

**UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA**

**A STUDY OF LOMBOK SONGKET  
WEAVING: SASAK ETHNICITY IN  
SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEXT**

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## ABSTRACT

Songket of Lombok is also known as *songket Subahnale*, derived from the Arabic word, “*Subhanallah*”, which means “Glory be to Allah”. The motifs on songket *Subahnale* are unique and heavily influenced by local culture, social life, religious values, nature and the environment, and other factors related to Sasak’s socio-culture. The lack of in-depth research and the lack of interest of young people in preserving this *Subahnale* songket motivated the researcher to study this issue to prevent this traditional woven craft from going extinct and raise awareness of the importance of preserving traditional arts. This study aims to identify the motifs in songket *Subahnale*, analyze the meaning behind them, and describe their function and their relation to the social and culture of the *Sasak* people. This study adopted a descriptive qualitative approach, and the data analysis used is the semiotic theory developed by *Ferdinand de Saussure*, which is considered appropriate for this research. The study results indicate that some of the *Subahnale* songket motifs are not commonly found in songket types from other regions, such as the existence of a category of fauna and humanoid motifs. Symbolism in Lombok songket motifs reflects Sasak’s culture, such as the *merariq* tradition in the *wayang* motif. Songket *Subahnale* cloth also influences society, such as showing one’s social level, and is used as a marker of eligibility for *Sasaknese* women to be ready for marriage. This research is expected to contribute to future studies that have the same interest, and the benefits of this research are expected to improve the conservative quality of the local culture of songket weaving in the Archipelago, especially songket *Subahnale* of the *Sasak* tribe on the island of Lombok, Indonesia.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Research Background

Indonesia is world-widely established as a country of the Archipelago, which means that the nation of Indonesia geographically consists of many islands. According to Tumonggor et al. (2013), there are roughly 17,000 islands in Indonesia, ranging from *Merauke* in the east to *Sabang Island* in the west. This aspect also contributes to Indonesia's diversity, which is characterized by the coexistence of a wide range of ethnic communities, like Sundanese, Toraja, *Balinese*, *Sasaknese*, and several other tribes dispersed across the entire nation. As part of Southeast Asia, various ethnic groups in Indonesia historically have ties to their closest countries, such as Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, Indonesia, Brunei, and most of Southeast Asia (Din, 2011).

Furthermore, Southeast Asian nations had links in geopolitics, trade, ethnoreligiousness, and art and culture. Gaspersz (2018) claims that during the colonial era, the distinction or otherness between "white" and "brown" citizens was referred to as "*masuk Melayu*" by the colonial rulers. They developed social distinctions as part of their socio-political superiority to subjugate indigenous people based on pre-existing self-perceptions. Hence, the existence of those ethnic groups causes cultural diversity in every region and may cause two or more places to share similar features or characteristics, including arts and cultures. One of many places that are influenced by Malay culture is Lombok Island.

According to Mulyadi (2014), Lombok is an island in Indonesia's West Nusa Tenggara (NTB) Province. The island of Lombok has an area of approximately 5435 km<sup>2</sup> and is located in the eastern part of Indonesia at the time of the division of central Indonesia. The word "Lombok" is derived from the Sasaknese word *lombo*, which is translated as "straight." About 80% of the island's population are followers of Islam, another 18% are Hindus, and most of whom are part of the population of the island of *Bali* who used to live on the island of Lombok, and a small part are residents of the island's tribes who still hold Hinduism, and the remaining 2% of the population is shared with Christians and Buddhists (Wahyudin, 2018). Lombok Island has been a house for Sasak indigenous people who have lived there for hundreds of years until