

PHYSICAL ANALYSIS OF *KELINGKAN* SHAWLS AS
SUSTAINABLE ARTEFACTS FOR MUSEUMS IN
MALAYSIA

BY

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ABSTRACT

Kelingkan embroidery is one of traditional hand-made Malay historical textiles which is currently facing a state of declination in Peninsular Malaysia due to diminishing number of surviving skilful artisans. Initial survey conducted on the collection of *kelingkan* embroideries in several local museums in Peninsular Malaysia revealed certain degrees of degradations and lack of systematic management on their inventory, storage and conservation methods. The main aim of this study is to safeguard and maintain the well-being and sustainability of *kelingkan* embroideries as national heritage. Hence, the study embarks on a series of identification, classification and documentation of *kelingkan* shawls as a form of *kelingkan* embroideries in terms of their physical characteristics and conditions. The case study is limited to 25 samples of Malay *kelingkan* shawls embroidered by satin stitch technique and stored in the textile storage room of the Department of Museums Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur. Multiple methods of data collection conducted include visual observation, microscopic analyses and burning tests supported by literatures, interviews and participatory observation. The findings reveal similarities and differences on physical characteristics of *kelingkan* shawls which can be grouped into materials, colours, shapes, patterns and motifs. The condition of *kelingkan* shawls are consequently classified into good-fair, fair, poor and very poor condition with different degrees of physical, chemical and biological damages. The output of the research is the documentation of *kelingkan* shawls in the form of inventory detailing their physical characteristics, conditions, and damages. This inventory will serve as databank, beneficial for curators and conservators in curative and preventive conservation of *kelingkan* shawls. In conclusion, further researches in the curative and preventive conservation of the embroidery are recommended as to ensure its continuous wellbeing and to contribute to the currently limited literatures in the preservation of *kelingkan* embroidery.

خلاصة البحث

تطريز كلنجكان هي واحدة من المنسوجات التقليدية الملايوية التاريخية المصنوعة يدويا والتي تواجه حاليا حالة من الانخفاض في شبه جزيرة ماليزيا بسبب تناقص عدد الحرفيين المهرة على قيد الحياة. وكشفت الدراسة الاستقصائية الأولية التي أجريت على مجموعة من مطرقات كلنجكان في العديد من المتاحف المحلية في شبه جزيرة ماليزيا بعض درجات التدهور وعدم وجود إدارة منهجية على المخزون والتخزين وطرق الحفظ. والهدف الرئيسي من هذه الدراسة هو الحفاظ على رفاه واستدامة مطرقات كلنجكان كتراث وطني. ومن ثم، تشرع الدراسة في سلسلة من تحديد وتصنيف وتوثيق شالات كلنجكان كشكل من أشكال مطرقات كلنجكان من حيث خصائصها وظروفها المادية. وتقتصر دراسة الحالة على 25 عينة من شالات كلنجكان الملايوية المطرزة بتقنية غرزة الساتان والمخزنة في غرفة تخزين المنسوجات التابعة لإدارة المتاحف الماليزية في كوالالمبور. وتشمل الطرق المتعددة لجمع البيانات التي تتم الملاحظة البصرية، والتحليلات المجهرية، واختبارات الحرق التي تدعمها المؤلفات والمقابلات والمراقبة التشاركية. وتكشف النتائج عن أوجه تشابه واختلاف في الخصائص الفيزيائية لشالات كلنجكان والتي يمكن تجميعها في مواد وألوان وأشكال وأنماط وزخارف. وبالتالي تصنف حالة شالات كلنجكان إلى حالة جيدة ومنصفة وفقيرة وفقيرة جداً مع درجات مختلفة من الأضرار الفيزيائية والكيميائية والبيولوجية. وكان ناتج البحث هو توثيق شالات كلنجكان في شكل تجريد تفاصيل خصائصها المادية، وظروفها، والأضرار. كما سيكون هذا التجريد بمثابة بنك بيانات، مفيد للقيمين والمحافظين في الحفظ العلاجي والوقائي لشالات كلنجكان. في الختام، وأوصى مزيد من البحوث في الحفظ العلاجي والوقائي من التطريز لضمان رفايتها المستمرة والمساهمة في الأدبيات المحدودة حاليا للحفاظ على تطريز كلنجكان.

APPROVAL PAGE

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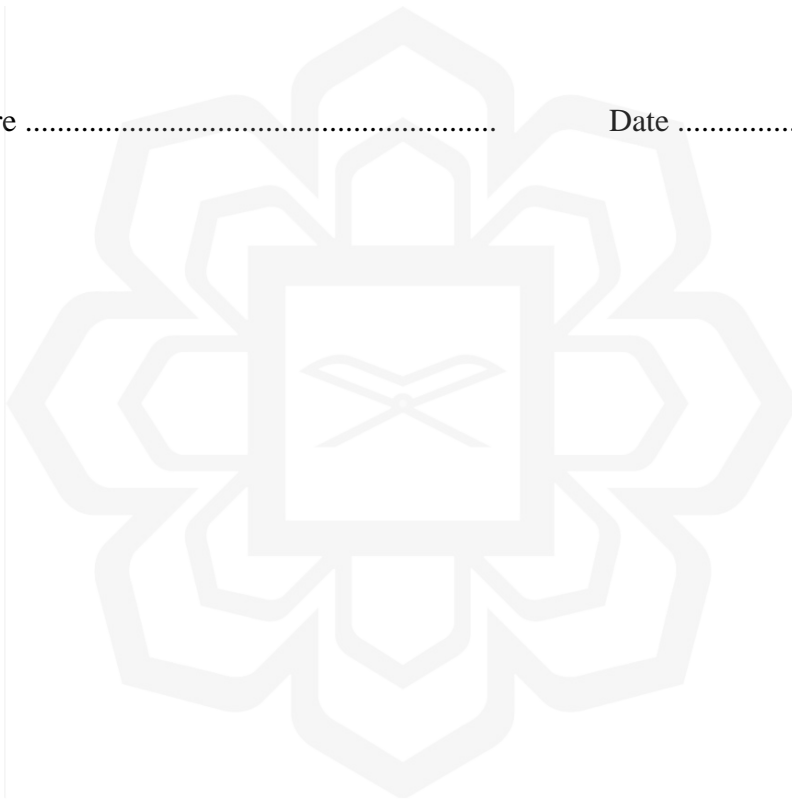
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	ii
Abstract (Arabic).....	iii
Approval Page.....	iv
Declaration.....	v
Copyright	vi
Acknowledgements.....	vii
List of Tables	xi
List of Figures	xiii
List of Symbols.....	xvii
List of Abbreviations	xviii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	13
2.1 Introduction	13
2.2 The Diminishing State of <i>Kelingkan</i> Embroidery in Peninsular Malaysia	13
2.3 The Definition of <i>Kelingkan</i> Embroideries.....	15
2.4 Geographical Distribution of <i>Kelingkan</i> Embroidery in Malay Regions...	16
2.5 Historical Background of <i>Kelingkan</i> Embroidery in Peninsular Malaysia	17
2.6 Local Uses and Evolvement of <i>Kelingkan</i> Embroideries	19
2.6.1 <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawl as a Form of <i>Kelingkan</i> Embroideries.....	20
2.7 Physical Characteristics of <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls	23
2.7.1 Materials.....	23
2.7.2 Technique of Embroideries	27
2.7.3 Colours	29
2.7.4 Patterns	30
2.7.5 Motifs	32
2.8 Degradation Factors of Historical Textiles	34
2.8.1 Introduction	34
2.8.2 Factors of Degradations	34
2.9 Care and Storage of Historical Textiles in Museum	44
2.9.1 Introduction	44
2.9.2 Environmental Monitoring	45
2.9.3 Storage Methods of Historical Textiles	47
2.10 Assessment and Documentation of Historical Textiles in Museums	49
2.11 Conclusion.....	55
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	56
3.1 Introduction	56
3.2 Preliminary Study	56
3.3 Interview	57
3.4 Participatory Observations	58

3.5	Locale of the Study	59
3.6	Selection of the Samples	60
3.7	Physical Examination of the Samples	61
3.8	Documentation of the Samples	61
3.9	Scientific Study	63
3.10	Classification of Data	67
3.11	Conclusion	69
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS.....		70
4.1	Introduction	70
4.2	Results from the Preliminary Study.....	70
4.3	Results from the Interviews	72
4.4	Results from the Participatory Observations	73
4.5	Results from the Physical Analysis on the Physical Characteristics of <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls	75
4.5.1	Materials	75
4.5.2	Colours	80
4.5.3	Shapes	81
4.5.4	Patterns	83
4.5.5	Motifs	94
4.6	Results from the Analysis of the Conditions of <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls	112
4.6.1	Degradation Assessment of <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls	112
4.6.2	Classification of Condition Rating Code of <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls ...	117
4.6.3	An Assessment of the Storage Conditions of <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls ...	122
4.7	Factors of Degradation of <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls	126
4.8	Conclusion	127
CHAPTER FIVE: INVENTORY OF <i>KELINGKAN</i> SHAWLS		128
5.1	Introduction	128
5.2	Inventory of Physical Characteristics and Conditions of <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls	128
5.2.1	Inventory of <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls classified by Patterns	129
5.2.2	Inventory of Motifs of <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls	154
5.2.3	Inventory of the Major Degradations of <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls	162
5.3	Recommendations for Appropriate Storage Methods of <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls in Museums	165
5.4	Conclusion	169
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS		170
6.1	Conclusion	170
6.2	Recommendations for Future Works	174
6.3	Significances of the Research	175
REFERENCES		176
APPENDIX I: A LIST OF DMM COLLECTION OF <i>KELINGKAN</i> EMBROIDERIES		181
APPENDIX II: A LIST OF PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF 25 SAMPLES OF <i>KELINGKAN</i> SHAWLS		188

**APPENDIX III: A SAMPLE OF *KELINGKAN* SHAWL ASSESSMENT
FORM 189**
APPENDIX IV: AN EXCERPT FROM AN INTERVIEW 191
GLOSSARY193



LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1	The Operational Definition of Malay terminologies	11
Table 2.1	The Embroidery Process of <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls in Kelantan and Selangor	27
Table 2.2	A List of Motifs embroidered on <i>renda</i> and <i>badan</i> of <i>kelingkan</i> shawls	33
Table 2.3	A List of Conservation Terms for the Assessment of Historical Textiles	50
Table 2.4	The Classifications of Damages on Historical Textiles	51
Table 2.5	The 4 Levels of Condition Rating Codes of Historical Textiles	52
Table 2.6	The 6 Levels of Condition Rating Codes of Historical Textiles	53
Table 2.7	The 4 Levels of Condition Rating Codes of Historical Textiles	54
Table 3.1	A List of Existing Numbers of <i>Kelingkan</i> Embroideries acquired from selected museums in Peninsular Malaysia during preliminary study	57
Table 3.2	The 6 Types of <i>Kelingkan</i> Embroideries observed during the preliminary study	60
Table 3.3	Parameters of Physical Examination on 25 Samples of <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls	62
Table 3.4	The Burn Characteristics of Cellulose and Protein Fibres in Good Condition	65
Table 3.5	The Classification of Data on the Physical Characteristics, Conditions, Damages and Storages of <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls	67
Table 3.6	The Classification of Data on the Damages of <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls	67
Table 3.7	Designed Condition Rating Codes to classify the condition of 25 samples of <i>kelingkan</i> shawls	68
Table 4.1	The 4 Types of Embellishments of <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls	78

Table 4.2	The Variations in the Intensity of Colours of <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls	81
Table 4.3	The Descriptions on the Category of Shapes and Measurements of <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls	82
Table 4.4	The Descriptions on the Positioning and Styles of Motifs of <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls on Type I and Type II	84
Table 4.5	The Total Numbers of <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls from Type I and Type II	85
Table 4.6	The Total Numbers of <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls from 7 Sub-areas of <i>Kelingkan</i> shawls of Type I	90
Table 4.7	The Total Numbers of <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls from 5 Sub-areas of <i>Kelingkan</i> shawls of Type II	91
Table 4.8	The Description of Motif Names, Classification and Total Numbers of <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls based on 5 categories of motifs	98
Table 4.9	The 3 Types of <i>Renda</i> Motifs	101
Table 4.10	The 4 Types of <i>Birai</i> Motifs	104
Table 4.11	The Types of <i>Badan</i> Motifs	106
Table 4.12	The 5 Categories of Motifs on <i>Sudut</i> of <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls	110
Table 4.13	Motifs Designs on the Irregular areas (Type II)	111
Table 4.14	The List of Physical Damages of <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls	114
Table 4.15	The List of Chemical Damages of <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls	116
Table 4.16	The List of Biological Damages of <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls	117
Table 4.17	The List of 4 Categories of Condition Rating Codes of <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls	118
Table 4.18	An Assessment on Museum Accession Numbers, Labels and Storage Methods of <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls	123

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1	The Research Framework	8
Figure 2.1	Geographical Distribution of <i>Kelingkan</i> Embroidery in Malay Regions	16
Figure 2.2	<i>Kelingkan</i> Shawl as a part of the Traditional Malay Royal Costume worn by Her Highness Tengku Ampuan Jemaah (1900-1973), The Royal Queen of Selangor	21
Figure 2.3	<i>Kelingkan</i> Shawl as a part of the Traditional Malay Royal Costume worn by Her Highness Tengku Ampuan Hajah Mariam (1889 - 1975), The Royal Queen of Terengganu	21
Figure 2.4	The <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls as part of the Malay Women Traditional Costumes	22
Figure 2.5	A Two-holes Needle customarily made for <i>Kelingkan</i> Embroidery	24
Figure 2.6	An Illustration of the Embroidery Process of <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls with <i>Teknik Tikam Tembus</i>	26
Figure 2.7	Embroidery Process of a <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls with <i>Teknik Tikam Tembus</i>	28
Figure 2.8	Embroidery Process of a <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls with <i>Teknik Riben</i>	29
Figure 2.9	<i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls in <i>Corak Tepi</i> , <i>Corak Bunga Tabur</i> and <i>Corak Penuh</i>	31
Figure 2.10	The Motifs Arrangement of a <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls	32
Figure 2.11	Agents of Degradations of Historical Textiles	35
Figure 2.12	The Agents of Degradations of Artefacts in Museums	35
Figure 2.13	The Impact of Low and High Level of Relative Humidity	37
Figure 2.14	Agents of Chemical Degradations on Historical Textiles	41
Figure 2.15	The Rate of Mould Growth at High Level of Relative Humidity	43
Figure 2.16	The Labelling Process of an Accession Number to a Textile Object	47

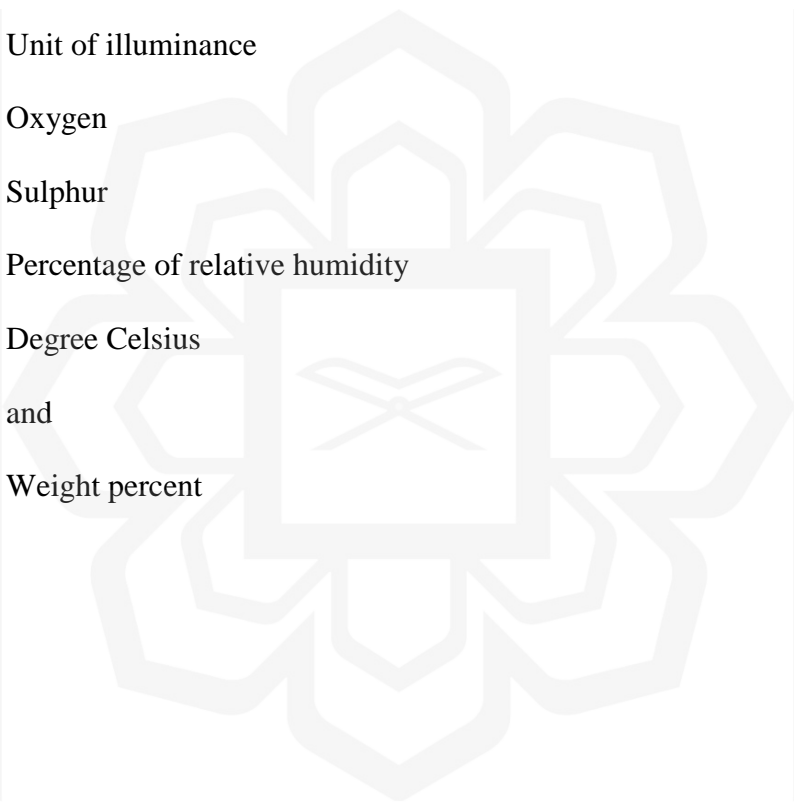
Figure 2.17	Proper Method of rolling a Historical Textile	48
Figure 2.18	A Bracket Storage System in A Drawer to support the textile weight	49
Figure 3.1	Malay <i>Kelingkan</i> Practitioners in Kota Bharu, Kelantan	58
Figure 3.2	Participatory Observation on the Process Making of <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls	59
Figure 3.3	Physical Examination of <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawl	61
Figure 3.4	A Designed Research Identification Number of 25 samples of <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls	62
Figure 3.5	Characterization of <i>Kelingkan</i> Threads with NAA	63
Figure 3.6	Burn Tests for the Identification of the Fabric Type	66
Figure 4.1	Common Physical Characteristics and Damages of <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls observed from the collection of visited museums	71
Figure 4.2	The Process-Making of <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls with <i>Teknik Tikam Tembus</i>	75
Figure 4.3	Several Types of Cotton and Silks Fabrics observed on <i>kelingkan</i> shawls	76
Figure 4.4	The Types of <i>Kelingkan</i> Threads	77
Figure 4.5	The Images of the 4 Types of Embellishments of <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls	79
Figure 4.6	The 7 Types of Colours of <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls	80
Figure 4.7	The Variations in Shapes and Measurements of <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls	82
Figure 4.8	An Illustration of Type I of Motifs Positioning of <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls	86
Figure 4.9	An Illustration of Type II of Motifs Positioning of <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls	86
Figure 4.10	The 3 Categories of Second Pattern of <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls	87
Figure 4.11	The Total Numbers of <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls in <i>Corak Tepi</i> , <i>Corak Bunga Tabur</i> and <i>Corak Penuh</i>	88

Figure 4.12	The Classification of <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls according to Fabric Materials and Common Motifs Positioning	89
Figure 4.13	The 7 Sub-areas of Type I of the First Pattern in Correlation with the Second pattern of <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls	90
Figure 4.14	The 5 Sub-areas of Type II of the First Pattern in Correlation with the Second pattern of <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls	91
Figure 4.15	Examples of <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls in Sub-area C and Sub-area E of Type I	92
Figure 4.16	Examples of <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls of Sub-area K and Sub-area I of Type II	93
Figure 4.17	The 5 Categories of Motifs of <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls	95
Figure 4.18	The Examples of Motifs from the Flora Category	96
Figure 4.19	The Examples of Motifs from the Category of Abstracted Fauna, Earth, Cosmos and Arabic writings	97
Figure 4.20	The Vertical Direction of Motif Design of Type A on <i>Renda</i>	102
Figure 4.21	The 2 Variations of <i>Renda</i> Designs on Type A	102
Figure 4.22	The <i>Renda</i> Designs on Type B and C	103
Figure 4.23	An Illustration on the 3 Types of <i>Birai</i> Motifs	105
Figure 4.24	The Motif of <i>Kacang Putih</i> commonly found on <i>badan</i> and <i>birai</i>	107
Figure 4.25	An Illustration of Symmetrical Arrangement in slanting designs on <i>Badan</i> Motifs in a pattern of <i>Corak Bunga Tabur</i>	107
Figure 4.26	An Illustration of Symmetrical Arrangement in Slanting Designs on <i>Badan</i> Motifs in a Pattern of <i>Corak Penuh</i>	108
Figure 4.27	The 3 Types of Motifs Designs on <i>Sudut</i> of <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls	109
Figure 4.28	The 9 Types of Physical Damages found on <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls	113
Figure 4.29	The 5 Types of Chemical Damages found on <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls	115
Figure 4.30	The 2 Types of Biological Damages found on <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls	117

Figure 4.31	The 4 Categories of Condition Rating Codes of <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls	118
Figure 4.32	The Examples of <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls in Good-Fair Conditions	119
Figure 4.33	Examples of <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls in Fair Conditions	120
Figure 4.34	The Examples of <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls in Poor Conditions	121
Figure 4.35	The Examples of <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls in very Poor Conditions	122
Figure 4.36	The 7 Improper Storage Methods of <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls	124
Figure 4.37	The Examples of Improper Storage Methods of <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls	125
Figure 5.1	The Images of <i>Renda</i> Motifs found on earth and abstracted fauna motifs	154
Figure 5.2	The Images of Floral and Earth Motifs on <i>Birai</i>	156
Figure 5.3	The Images of <i>Badan Motifs</i>	158
Figure 5.4	The Images on <i>Sudut</i> consist of floral motifs	160
Figure 5.5	The Images of Motifs on the Irregular Areas of <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls	161
Figure 5.6	The Physical Damages of <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls	162
Figure 5.7	The Images on the Chemical Damages of <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls	163
Figure 5.8	The Images of Biological Damages consist of mildews and pest residues	164
Figure 5.9	The Images of Previous Repairs of <i>Kelingkan</i> Shawls	164
Figure 5.10	The Methods of labelling accession numbers to the <i>kelingkan</i> shawls	166
Figure 5.11	The Measurements of Rollers for rolling a flat textile	167
Figure 5.12	The Process of rolling a <i>kelingkan</i> shawl	168

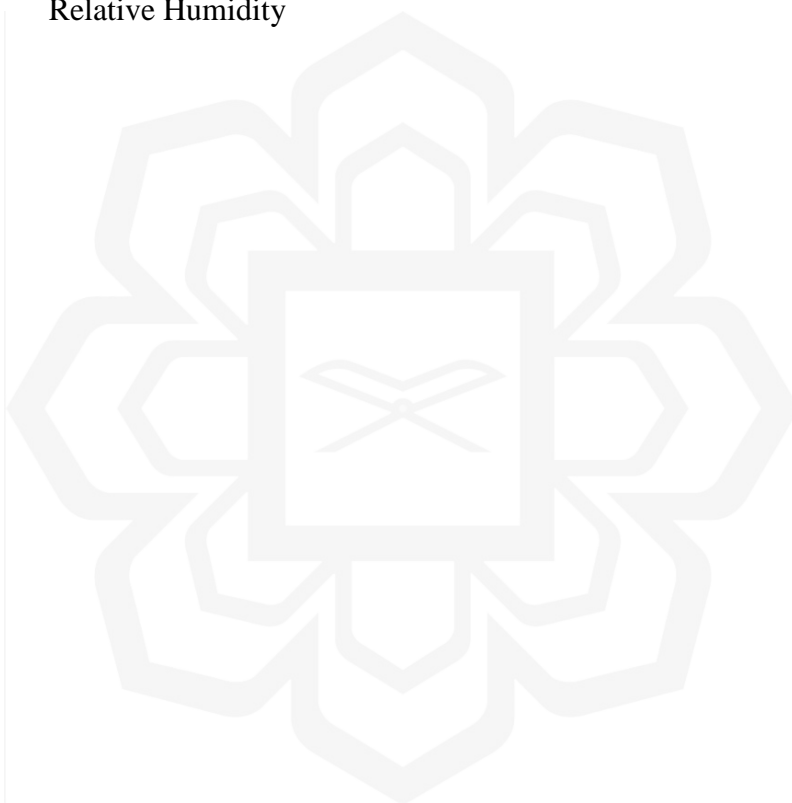
LIST OF SYMBOLS

Au	Gold
Ag	Silver
C	Carbon
Cu	Cuprum
In	Indium
Lux	Unit of illuminance
O	Oxygen
S	Sulphur
%	Percentage of relative humidity
°C	Degree Celsius
&	and
Wt.%	Weight percent



LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIC	American Institute for Conservation
CM	Centimetre
DMM	The Department of Museums Malaysia
ID	Identification number of samples
KT	<i>Kelingkan</i> thread
M	Meter
NAA	Neutron Activation Analysis
n.d	no date
PADAT	Perbadanan Adat Melayu dan Warisan Negeri Selangor
RH	Relative Humidity



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Kelingkan embroidery is one of Malay historical textiles that include *limar*, *telepuk*, *tekat* and *songket* in Malaysia (Rose Dahlina Rusli & Norwani Md.Nawawi, 2016).

Kelingkan embroidery is distinguished by the use of flat and thin metallic threads of traditionally gilded gold or silver which threaded onto variant of fabrics of cotton and silks by a customized 2 holes needle, resulted with glittering motifs often found on Malay textiles include shawls, traditional costumes and wedding bedroom furnishings.

This traditional hand-made metallic thread embroidery is enriched with historical, cultural and aesthetical values. *Kelingkan embroidery* holds historical tangible evidences of shared Malay arts in Nusantara as exhibited in its delicate workmanship and distinctive materials. These values are also embodied in the regal costumes of Malay nobilities.

Unfortunately, in Peninsular Malaysia *kelingkan embroidery* is in the state of declination. Its practice remains strong in Sarawak but the embroidery is fearfully diminishing in the West Malaysia (Rose Dahlina and Norwani, 2016). There are only few surviving Malay women practitioners, mostly in advanced age in the remaining states of Selangor and Kelantan. Rose Dahlina and Norwani (2016) state that the preservation of *kelingkan embroidery* is of importance particularly on the dying knowledge of the tools, technique and motifs of this art of embroidery.

1.2 BACKGROUND

In Malaysia, *kelingkan* embroidery is well known in Peninsular Malaysia as well as in Sarawak. It is also popular in Brunei, Singapore and several states in Indonesia. The geographical and language differences explain the existing various *kelingkan* terms like *keringkam* in Sarawak, *terekam* in Terengganu and *kelengkan* in Kelantan (Suhana Sarkawi, 2016).

Kelingkan embroidery in Peninsular Malaysia is believed to have originated during the reign of Malacca Sultanate, when it was a powerful centre of international trade, Islamic religion and Malay culture in 15th century. Luxurious foreign textiles including decorated fabrics embellished with gold threads were brought to the local market in Malacca and were highly favoured by the Malay nobilities. Azah Aziz (2009) stated that the arrival of these sumptuous fabrics has led to the development of Malay metal thread embroideries in Peninsular Malaysia as fabrics began to be embellished by local artisans with gold and silver threads.

In the past, the development of Malay metal threads embroidery in Peninsular Malaysia was under the patronage of the Malay royals and nobilities, as gold and sumptuous textiles were solely privileged to and highly afforded by them. In the beginning, the art of *kelingkan* embroidery was mastered by the Malay noble women as their favourite pastime. This embroidery then was taught to the servants living within the palace compounds. Gradually, it was disseminated to the public, learnt by the common people and became popular in 19th century.

Kelingkan embroidery is the art of Muslim Malay community in Malaysia and this is illustrated through the reflection of Islamic philosophies in its motifs. The absence of complete images of figures and animals are replaced by the various motifs

appreciating God natures include flowers, plants, mountains, stars, waves as well as the Arabic inscriptions and few forms of modified animal motifs.

Kelingkan shawl, which is intended as the focus of the study, is commonly made from sheer and lightweight fabrics such as cotton gauze and voiles, as well as variant types of silks such as crepe, chiffon, sateen, organza and net. *Kelingkan* shawl is worn over the head or shoulders of a woman as part of traditional Malay costumes, during occasions like engagements, weddings and royal coronaries. It is commonly worn by the Malay women in Peninsular Malaysia, Sarawak and other related Malay regions.

There are 3 major techniques of *kelingkan* embroidery in Malaysia. A technique which is widely practiced in Sarawak is known as *keringkam* while in Selangor *teknik riben* or the ribbon technique is commonly known. The third technique which is the focus of this study is called *teknik tikam tembus* or the satin stitch technique (Rose Dahlina and Norwani, 2016) or also known as *teknik tikam-tarik-ulang-selit* (Suhana, 2016). This technique can be found in many states of Peninsular Malaysia, Sarawak and other Malay regions.

Furthermore, the assimilation of external cultures in the *kelingkan* embroidery is exhibited by the similarity of traits with other foreign embroideries such as *tel musabak*, *tel kirma* and *tel sarma* in Turkey, *mukaish badla* in India and *tally* in Egypt (Suhana, 2016 & Adline Abdul Ghani and Ros Mahwati Ahmad Zakaria, 2013).

Today, *kelingkan* embroidery is considered as a national heritage asset, collected and exhibited by many museums in Malaysia. Prior to embarking on this research, a preliminary study on *kelingkan* embroideries was conducted by the researcher in the Department of Museums of Malaysia, located in Kuala Lumpur. The preliminary study demonstrates that the museum acquisition of *kelingkan* embroideries began as early as 1960s, and the earliest *kelingkan* embroideries found are not more than 150 years of

age. The preliminary study also reveals that a large collection of *kelingkan* embroideries in the textile storage room are suffering from various levels of degradations, insufficient data documentation in inventories as well as inappropriate storage methods.

In the light of the above statement, this research is conducted to safeguard and maintain the well-being and sustainability of *kelingkan* embroidery as a national heritage. By this, the study embarks on a series of physical analyses and documentation on the physical characteristics and conditions of *kelingkan* shawls from the collection of the Department of Museums Malaysia located in Kuala Lumpur.

The research intends, at the final phase of the study, to produce a detailed inventory of *kelingkan* shawls detailing their physical characteristics include materials, colours, shapes, patterns and motifs. The inventory will also record categories of the artefacts conditions include their categories of damages, condition rating codes and recommendation of appropriate storage methods.

Kelingkan embroidery is a form of Malay embroidery and hence, Malay terminologies which provide better and concise description of their types and embroidery processes are extensively used in this research. The operational definitions of the Malay terminologies are provided in the section 1.11 for the readers to have a clear understanding of the research.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

There are limitations of literatures on the *kelingkan* shawls compared to other Malay golden thread textiles like *songket* and *batik* especially on the topics of their preservations. The rarity of written works on *kelingkan* embroidery serves as an indication that this art is not known to the present generation. In addition, the preliminary study conducted in the Department of Museums Malaysia also reveals the

multiple levels of degradations, inventory insufficiency and inadequate storage methods of *kelingkan* shawls in the museum textile storage room. The scarcity of skilful artisans in the art of embroidery with the surviving few being in advanced age, further exacerbate this problem, leading to the diminishing state of this traditional Malay embroidery. Hence, actions are needed to preserve this national heritage and sustain its longevity for the appreciation of current and future generations.

1.4 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to safeguard the well-being and maintain the sustainability of *kelingkan* shawls as national heritage. This is realised through a series of identification, classification and documentation of physical characteristics of *kelingkan* shawls, as well as the assessment of their types of conditions in the textile storage room of the Department of Museums Malaysia located in Kuala Lumpur.

1.5 RESEARCHES OBJECTIVES

The research aims to achieve the following objectives:

- i. To identify, classify and document the physical characteristics as well as conditions of *kelingkan* shawls through physical and visual observation.
- ii. To assess the level of degradations on *kelingkan* shawls through physical analyses.
- iii. To produce a detailed inventory that documents the physical characteristics of the *kelingkan* shawls in the collection of the Department of Museums Malaysia for the benefit of curators, conservators and future researchers.

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research aims to answer the following questions:

- i. What are the attributes of *kelingkan* shawls that need to be identified in order to classify them according to their physical characteristics?
- ii. What are the types of degradations suffered by *kelingkan* shawls in museum storage room?
- iii. What data that needs to be collected in order to come out with detailed inventory of *kelingkan* shawls that could help in the preservation of these artefacts?

1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

The research adopts a case study approach involving multiple methods of data collections which are presented below:

1.7.1 Preliminary Study

A preliminary study is conducted in museum textiles storage rooms in Peninsular Malaysia to seek an introductory overview on the physical characteristics of *kelingkan* shawls and their conditions in the storage room.

1.7.2 Literature Review

Literature reviews include books, journals, proceedings, museum inventories, websites and newspapers.