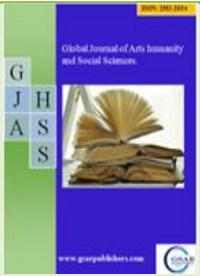
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The Aesthetics of Malay Traditional Attire in the Sepak Rago Tinggi Performance

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Abstract

The sepak rago tinggi Kopah is a cultural heritage that embodies collective values and Malay identity through its symbolic movements and traditional attire. This work aims to visualize the aesthetic values of Malay cultural clothing worn during the performance of Sepak rago tinggi through the medium of photography. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, this study explores the integration of traditional costume within the dynamics of the game. Data were gathered through visual observation, field documentation, and literature review. The primary objective is to document the artistic details of Malay attire as it interacts with the players' movements, allowing cultural values to be appreciated visually. The results of this exploration are expected to contribute to the field of art studies, particularly at the intersection of cultural aesthetics and documentary photography practice.

Keywords: Clothing Aesthetics, Malay Culture, Visual Photography, Sepak Rago Tinggi Kopah.

INTRODUCTION

The preservation and documentation of traditional cultural heritage are crucial imperatives in addressing the challenges of global cultural homogenization. Local culture comprising traditions, values, and norms serves as a manifestation of group identity that distinguishes one community from another. Cultural preservation aims to safeguard, maintain, and pass down this heritage to future generations, fostering a sense of pride, self-worth, and strong collective identity. Within this framework, visual documentation through photography plays a vital role in capturing the uniqueness of traditions, ensuring that cultural richness remains preserved and accessible in the modern era (Karmadi, 2007)

This visual study focuses on the aesthetics of the Malay attire worn by Sepak rago tinggi players in Kenegerian Kopah, which comprises a combination of the baju koko, a selendang (waist sash), and a peci (traditional cap). The 'baju koko' reflects the deeply rooted religious identity of the Riau Malay community, while the 'selendang' wrapped around the waist serves not only as an aesthetic attribute but also creates dynamic movement lines during the players' aerial maneuvers. The 'peci', as a symbol of formality and dignity (marwah), provides an impression of

authority amidst the physical agility of the game. Through the photographic lens, the color compositions, fabric textures, and silhouettes of this attire are captured as a cohesive visual entity, demonstrating that traditional clothing remains functional without losing its aesthetic value during intense physical activity.

The aesthetics of Malay attire in the sepak rago tinggi performance of Kenegerian Kopah presents a compelling visual phenomenon. This tradition transcends mere motor skills or physical agility; it serves as a visual and philosophical manifestation of Malay cultural aesthetics, which is rooted in harmony, order, and structured movement. Within the photographic context, the attire is not merely an accessory but a pivotal element that emphasizes the harmony between the players' physical discipline and their cultural identity. The interaction between the flowing fabric and the precision of movement creates a visual composition that symbolizes the dignity ('marwah') and elegance inherent in Malay society (Amby, 2023). The game embodies profound educational values, particularly in fostering social solidarity, cooperation, and the spirit of 'gotong royong' (mutual assistance) as the foundation of social interaction. Philosophically, sepak rago tinggi upholds Islamic teachings, which are manifested through the symbolic content of the Malay attire worn by the players. The use of



attributes such as the 'baju koko' and 'peci' is not merely a sartorial choice but a visual representation of religious identity and modesty integrated into cultural activities. Through photography, the connection between these social values and religious symbolism is captured as a cohesive aesthetic unity (Wulandari & Daryusti, 2023).

To extract and elaborate on the visual richness and values embedded in this cultural practice, a methodological lens capable of freezing ephemeral moments is required. Photography offers an effective framework for this purpose; as a visual discipline, it possesses the capability to record the objects of Sepak rago tinggi objectively while providing a subjective interpretation of the captured reality. In contemporary humanities discourse, photography has emerged as a valid epistemological instrument for exploring reality. This study employs the 'Thin Description' theory to describe the visual facts of Malay attire in a straightforward and factual manner, focusing on the physical forms and the presence of garment attributes without engaging in excessive interpretive speculation. (Bortolini, 2025) Within this context, the 'thin description' approach is defined as a report of actions based on physical observations. In the performance of sepak rago tinggi, photography serves as an epistemological instrument to reveal cultural meaning through the visual documentation of attire attributes and player interactions. By focusing on sensory- captured aspects, photography provides factual data regarding the aesthetics of Malay dress, which in turn serves as a key to understanding the cultural identity embedded within the game.

Based on the aforementioned background, this study focuses on analyzing the aesthetics of Malay cultural attire through visual photography within the traditional performance of sepak rago tinggi in Kenegerian Kopah. The primary objective is to identify and factually describe the visual aesthetic values inherent in the game through the interpretative frame of photography as a visual medium. The findings of this study are expected to provide an academic contribution to the field of art studies, particularly at the intersection of cultural aesthetics and the practice of photography.

METHODE

The conceptual foundation of this study is built upon a synthesis of visual communication theory and cultural ontology. As identified in the previous stages, (Martaa et al., 2024) provide a crucial lens by defining visual media as a sensory vehicle that delivers complex messages through ocular stimuli. In this research, those "messages" are the spiritual and educational values embedded in the performance of Sepak Rago Tinggi. This theoretical premise is empirically grounded by the insights from (Suparmi, 2024) who emphasizes that Riau Malay culture is inextricably linked to Islamic teachings. By collecting these ideas, the researcher establishes that the visual attributes specifically the baju koko, selendang, and peci are not merely aesthetic accessories. Instead, they function as "visual signifiers" that bridge the physical act of the game with the community's deep-seated religious ontological framework. Thus, the integration of these perspectives allows

photography to transition from a mere recording tool to a valid epistemological instrument. It captures the synergy between kinetic movement and sociocultural wisdom, confirming that the traditional attire maintains its marwah (dignity) even during intense physical maneuvers.

This study employs a qualitative methodology, drawing data from a triangulation of observations, semi structured interviews, and comprehensive documentation. Central to this inquiry is the visual ethnography approach. In this context, the "visual" element transcends mere aesthetics; it refers to the physical manifestations and observable phenomena that constitute the subjects' lived reality. By utilizing visual ethnography, this research seeks to decode the nuanced meanings embedded within the visible world, treating imagery and sight as primary conduits for cultural and social understanding. According to Martaa et al., (2024) visual media serves as a pivotal vehicle for delivering information or messages through a synthesis of auditory and ocular stimuli, both of which are perceptible by the human senses. Complementing this, ethnography is defined as a scholarly inquiry that extends beyond the mere observation of communicative behavior. It is fundamentally aimed at uncovering the diverse forms and functions inherent within human communication. Ethnography strives to analyze the intricate communication patterns embedded within cultural knowledge and human behavior. Within the realm of qualitative inquiry, Visual Ethnography emerges as a multidimensional methodological approach that integrates traditional participant observation with the analysis of visual materials as a primary instrument for deciphering social realities. In a broader research context, this methodology functions as a critical bridge for exploring the unseen the latent cultural nuances through 'the seen' or the manifest visual practices. Such an approach enables researchers to deconstruct the cultural knowledge deeply rooted in human interactions, leveraging the validity of visual data to fortify field findings both empirically and interpretatively.

Field findings demonstrate that Sepak Rago Tinggi transcends its role as a mere traditional sport; it represents a profound cultural practice embedded with educational and spiritual values that are systematically integrated into its execution. The data reveals that these values are not peripheral, but rather intrinsic to the physical performance of the activity, reflecting a synergy between kinetic movement and sociocultural wisdom. Insights derived from interviews and observations with (Kasyter Wandra, 2024) the head of the Sepak Rago Tinggi community, reveal that the game is executed through a highly disciplined and structured framework. Islamic teachings are not merely peripheral additions but function as an integral component of the activity, both in its preparation and conclusion. This integration is manifest in specific protocols, such as the adherence to modest dress codes (awrah). Such practices demonstrate that religious values are not positioned as mere symbolic or ceremonial gestures; rather, they operate as foundational principles that actively shape the behavioral ethics and conduct of the players throughout the game.

Within this framework, the researcher identifies attire as the primary object of investigation. This selection is predicated on the

understanding that clothing functions as more than mere utilitarian sportswear; rather, it serves as a potent visual and cultural signifier. In the context of the Riau Malay community, these garments represent a synthesis of religious tenets and collective identity. By analyzing the attire, this study aims to decode the symbolic layers that bridge the physical act of the game with the underlying sociocultural values of the practitioners.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This research articulates the visual richness of Malay attire worn during the Sepak Rago Tinggi performance in Kenegerian Kopah. By adopting a qualitative descriptive framework, the study employs the 'Thin Description' theory to factually document the physical attributes of the garments specifically the baju koko (shirt), selendang (waist sash), and peci (cap) avoiding excessive interpretive speculation. This approach enables the researcher to freeze ephemeral moments into an epistemological instrument, revealing the objective reality of the traditional attire.

The creative concept of this study emphasizes documentation during the live performance, focusing primarily on the crucial moments when players execute the rago ball kicks. In alignment with the perspectives of (Sari et al., 2024), the visual capture of traditional clothing is not merely a mechanical recording but an artistic endeavor that requires mastery of composition to evoke profound meaning. Through the photographic lens, the interaction between the flowing fabric and the precision of the players' movements creates an aesthetic unity that symbolizes the dignity (marwah) of the Malay community.

A. Analysis of Figure 1

This section highlights the aspects of formality and collective identity among the players within a linear formation. Visually, the use of dark-colored, long-sleeved baju koko paired with the peci (traditional cap) creates an impression of authority amidst the physical agility required by the game. Furthermore, the placement of the patterned selendang (waist sash), which provides a stark contrast to the primary attire, functions as a visual signifier that bridges the players' physical actions with the religious ontological framework of the local community



Figure 1. Portrait of Player Wearing Malay

B. Analysis of Figure 2

Moving into the movement dynamics captured in Figure 2, the documentation demonstrates how the attire remains functional without compromising its aesthetic value during intense physical activity. The loose-fitting baju koko provides freedom of movement, while the selendang (waist sash) securely fastened around the waist creates dynamic visual lines that follow the body's contours. The aesthetics in this figure reflect the principles of harmony and order, where the clothing does not function merely as a decorative element but integrates seamlessly with the player's motor activities.



Figure 2. Malay Clothing in the Aesthetic Movement of High Rago Football Players

C. Analysis of Figure 3

In Figure 3, the focus is directed toward the interaction between the player's biomechanics and the structural construction of the attire during an acrobatic kick. This visual evidence factually proves that the design of the traditional costume does not impede the physiological range of motion required for extreme maneuvers. On

the contrary, the fluidity of the selendang (waist sash) following the trajectory of the kick adds a layer of elegance to every aerial movement, reinforcing the synergy between physical discipline and cultural identity.



Figure 3. Malay Clothing Does Not Disturb or Restrict Your Movement

Field findings clarify that Sepak Rago Tinggi transcends its role as a traditional sport, as it systematically integrates educational and spiritual values. (Wandra, 2024) explains that the game is conducted within a disciplined framework where Islamic teachings serve as an integral component, including strict adherence to dress codes that cover the awrah. In this context, attire functions as a communication medium that conveys 'invisible' Islamic moral foundations through tangible visual practices.

The integration of visual media and cultural ontology in this study positions photography as a strategic archive for the preservation of local heritage. By documenting sartorial details during the performance, this research successfully captures identity symbols capable of resisting the tide of global cultural homogenization. Consequently, Sepak Rago Tinggi is proven to be an integrative cultural space where sports, character education, and Malay spirituality converge and are continuously negotiated through daily practice.

D. Aesthetics of Malay Attire

The aesthetics of Malay attire in the Sepak Rago Tinggi performance of Kenegerian Kopah represent a harmonious blend of theological values and cultural identity manifestations. Fundamentally, this aesthetic is rooted in the concept of marwah (dignity and honor), where each sartorial element serves as a medium of visual communication to convey values of modesty and adherence to religious norms. The use of the baju koko, peci, and selendang is not merely a fulfillment of functional aspects in sports but a symbolic statement of a Malay identity that is inclusive of Islamic teachings. In alignment with traditional aesthetic principles, this attire prioritizes loose and modest proportions to meet awrah standards while maintaining elegance through fabric textures and contrasting color compositions between the primary garment and the waist sash.

Furthermore, the aesthetic dimension of this attire is kinetic, where its beauty is most vibrantly expressed during interactions with the

players' body dynamics. According to sociocultural theory, clothing in this context functions as a 'social skin' that envelops physical agility with layers of moral values. The fluidity of the selendang following the trajectory of acrobatic kicks creates a visual accentuation that reinforces the rhythm of movement, transforming the athletic performance into a poetic and orderly spectacle. This integration of an ergonomic clothing structure with religious symbolism asserts that Malay aesthetics are not static but adaptive to ranges of motion without compromising the spiritual principles that form the foundation of life for the Kenegerian Kopah community.

CONCLUSION

This research concludes that the traditional game of Sepak Rago Tinggi in Kenegerian Kopah is an intangible cultural heritage that represents the collective identity and dignity (marwah) of the Malay community. Through a qualitative descriptive approach and visual ethnography methodology, this study successfully articulates how Islamic theological values are systematically integrated into athletic practices and sartorial aesthetics. The use of photography as a research instrument, guided by the 'Thin Description' framework, proved effective in transforming ephemeral moments during the game specifically during the acrobatic kick phase into epistemological data that reveals the objective reality of Malay aesthetics.

The analysis results indicate that the attire attributes, consisting of the baju koko, peci, and selendang, are not merely functional sartorial elements but identity symbols that bridge physical actions with a religious ontological framework. The design of this attire demonstrates high ergonomic characteristics, where the structural construction of the garments provides freedom of movement without compromising the values of modesty (awrah) that form the game's moral foundation. The interaction between the players' body biomechanics and the fluidity of the selendang fabric creates a unique kinetic aesthetic, reinforcing the synergy between physical discipline and the nobility of cultural identity.

Overall, the integration of visual media and cultural documentation in this study serves as a strategic archive to ensure the sustainability of local heritage against the tide of global homogenization. These findings confirm that Sepak Rago Tinggi is an integrative cultural space where athleticism, character education, and Malay spirituality converge. This research provides a theoretical contribution to art and socio-cultural studies while opening opportunities for future research regarding the semiotic evolution of cultural symbols in maintaining the resilience of Malay identity in the modern era.

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