

# Sustainable Heritage Costumes: A Review of Malay Manuscript in the Malay Peninsula

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## ABSTRACT

Sustainability has existed in great civilisations across the globe for thousands of years without officially being recognized as ‘sustainable’. According to the National Environment Policy Act 1969 (NEPA), ‘sustainable’ is defined as something that benefits current and future generations in keeping the planet’s resources safe by the movement of economy. Later, in academic debates and discussions in the business area, there are more than hundreds of definitions of “sustainability” which are referring to humans, ethics, business, and many more (Marrewijik, 2003). Zooming in on the Asian continent, where the Malay Peninsula is located, the people have been applying sustainable concepts for ages in various contexts including costume making. The process of garment making is from scratch where all the natural resources are used which include motifs, philosophies and natural items such as grass, thatch, animal skin, and many more until the introduction of weaving in the Malay world. However, the use of costume proses, vocabularies, and fractured words in most Malay manuscripts is difficult and confusing to understand. Studies conducted in this area are also not as extensive. This paper provides a short overview of related research towards the suitability issue which comes from costume Malay heritage manuscripts by using textual analysis to create awareness on appreciating the old art heritage that can be promoted to open the minds of the next generation.

**Keyword:** *Sustainable Heritage, Malay Manuscript, Costume, Malay Peninsula*

## INTRODUCTION

Folklore manuscripts have existed before the arrival of Islam in the Malay Peninsula during the reign of the Hindu-Buddhist era around 1030. These manuscripts focus on tales to entertain the royalists and the elites as well as an act of educational guidance for the royals to be more knowledgeable and fearless in shouldering the task as future rulers (Hamzah, 2017). After the arrival of Islam, manuscript writing began to grow rapidly in the Malay Peninsula around the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. During those times, prominent scholars such as Hamzah al-Fansuri, Shamsuddin al-Sumatra, Nuruddin al-Raniri, and Abdul Rauf Singkel turned up to be part of the first scholars to contribute to manuscript writing. They had successfully written the first Malay manuscript without any external influence from the Arabs which were known as primary sources or muse in disseminating knowledge of writing in the manuscript form.

The development of knowledge has successfully recorded some folklore stories that have been transmitted through the medium of oral literature from generation to generation. This resulted in a great narrative of the Malay Archipelago; a folklore manuscript which becomes the intellectual heritage of the Malays. Among the stories that are popular and successful to date are namely; *Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa*, *Hikayat Hang Tuah*, *Hikayat Amir Hamzah*, *Hikayat Malim Deman*, *Hikayat Malim Dewa*, *Hikayat Awang Sulung Merah Muda*, *Hikayat Anggun Cik Tunggal*, *Hikayat Raja Muda*, *Hikayat Indera Putera*, and many more. Most of the folklores describe an adventure of heroes which includes history, romance, magic, and the glory of royalties in the Malayan kingdoms. Mostly, these texts are meticulously interpreted. Every story is described in a calibre language used in explaining every inch of the story including the description and the interpretation of costumes which carry a symbolic message in the ambiance of the story. Most folklore manuscripts describe costumes worn by the upper-class such as the royals based on how they were styled and that they were made from the references of inspirations of nature.

## RESEARCH PROBLEM

Costume narration from the old Malay manuscripts is still being researched to date based on previous studies. The observations from past studies on old Malay manuscripts usually interpret their writing styles, the languages used, how the narrations are performed, how the state are governed, and many more. It is also recognised by Siti Zainon (1991) that there is still little emphasis on the typical Malay costumes by researchers in scientific research and writing. Furthermore, the use of classical language in the folk story is unclear and thorough interpretation of modern language theory is still minimal (Siti Zainon, 2009). Today's generation is more interested in visualisation as they like something to be seen directly. The interpretation of costume proses in the form of classical texts makes it difficult for today's readers to examine and understand the context of a costume feature in terms of the current sense of fashion. Adilah Jusoh (2015) also backed this claim, stating that elevated language prose remains enigmatic among the younger generation in any of the Malay's manuscripts. This has led to young people's lack of curiosity and commitment to immerse themselves in stories that are abundant with cultural values. Due to the lack of research on the studies of visuals from the manuscript, the idea of visualising the real costume prose is hardly understood.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The textual analysis study is a method used to analyse the heritage costumes stated in the Malay folklore manuscripts. The depiction of heritage costumes is described into three parts which are namely; characters, situations, and moods to draw parallels with the ways costumes were styled. Through the use of vocabulary and terms on describing costume, a variety of types and styles that complement the beauty of costumes made back then is able to be discovered by readers. In addition, this study employed a variety of structured interviews and open-ended questions to deepen the experts' understanding of the research undertaken as well as the experts' opinions on the subject. Open-ended questions can also provide an opportunity for specialists to provide the topic of discussion with whatever responses they believe are

essential. Interviews between researchers and experts provide more accurate and precise data. The explanation of sustainable costume process will then be explained from the Malay literary texts mentioned in the Malay folklore manuscripts.

## SUSTAINABLE HERITAGE COSTUMES IN FOLKLORE MANUSCRIPTS

A complete style of dressing is known as a costume which includes garment, ornament, equipment, and style. Costumes in the Malay world were worn in a particular period as a national costume. Back to the basics of functional clothing as in the geographical context, clothing or garment is the main 'object' in protecting the body of the wearer from extreme climates. Since the Malay Peninsula is located in the equatorial region with a tropical monsoon climate, the forms of clothing worn back from the prehistoric times about more than 200 000 years ago were made of light material of natural origin such as woven leaves and barks, which are suitable for two-season weather of rain and dry throughout the year. The process includes softening the woven leaves and barks by using special textured stones and scratching on the surface of the woven leaves and barks to create softer surface of the garments. Prior to cotton, orchids, pineapple bushes, and wild banana trees were used by the Malays as natural fibre to create cloths. Apart from that, palms trees of the *Corypha Gebanga* species were also used to create a different material of cloth during the old days. This process shows that ancient people back then were already preserving the nature by making things from scratch and benefiting future generations in keeping the planet resources safe. After the rise of the Malay civilisation in the Malay Peninsula, the art of weaving was discovered. Textile is not just textile; it is part of the Malay culture which is essentially part of ritual purposes and ceremonies in the Malay society. Heritage costumes were written and mentioned in most of the Malay manuscripts in the forms of classical Malay literary texts that provide greater depth of symbolic and aesthetic values of costumes in the Malay world. *Ikat* cloths are one of the essential cloths stated in most of the old Malay manuscripts. The *Ikats* consist of four types; *kain ikat pua*, *kain ikat loseng*, *kain ikat limar* and the most mentioned; *kain cindai* or the *patola* cloths. According to Siti Zainon (2018), *ikat* has been practiced since the Dongson era by using the warp *ikat* technique where warp thread is partly bound and patterned prior to weaving and ready to tie-dye process. The colouring process involves natural dyeing using the *lembak* leaf as a resist to create a pattern where the leaf is tied around the warp yarn before undergoing the dyeing process. *Mengkudu* roots or *Morinda Citrifolia* are used as a traditional natural dye to create the red colour. In order to get the rusty red colour, the Malays used *Passuchotria Viridiflora* or *engkerbai* leaves mixed with lime as a mordant to create the desired rusty red.

Tarum leaves (*Indigofera*) then are used as an extract colour of navy blue in dyeing the warp yarn. Usually, these colours are used in the *Ikat Pua* cloth. Besides, the Malays also came out with some of the indigenous plants' dyes, such as the *murudu* roots, indigo, and the *sepang* bark in order to strengthen the aesthetic and symbolic values of the particular cloths. Then, the oil from the candlenut tree were used as a previous treatment on the cloths. The *Cindai* cloth is another type of the *ikat* family. The weaving process involves double *ikats* usually made from fine cotton or silk enriched with silver thread, additional gold, and stamped with gold leaves. The name of *cindai* or *patola* itself is derived from the pattern of the snake gourd fruit and python which represents nature in everything, which shows how much the Malays appreciate nature. Another popular cloth that is always mentioned in the Malay folklore manuscripts is *sakhlal*. *Sakhlal* is known as a felt cloth or broadcloth. This type of cloth is often used and worn by the upper-class such as the royalties. The material of this cloth is made out of animal fur such as sheep fur and goat fur. Unlike other materials of cloths, the making process of this type of cloth does not involve weaving. Instead, it is compressed with hot-steamed power. Usually in the Malay literary texts, the word *sakhlal* is often mentioned with *sakhlal ainul-banat*. According to Azzah Aziz (2009), *ainul-banat* is one of the finest and luxurious cloths embedded with gold thread known as 'Eyes of Maidens'. This type of cloth has always been a choice of the kings and the nobles as it involves a series of the finest and the most detailed weaving craftsmanship without damaging or polluting the world. From the materials used in most of the garment process, it can be seen as highly valuable which inspires the greatness and the beauty of the divine nature being applied in the Malay arts since thousands of years ago. The following are categories of related descriptions found:

Sustainable Heritage Costumes				
Garment	Bottom	Headgear	Sash	Waist
<p><i>Baju Beledu</i>  <i>Tengkuk Kuning,</i>  <i>Baju Alang</i>  <i>Sayap Layang</i>  <i>Layang,</i>  <i>Baju Pokok,</i>  <i>Baju Sakhlal</i>  <i>Ainul Banat,</i>  <i>Baju Baldu Ainul</i>  <i>Banat</i></p>	<p><i>Seluar Intan</i>  <i>Dikarang,</i>  <i>Seluar</i>  <i>Gemerlapan</i>  <i>Cermin Di Kaki,</i>  <i>Seluar</i>  <i>Pancalogam</i>  <i>Dikarang,</i>  <i>Meribu cermin di</i>  <i>pinggang,</i>  <i>Seluar panjut</i>  <i>panjang kaki,</i>  <i>Meratus cermin</i>  <i>di kaki,</i>  <i>Kembung</i>  <i>Seluar Aceh</i></p>	<p><i>Tengkolok Kampuh</i>  <i>Pelangi,</i>  <i>Tengkolok Kampuh</i>  <i>Pelangi Kuning,</i>  <i>Tengkolok Alang</i>  <i>bersurat kalimah</i>  <i>halimunan</i>  <i>Sulaiman,</i>  <i>Solek Elang</i>  <i>Terbang</i>  <i>Menyongsong</i>  <i>Angin,</i>  <i>Tengkolok Hitam</i>  <i>Belah Mumbang:</i>  <i>Tengkolok Sering,</i>  <i>Ayam Patah Kepak</i></p>	<p><i>Selempang Kain</i>  <i>Bugis</i>  <i>Kembayat,</i>  <i>Selempang</i>  <i>Sutera Bali</i></p>	<p><i>Kain Cindai</i>  <i>Berambu Kuning,</i>  <i>Kain Cindai</i>  <i>Jantan</i>  <i>Berbenang Emas,</i>  <i>Berikat pinggang</i>  <i>kain jong sarat,</i>  <i>Kain Kembung</i>  <i>Kampuh Pelangi,</i>  <i>Ikat Pinggang</i>  <i>Kain Cindai</i>  <i>Jantan,</i>  <i>Kain kesumba</i>  <i>murup,</i>  <i>Kain cindai</i>  <i>jantan panjang</i>  <i>Sembilan,</i>  <i>Ikat pinggang</i>  <i>Kain Limau</i>  <i>perbuatan Bali,</i>  <i>berkain Bugis</i></p>

Table 1: Categories of Sustainable Heritage Costumes

## CONCLUSION

At present, an interesting fact about prehistoric traditions in wearing the simple forms of clothing of leaves and barks is that they are still practiced by the people of the Dusuns, Torajans of the Celebes, Penans, and Ibans. These ethnics mostly live deep in the interior parts of islands in the Malay Archipelago. This has shown that the process of garment-making from the prehistoric days are still relevant to wear in certain areas of this world until now. There are no chemical residues or pollution involved in the process of garment-making back then. Sustainability in the Malay world has been applied since thousands of years ago. It can be seen by the Malay's tradition in appreciating the nature by applying most of what are around, extracting the full essence of it from specific motifs and forms, common materials, and the unique artistic sensitivity of numerous artworks that remain unknown. This is in line with the definition of sustainability by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (2020) which stated that sustainability is about creating and maintaining the conditions of humans and nature in order to live in productive and harmony life and at the same time supporting present and future generations.

## RECOMMENDATION

In order to preserve and re-introduce the glory of sustainable heritage costumes in the Malay manuscripts, subsequent studies can be performed in highlighting a study referencing on styles of vocabulary and fractured words used in the old Malay manuscripts. By doing so, these vocabulary usages can be seen from a whole new perspective and can be explained in more detail. Future researchers can also unravel the uncertainties by focusing on philosophical aspects of the costumes mentioned in manuscript writing. This will reveal more insights regarding the contents carried by previous researchers so they can be used as a comparative study of costumes by future researchers on relevant fashion studies.

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