contemporary value is reflected from the combination of traditional and modern culture. The evaluation result shows that the designs meet the preference of teenagers as it represents the characteristics of teen, i.e., dynamic, energetic, unique, and fashionable. This is also to ensure the long-term sustainability of the development of Karawo further. With that being said, the output of this research holds potential to contribute to the development of Karawo and other traditional textiles in Gorontalo.

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