THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

Songket of Palembang:
Socio-cultural and Economic Change
in a South Sumatran Textile Tradition

being a Thesis submitted for the Degree of

PhD in Southeast Asian Studies

by

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October, 2006
CONTAINS PULLOUTS
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Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisors, Professor V. T. King, and Dr. Jan W. Christie of the University of Hull for their all-around support during my research. Without their expert advice and practical help, I could not have accomplished this study. I also appreciate valuable advice given by Dr. Fiona Kerlogue of the Horniman Museum and Mrs. Rens Heringa, both of whom had conducted their research in Jambi and Palembang, in and near my study areas. Their experience there and knowledge of textiles pointed me in the right direction when I started my work. I would like to give many thanks to Mr. Lewis Hill, who gave me great support when I had a hard time. I would also like to give special thanks to Professor Tsuneyuki Suzuki of the Tokyo Woman’s Christian University for his useful information on the archives regarding Palembang.

I obtained enormous help in the Netherlands; particularly from Mr. Pieter ter Keurs of the National Museum of Ethnology in Leiden, Drs. Pim Westerkamp and Mrs. Paula Voges of the Museum Nusantara in Delft and Drs. Linda Hanssen of the Wereldmuseum in Rotterdam, who unstintingly offered me their information and data, sharing their precious time.

During my stay in Indonesia, I was supported by many local people. Bapak Zainal Ridho Djafar, the Rector of Universitas Sriwijaya, provided help on a regular basis so that my fieldwork went smoothly. Dra. Murni, my sponsor, gave me much advice on my research from the indigenous point of view. Bapak Ali Musa of the National Library in Jakarta and Bapak Usman Agus of Museum Balaputra Dewa in Palembang helped me find essential materials and data. Bapak Djohan Hanafiah and Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo gave up a lot of their time in explaining to me the history of Palembang, and the traditions and culture associated with
songket, although they were very busy. I was impressed by their attitude in providing as accurate and precise information as possible on their culture and traditions. Ibu Susan and Dra. Onna, with whom I stayed during my fieldwork, supported my daily life in Palembang, giving me a favourable environment for study. Bapak Handoko and his wife, Ibu Mala, also helped me collect data. Indah, a student of Universitas Sriwijaya, and her family, who lived near my research village, treated me like their real family, giving me enormous help. To my delight, Indah got married during my stay in Palembang, and her family allowed me to collect data on the ceremony and take photographs. Owing to their generous offer, I obtained precious information on wedding rituals. Sincerely I wish her an everlasting and happy married life. I would also like to thank many local weavers and other artisans involved in the songket industry and songket-shop proprietors and assistants, who gave me first-hand information on the industry and on their working lives. There are too many to mention by name.

I also appreciate Mr. Peter Tyler’s superb proof-reading, which gave spice to my rather dull writing and Ms. Madeleine Lee’s support in my understanding of Dutch documents. My friends, Matthew Fletcher also checked my English, Alex Chandra and Ani Margawati helped me in translating Indonesian texts, Naoko Horikawa often inspired me with new ideas, and Chikako Ishikawa always encouraged me. Finally, I would like to give many thanks to my family for their moral support.

Megumi Uchino
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Map 1: South Sumatra
(http://www.mapquest.com/
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B: Harem
C: The main gate to the kraton
D: Audience hall
E: Audience hall
F: The palace of the crown prince (old kraton)
G: The main gate to the old kraton
H: Battery
I: The tower (minaret) of the mosque
J: The mosque (mesjid)

Map 3: A sketch of the kraton in 1811
(KITLV D17.7)
Map 4: The city of Palembang in 1877 (KITLV D17.4)

The Ilir side was composed of 37 villages (from 1 Ilir to 37 Ilir), and, the Ulu side comprised 14 villages (from 1 Ulu to 14 Ulu).
Map 5: The city of Palembang at the present time
Map 6: Daerah Suro

- x: small- and middle-size shop
- o: large shop

(as of September 2002)
Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background to the research topic

1.1.1 Songket

_Kain songket_ is generally defined as cloth decorated by a supplementary weft technique “in which extra ornamental weft threads are woven into a textile between two regular wefts to create patterns additional to the ground weave” (Maxwell, 1990: 418; see also Achjadi, 1998: 44; John Summerfield, 1999: 212). _Kain songket_ is often called simply _songket_, and this term can also refer to the technique of this type of patterning. In this thesis I shall use ‘songket’ to signify the cloth, and use the word ‘technique’ when it is necessary.

The supplementary weft patterning technique has three types: continuous- and discontinuous-supplementary weft weaving, and weft-wrapping weaving. The first type is that in which the supplementary weft threads are passed across the full width of the cloth, while the second one requires that they are passed across only the areas of the patterns. These two techniques can be found in most parts of Indonesia, and in many places in Southeast Asia, including Malaysia, Thailand and Laos (Maxwell, 1990; 2000). After explaining the supplementary weft weaving, Achjadi states that “In Sumatra, the technique is called songket” (1998: 44). Anne Summerfield and Sutan Madjo Indo also consider the supplementary weft weaving technique to be songket (1999: 171).
Chapter 1. Introduction

Selvanayagam, 1990; Suwati Kartiwa, 1996: 8). They are also used for Palembang songket. The third type involves the warp threads being wrapped around with supplementary weft threads to create a pattern, which appears the same on both sides of the cloth. This technique is found in particular areas, and the cloth is often called by different names in each area, such as sungkit in Borneo, pa’uf in western Timor and buna in central Timor (Maxwell, 1990: 416, 418; Achjadi, 1998: 44).

Various kinds of supplementary weft thread are used throughout Indonesia, such as thread combined with metal, silk-, cotton- and wool-thread, which is often coloured, embroidery thread, synthetic fibres like rayon, and natural fibres like banana (Suwati Kartiwa, 1996: 11; John Summerfield, 1999: 201-205, 212). However, Raden Haji Muhamad² Akib (hereafter Akib, 1975a: 68) has stated that only gold thread can be used, and Selvanayagam (1990: xv) has named only gold- and silver-thread as supplementary weft thread for songket, in their books on Palembang culture and on Malaysian songket, respectively. According to Maxwell, songket usually implies that metallic thread is used as the major supplementary weft element (1990: 418).

In Palembang it is believed that the origin of the word, songket, is ‘songko’, a local head cloth³, since gold thread was first used in making these head cloths (Saragih, 1995: 33; Syamsir Alam, Muhamad Taufik and Yusef Rizal, 1995/1996: 2; Suwati Kartiwa, 1996: 12)⁴. Generally, Palembang people are of the view that gold thread is an

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² Raden Haji Muhamad is usually abbreviated to R.H.M. Haji is a title for men who have made the pilgrimage to Mecca, and Raden is a Palembang noble title, using Muhamad together (Ibu Murni, interview 2002; for noble titles, see Chapter 3).
³ A traditional Palembang head cloth for men, songko, is still used in wedding ceremonies (see Chapter 6).
⁴ There is another theory that the term songket is derived from sungkit; ‘to lift thread’ (Saragih, 1995: 33; Suwati Kartiwa, 1996: 12). According to Syamsir Alam, Muhamad Taufik and Yusef Rizal, the word sungkit was itself derived from two Malay words, tusuk (to stick) and cikut (to pick), which were joined together and became suk-kit, then finally sungkit (1995/1996: 2).
indispensable material for songket. Silk cloth patterned with gold-wrapped thread is often introduced as a typical songket from Palembang in books on Indonesian textiles (see Maxwell, 1990; Suwati Kartiwa, 1996; Achjadi, 1998). Gittinger also illustrates one piece of songket patterned with gold-wrapped thread on a red background, explaining: “This is a brilliant example of the Palembang gold and red silk tradition that is recognized throughout Indonesia” (1979: 104). There are, however, some designs and decoration techniques which use silver-wrapped thread and coloured or white silk or cotton thread, though gold-wrapped thread is certainly the most common material used for patterning in Palembang songket (see Chapter 2), as Suwati Kartiwa also suggests (1996: 96, map). In this thesis, therefore, songket refers to cloth patterned by a supplementary weft technique, using mainly gold-wrapped thread (hereafter ‘gold thread’; for the detail of gold thread, see Section 2.4.2) but occasionally also silver, silk and cotton.

Cloth woven with a supplementary gold weft is produced widely in Indonesia, in places such as South Sumatra, Jambi, West Sumatra, West and South Kalimantan, Bali, Central and South Sulawesi, Lombok and Sumbawa (Hauser-Schäublin, Nabholz-Kartaschoff and Ramseyer, 1991a; 1991b; Suwati Kartiwa, 1996; Hitchcock, 1996), as well as in neighbouring countries such as Malaysia, Brunei and Thailand (Selvanayagam, 1990; Conway, 1992; Borneo Bulletin, 1996: 96). Some scholars have suggested that places with a long history of supplementary gold weft weaving have three features in common. Firstly, Suwati Kartiwa suggests that the expansion of songket was probably associated with Islam and trade routes, since supplementary gold- and silver-thread decoration techniques could have been introduced to maritime Southeast Asia by Arab and Muslim Indian merchants (1996: 4-7). Secondly, Jessup
argues that songket weaving was located in politically significant kingdoms because of the use of expensive materials in its production (1990: 140-141). Thirdly, songket weaving was mainly associated with areas of Malay settlement, which extended to the Malay Peninsula, coastal Sumatra and coastal Borneo; there are, however, a few exceptions, such as Bali (Hitchcock, 1996: 126). Palembang displays all these features common to songket weaving places.

1.1.2 Palembang

Palembang is the capital city of the province of South Sumatra (Propinsi Sumatera Selatan) (see Map 1). It is the second largest city in Sumatra, with a population of 1,451,419 (as of June 2000). Located on an international maritime trade route, the city was already prospering by the sixth century as a port town (Groeneveldt, 1887: 185-186). The broad River Musi, which originates in the mountains in Bengkulu, runs through the city towards the Malacca Straits, and played an important role as the only means of transportation between downstream and upstream areas before a road was built in the late nineteenth century. In the late seventh century the maritime empire of Sriwijaya emerged in this area, and Palembang is supposed to have been its capital city until the late eleventh century. Indian, Arabian, Chinese and Malay merchants came to Palembang bringing exotic trade goods, and exchanged these while waiting for the next monsoon period (Hall 1985: 78-9). The ruler and his family became wealthy enough to

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5 Gold thread was made of real gold of 14 to 18 carats before the Second World War (Suwati Kartiwa, 1996: 33; Montegut, Indictor and Summerfield, 1996: 104).
6 http://www.citypopulation.de/Indonesien.html. The largest city in Sumatra is Medan, with a population of 1,904,273 (as of June 2000).
7 See Bronson (1977).
import luxury products including brocade, which was probably introduced to Palembang from India or China during the Sriwijayan period (Gittinger 1979: 102). Many local people still believe that the songket weaving of Palembang started during the Sriwijayan period, using thread which was made from the gold which Sriwijaya exported to Siam, and then re-imported in turn in the form of gold thread (Suwati Kartiwa, 1996: 18); no firm evidence is indicated for this, however.

In the latter half of the thirteenth century, Palembang was brought under Javanese rule. In the mid-sixteenth century, a Javanese prince established a dynasty in Palembang. The new dynasty (which later became the Palembang sultanate) prospered by trade until the early nineteenth century (Djohan Hanafiah, 2002a [1996], 31-56). Palembang imported exotic articles including Indian textiles, but these declined in the early 18th century. Andaya suggests that this prompted noblewomen increasingly to begin to weave luxurious textiles (1989: 41), which might also have included songket. Djohan Hanafiah, who is a local cultural anthropologist and related to the royal family, has asserted that songket was woven by noblewomen and worn when they attended ceremonies and other special meetings during the sultanate period (2001: 1-2). Songket must have flourished in the kraton (palace) and demonstrated the wealth of the sultanate (see Chapter 3).

In 1824 the Dutch East Indies Government abolished the sultanate and introduced direct colonial rule, and from 1942 until 1945 Palembang was subject to the Japanese Occupation (Ricklefs, 2001: 247-260). A European-style building erected in the 1820s on the site of the kraton, used as the Dutch Resident’s Office during the
colonial period, and the large Ampera\(^{8}\) bridge constructed over the river in the 1960s by
the Japanese as compensation for the depredations of the Second World War, remain
and serve as reminders of Palembang’s past as an occupied city. In 1945 the former
Dutch Residency of Palembang finally became independent within the Republic of
Indonesia. According to Proyek Pengembangan Industri Kecil dan Menengah (the
Development Project for Small and Medium-sized Industries, henceforth PIKM),
songket weaving had decayed by the 1950s (PIKM, 1997/1998). In the 1960s, however,
Palembang people started to make efforts to revive it, and the songket industry
gradually became more active, in parallel with the city’s growth.

Palembang is now the provincial centre for administration, education, commerce
and industry. In the town there are government offices, several universities, many
markets, shops and department stores. An oil refinery and a fertilizer factory operate on
the lower reaches of the River Musi, and there are rubber and coffee plantations and a
coal mine on the urban periphery (Palembang, 2000: 60-61; South Sumatra, n.d.: 56,
62, 73). Traditional handicrafts, such as wood-carving, lacquer ware-making and
weaving, are still practised in the city centre near the site of the kraton (Palembang,
2000: 56-58). What is more, Palembang songket is now well known more generally to
the people of Indonesia, and also in Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei. The city attaches a
great deal of importance to tourism, hoping that the manufacture of traditional
handicrafts will attract visitors and tourist revenue.

\(^{8}\) ‘Ampera’ stands for ‘Amanat Penderitaan Rakyat (Message of the People’s Suffering)’, a Sukarno-era
slogan (Echols and Shadily, 1997: 17).
1.1.3 Malay societies and cloth

Local residents of Palembang refer to themselves as Wong Palembang (wong literally means 'people'), and by extension 'the indigenous people of Palembang'. Although the nobility were of Javanese descent, most inhabitants belong to the broad Malay ethnic group⁹, which shares certain common cultural features, including language (Malay), religion (Islam), ritual and custom, literature and legends called hikayat, and material culture including male and female costumes such as the short jacket (baju), trousers and sarong (Milner, 1982: 2-11; Guy, 1998: 68-71; DPN, 2001: 15; Britannica vol.7, 2002: 727).

In Malay societies, cloth plays an important cultural role, in that it is not simply a material which covers and adorns the body. Gittinger has argued that in Indonesia the significance of cloth is derived from both its real value in terms of the material and labour invested in it, and also from the sacred and symbolic value represented in its motifs, colours and designs (1979: 19-21, 41-49), and this proposition can also apply to Malay cloth culture.

Traditionally, textiles were used as rewards from a ruler to his followers and as a means to secure and express patron-client ties, and in political exchanges from one ruler to another. Exotic textiles brought from abroad, in particular, were considered prestigious items, which local leaders sought and for which they competed. Guy suggests that the Sultan of Palembang presented imported Indian textiles together with other exotic articles to his subjects and neighbouring rulers, to secure cash crop supplies for international trade (1998: 72). This function was especially important for the Malay

⁹ For Malay ethnic groups, see also De Bruijn Kops (1920); Andaya and Andaya (2001); Nishio (2001).
ruler because of the nature of the traditional political system or kerajaan (‘the condition of having a Raja [king]’); as part of this concept, the Malay people did not belong to a particular state or territorially defined unit, but rather they followed a personal ruler. Generally, a Malay state did not have fixed and defined borders; the sphere of the ruler’s influence depended on his retaining the support and allegiance of his followers (Milner, 1982: xv, 8-9). The ruler’s authority was therefore personal and fluid, particularly in the remote areas, so he needed constantly to make efforts to impress and gratify his followers, by demonstrating his authority and by giving rewards to local leaders. Valuable cloth was one of the articles which effectively fulfilled both of the aims; the ruler emphasized his power and sacredness by wearing and displaying it, and maintained the relationship with his followers by giving cloth to them (Bronson, 1977: 50; Jessup, 1990: 137). Precious and luxurious cloth was often kept and passed on as an heirloom, and as a means of storing wealth.

During the sultanate period, certain colours and motifs also incorporated particular symbolic meanings, which served to restrict the use of the cloth. For instance, yellow was generally reserved for the ruler and nobles in the Malay world (Andaya, 1989: 34). The Sejarah Melayu, or the Malay Annals, recounts the story of Sultan Muhammad Shah, the ruler of Malacca, who first instituted the royal privileges with regard to yellow; he stated that “it could not be worn by commoners or used for cloths, for curtain fringes, for bolster ends, for mattresses or for any kind of wrapping”. The ruler, however, allowed people to use yellow for sarong, jackets and handkerchiefs (Brown, 1970: 44). As for umbrellas, “white was more strictly a royal privilege than yellow, for white umbrellas were reserved for rulers while yellow umbrellas could be used by princes” (ibid.). It seems that colour gave a special significance to certain
articles. Regarding another important colour, red, Andaya has argued that “the difficulty in achieving a successful dye” probably contributed to “its reputation for protective qualities” (1989: 34). According to her, during the war between Palembang and the Dutch in 1658, “the king’s bodyguard had been dressed in red, and the royal cannon were draped in the same color” (ibid.).

Photographs taken from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries show how cloth played an important role in ceremonies. For example, in a photograph taken in Jambi around 1920, the bride and groom are receiving guests in their bridal room. They are seated on a pile of mats and surrounded by many textiles hanging on the walls. Gittinger explains that the number of mats indicated the family’s social rank (1979: 30, Plate 7). According to Guy, the hanging textiles were both locally made and imported, and had been obtained through gift exchange, and these displayed the couple’s social status (1998: 74, Plate 89).

Some scholars have reported that songket, along with other types of cloth, still plays an important role in the form of ritual gifts, ceremonial dresses and articles, and ethnic identity markers, in modern Malay societies (see Gittinger, 1979; Selvanayagam, 1990; Maxwell, 1990; Heringa, 1994; Kerlogue, 1997). In Malaysia, the Malay bride and groom wear matching suits of songket. Songket is also used to make the ‘tents’ in which young princes lie on their circumcision day in Terengganu (Selvanayagam, 1990: xxii, 2). In Palembang, the traditional local wedding costume contains songket (Heringa, 1994: 30). In a baby’s hair-cutting ceremony, songket is worn by the man carrying the baby, and used to cover the baby itself (Gittinger, 1979: 109; Heringa, 1994: 33-36; Suwati Kartiwa, 1996: 36). According to Suwati Kartiwa, songket is also one of the bridal gifts given by the groom’s family to the bride’s family in Palembang.
1.1.4 Studies of songket

Palembang songket has not been the subject of much scholarly research. Several local scholars and organizations have referred to the uses of songket regulated by Palembang *adat*.

*Adat* is a very commonly used word in the Indonesian-Malay language, and is usually defined as ‘customary law’ or more broadly ‘customs’. It is therefore associated with long-established traditions, and was certainly an important concept in the pre-Dutch period. It is based on precedents and, in this connection, Hazairin describes *adat* as the “sediment of ethics in the community” (Hazairin, 1952: 12, cited in Koesnoe, 1971: B4). *Adat* prescribes the basic principles of life in a community, embracing social organisation, human relationships, marriage, inheritance, the right to land and water, people’s obligations, and penalties against wrongdoing (Ter Haar, 1962: x-xvi; Koesnoe, 1971: B13).

*Adat* was, however, not given much attention by Europeans until the late eighteenth century, because it was originally a set of unwritten laws and practices. In the second half of the nineteenth century, *adat* was studied and codified mainly by Dutch officers in order to use it as a basis for a legal system (see Van Vollenhoven, 1987). Various local customs throughout the Dutch East Indies were selected, written down and compiled in a series of *Adatrechtbundels* and in other Dutch official reports. These became part of the legal code for the area. According to Akib, songket was worn only by noblewomen and wives and daughters of high-ranking officials in ceremonies during the sultanate period (1975a: 72-75), and so one would expect references to its uses to be found in Palembang *adat* surrounding rituals or social rankings, and recorded in these
Dutch documents. It is surprising, then, that the documents rarely mentioned the adat of the town of Palembang, let alone its songket.

In the Residency of Palembang, adat seems mainly to have been collected from the rural area of Palembang. Some marriage customs in the suburbs, such as Komering, Tebingtinggi and Pasemah, can be found in the Adatrechtbundels (see Adatrechtbundels 1928; 1932). Praetorius (1843 [1832]: 413-430), who was the Resident of Palembang from 1828 to 1833, also briefly mentioned marriage customs in suburbs such as Ogan, Komering, Lamatang Ulu, Kikim and Musi. Unfortunately, these adat are mostly descriptions concerning bridal money and gifts. Occasionally clothes for the bride and groom are mentioned, but they do not specify songket. We have had to wait for the detail of Palembang adat, including the protocols of rites of passage, the use of songket as a wedding gift and some customs of the nobility, to be described in some recent locally-published books (see Akib, 1975b; Palembang, 2000; Djohan Hanafiah, 2001, n.d.; DPN, 2001).

The pioneer of such cultural and anthropological studies of Palembang customs was the late Akib (1975a; 1975b), who was a descendant of the Sultan of Palembang. He wrote a two-volume Indonesian- and English-language book describing adat practised in the rumah limas, the traditional Palembang house for the nobles (Akib, 1975a), and discussing the custom of marriage in particular (Akib, 1975b). According to Akib, songket was traditionally worn only by married noblewomen when attending adat ceremonies and performing Palembang dances at the court for important guests (1975a: 72-75). Regarding the idea that songket was worn only by women, Saragih has assumed that certain motifs of Palembang songket, most of which are associated with femaleness, such as flowers made of curvy lines, could be vestiges of an old tradition
which designated songket as a cloth for women (1995: 35). Akib mentioned symbolic meanings ascribed to plants, often used for woodcarving designs on the wall in the traditional house (1975a: 52, 62), and these could apply to songket motifs. According to him, the *tanjung*-flower represents ‘welcome’, the rose-motif with seven petals is locally believed to function as a charm against bad luck, and the jasmine-motif represents civilisation and courtesy (ibid.: 52, 62).

The design and decoration of a songket costume was restricted according to the wearer’s status in the nobility; for example, *aesan gedeh* or *pakaian ksatria* was a costume for princesses, *aesan gandik* or *sandan manteri* was worn by daughters of ministers and other high-ranking officials, and *pakaian pesangko* was for wives of high-ranking officials (Akib, 1975a, 72-75). Some designs of songket also designated the wearer’s status and race, such as *bungo cino* that was for Chinese women, and *bungo pacik* for Arab women (ibid.: 64-69).

Akib, in his discussion of marriage *adat*, noted that the groom’s family was required to give wedding gifts to the bride’s family, and that these should include textiles, such as songket (1975b: 24). He also described the kinds of songket and their use as wedding gifts. According to him, wedding gifts could be ranked, according to the groom’s social status, from an expensive assortment of several pieces of songket down to ordinary textiles. He also explained that the groom wore the *aesan gedeh* in a wedding ceremony in modern Palembang, since the groom was considered as a king (ibid: 35). His study has been referred to by several scholars, including Saragih (1995) and Suwati Kartiwa (1996), as an important source of information on old traditions regarding songket.
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Similar but more detailed accounts have been provided by Djohan Hanafiah, although unfortunately these studies have not been published (2001; n.d.). He examined the role and function of songket, especially in wedding ceremonies, in detail. According to him, there were five ranks of wedding gifts, in each of which the motifs of songket were fixed by *adat* (Djohan Hanafiah, 2001: 2-4; n.d.: 7-9).

The problem of these studies of *adat* by Akib and Djohan Hanafiah is that these writers do not provide any firm evidence to support their explanations; it must be assumed that their information was based on oral traditions in these noble families, handed down from generation to generation. It is necessary, however, to question their accuracy, though their information is certainly valuable and informative. It is also uncertain to what extent the traditions explained by Akib and Djohan Hanafiah are still followed by the local people, or whether these have been modified or totally forgotten, bearing in mind that the importance of *adat* began to be reconsidered when the Indonesian Government codified regional autonomy in the Law on Regional Governance in 1999. This new law states that the local village as a democratic governmental unit is to be “based on local origins and customs”, providing “space for diversity and responsiveness to local aspirations” (Antlöv, 2003: 194, 197, 199).

In 1986, Suwati Kartiwa published the first edition of an Indonesian- and English-language book which was a comprehensive study of songket in Indonesia; this is now in its third edition (1996). In it, she introduces the reader to a wide range of examples of songket from Sumatra, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, Bali and other islands of eastern Indonesia, illustrated with a selection of photographs. She argues that the glorious past of Palembang as the capital of Sriwijaya is reflected in its culture, including traditional architecture, woodcarving, gold- and silver-work, and ceremonial
and traditional costume (ibid.: 32). According to her, songket was woven with gold thread made of real gold (hereafter ‘real gold thread’) of 14 carats before the Second World War. She states that there are two broad categories of songket design according to the density of the gold thread; one is *songket lepus*, whose motifs with gold thread are closely woven over the whole cloth, and the other is *songket tawur* (or *tabur* = scattered\(^{10}\)), whose motifs with gold thread are less densely woven. She claims that this distinction in quality was important in Palembang where the cloth was also used as a wedding gift presented by the groom’s family to the bride’s family (ibid.: 33-34).

Suwati Kartiwa also considers the symbolism of Palembang songket, mentioning three flowers: the rose, jasmine and *tanjung*. She agrees with Akib’s explanations, except for the jasmine, which she claims represents courtesy and ‘purity’ in contrast to Akib’s ‘civilisation’. She also argues that some designs signify the wearer’s status. *Songket jando* (*jando* or *janda*\(^{11}\) = widow; songket with a special design for widows), which is woven with bright colours, indicates that the wearer wants to marry again (ibid.: 34-35).

However, in the book Suwati Kartiwa does not indicate whether the majority of the local people still recognise the special significance of *songket lepus*, or whether the motifs convey any symbolic meaning today. Apart from traditional uses of three local costumes which contain songket, she mentions another use of songket in a baby’s hair-cutting ceremony; the baby is carried in *selendang* of songket and the head is covered with a small square songket (ibid.: 36).

According to a short article written by Saragih, symbolic meanings of motifs and designs are now remembered only by certain people, such as the creator of those

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\(^{10}\) The translation of Indonesian terms is based on Echols and Shadily (1997), unless otherwise specified.

\(^{11}\) The ‘a’ of a word ending in *bahasa* Indonesia becomes ‘o’ in the Palembang dialect.
designs (1995: 35); it is, however, uncertain whether or not they are still alive. She argues that the symbolic meanings such as those referred to by Suwati Kartiwa are now ignored, and suggests that the change in the use of songket, from a special cloth for noblewomen into everyday cloths such as tapestries and tablecloths, might have caused this phenomenon (ibid.).

Syamsir Alam, Muhamad Taufik and Yusef Rizal (1995/1996) conducted research on twenty-nine pieces of Palembang songket stored in the local museum, Balaputra Dewa, in Palembang. They spent four months attempting to identify and classify their motifs and designs by examining documents, books and magazines, and by conducting an interview survey; their study is illustrated with photographs. According to them, the majority of motifs are composed of plants or stylised flowers, as well as compositions of plant- and geometric-motifs. They suggest that there are three motif categories: songket lepus, songket bungo (bungo or bunga = flowers; songket with flower motifs) and songket motif lain (motif lain = other motifs), each of which displays some variations (ibid.: 8-9). They also identify two broad categories according to the density of gold thread, songket lepus and songket tawur, asserting that this distinction is important because, according to Palembang adat, it indicates an owner's rank. Nowadays, however, people can feel free to wear whatever motifs they want (ibid.: 12-13).

Syamsir Alam, Muhamad Taufik and Yusef Rizal also argue that only certain people such as creators of motifs, who are very few in number now, are knowledgeable about designs and motifs, and that although motifs and designs may once have had symbolic meaning, very little knowledge of these has been passed down (ibid: 11). Their general idea is that motifs and designs each have their own specific names and
meanings. In contrast to this, Gavin has argued in her doctoral thesis on the motifs and names of Iban textiles that the names of motifs are sometimes just “a means of distinction between motifs” (1995: 301). She has also asserted that the meanings of motifs are not always shared by all the people in a community, and that a meaning is sometimes located in its use, rather than in its designs (ibid.: 295-301). The ‘survey’ done by Syamsir Alam, Muhamad Taufik and Yusef Rizal was in fact very limited, involving only four informants. While their study contains useful and valuable information about the names of motifs in Palembang songket, their classification of motifs seems to be inadequate and imprecise. Regarding the symbolic meanings of some motifs and the traditional functions of songket, they just repeat the same explanations as those of Akib, Suwati Kartiwa and Saragih (Syamsir Alam, Muhamad Taufik and Yusef Rizal, 1995/1996: 20-21).

The PIKM (1997/1998) has also discussed motif classifications, and indicated four categories: songket lepus, songket bungo, songket limar (kain limar adorned with songket-work) and songket rumpak (songket with a chequered background). Each of these, except for the last category, has a range of variations. This classification differs from that of Syamsir Alam, Muhamad Taufik and Yusef Rizal, indicating the diversity of motifs and the difficulty of classifying them on the one hand; and on the other, as Gavin (1995) suggested, the problems inherent in the idea that each motif has a specific name and a symbolic meaning.\textsuperscript{12}

The PIKM also provided a brief history of the songket industry after the Second World War. According to this, the industry was almost extinct by 1950, due to the difficulty of obtaining materials. From 1950 to 1966 Palembang people struggled to

\textsuperscript{12} Details of these two categorisations of motif will be explained in Chapter 2.
resume songket weaving with silk thread, which was then beginning to be imported, and
with gold thread taken from old cloth. From 1969 to 1985 the number of workers in the
industry increased from 31 to 1200, a result of the establishment of Dinas Perindustrian
(the Industrial Service), which supports small- and middle-sized local industries.
Palembang songket gradually became popular in Malaysia and Brunei as well (PIKM,
1997/1998: 5). According to the PIKM, 270 groups were engaged in the songket
industry in 1997 in Palembang, including 168 groups in the villages of 30 Ilir and 32 Ilir
(see Map 5). Songket weaving was also taking place in 403 groups in eight villages in
the suburbs of Palembang (PIKM, 1997/1998: 5-6).

In the Netherlands, the Museon, a museum of education in The Hague, held an
exhibition of textiles from Palembang and Jambi in 1994. Rens Heringa, a Dutch textile
expert, conducted research in the two cities and wrote a Dutch-language booklet for the
exhibition. First, she described the history of how local cloths had been developed,
absorbing various elements of external cultures (Heringa, 1994: 8-11). She mentioned in
particular some similarities, such as in the field composition and motifs, between Indian
textiles and those of Indonesia, including Palembang. She questioned, however, whether
Indian textiles really did influence Palembang cloth, suggesting the possibility of the
reverse direction of influence, since it is likely that textiles produced in Palembang
served as an example for the Indian imports (ibid.: 14).

Heringa also explained that the motif and design of songket, and the type of
Palembang costumes, represented the wearer's status. According to her, for example,
aesan gedhe (or gedeh) was worn by the sultan and his relatives, aesan gandhek was
worn by royal officials, and pesangko was worn by the leaders of the commoners (ibid.: 16).
This statement is, however, different from that of Akib mentioned above. Heringa
also argued that *kain blongsong* (weft ikat cloth) with songket-decoration on its borders was worn by a non-noblewoman who married a nobleman (ibid). Mention was also made of the symbolic meanings of motifs and colours. For example, she stated that green and purple were intended for elderly people and leaders (ibid.: 16). The motif of jasmine was used for a marriageable woman since it symbolised ‘innocence’ and ‘modesty’, and the motif of *tanjung* was worn by the host of a party or special function, since it signified ‘hospitality’ (ibid.: 21).

Heringa explained the present uses of songket in rituals as a wedding gift, as wedding costumes and as ceremonial articles. According to her, for the wedding ceremony, the groom’s family presents three sets of songket called *adat tiga turun*. The three sets contain *aesan gedhe* (or *gedeh*), *aesan gandhek* and *pesangko*, each of which contains a *selendang* and *sarong* (ibid.: 32). The groom wears *aesan gedhe* (or *gedeh*) as the sign of his coronation as a one-day king, *raja sehari* (ibid.: 30). In another important ritual, *cukuran* (the hair-cutting ceremony for a baby), songket for the baby’s bed has a black or green centre-field and red edges, and is presented by the family of the baby’s father (ibid.: 35).

Heringa’s work contains important information on traditional customs regarding songket. It is unclear, however, at some points whether she is referring to the customs of Palembang, or Jambi, or both, since she writes about both places. For example, she displays the field composition of a *sarong* on which the *kepala* is shown on both ends of the cloth, and that of a *selendang* on which a lozenge appears in the centre, arrangements that seem to be common in Jambi (1994: 14, 43), but not in Palembang.

Although it is not exactly a study on songket, Andaya (1989) carried out a study of the textile trade in Jambi and Palembang in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.
She demonstrated how the economic environment influenced the local cloth industry and culture in both cities. According to her, it was between the late seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth century that the condition of the cloth culture of noblewomen changed. When the price of Indian textiles was rising and the pepper price dropped in the late seventeenth century, the import of Javanese cloth started to increase. Noblewomen secretly sent their own ships to Riau, Malaka, Batavia and Macao to buy textiles from the 1680s, but then the quality of Indian textiles declined in the early eighteenth century. Andaya has argued that noblewomen who were dissatisfied with the quality of Indian textiles and Javanese cloth increasingly started to weave their own high-quality cloth (1989: 38-41). According to her theory, songket weaving might also have become popular in the early eighteenth century, or soon after.

1.1.5 Aims and problems of this research

Songket, though it appears to be much less widely studied than, for example, Javanese batik, is nevertheless beginning to receive some attention from scholars. Books have recently been published on Malaysian songket (Selvanayagam, 1990) and on Minangkabau ceremonial costume including songket (Summerfield and Summerfield, 1999), and these describe their motifs, designs, manufacturing processes and uses on ceremonial (and non-ceremonial for Malaysian songket) occasions. Compared to these studies, information about Palembang songket is insufficient and fragmentary.

This research aims to clarify the significance of Palembang songket. Where does the significance of this cloth come from? What kind of function does this cloth have for
Chapter 1. Introduction

the local people in Palembang? Why do they continue to use this cloth? In order to achieve this goal, the following three aspects need to be examined.

a) The features of Palembang songket

It is important to clarify the significant features of Palembang songket. The cloth needs to be distinguished clearly from other woven textiles, from cloths with gold adornments, and from songket produced in other places, in particular Malaysia and West Sumatra, which are similar to Palembang songket. It is also necessary to analyse the motifs and designs of Palembang songket to find out whether or not they imply any symbolic meanings. Modern songket designs will be compared with dated songket stored in museums to examine whether there are any changes in motifs and designs. Those studies will be provided with photographs of whole cloths as well as detailed sections, in Chapter 2. After that the procedure of manufacturing songket will be examined in the same chapter. This should be of some significance, since there are no studies which provide information and analysis on how Palembang songket is manufactured. Is the procedure the same as Malaysian and West Sumatran songket, or different?

b) The history of Palembang songket

How has the significance and functions of Palembang songket changed through time? In order to clarify this point, it is necessary to address several questions regarding the history of Palembang songket. Firstly, how and when did songket start to be woven as a widespread practice? Was it, as Andaya (1989) suggested, around or shortly after the early eighteenth century? Secondly, there is the question of how imported cloth,
Indian textiles in particular, influenced Palembang songket in its design. As Heringa has argued "textiles produced in Indonesia served as an example to the Indian imports" (1994: 14), this question may prove difficult to answer. I shall discuss the historical background of songket, including those two points, in Chapter 3.

Thirdly, there is the question of how songket weaving survived after the sultanate had been abolished in 1824. If the nobility became extinct along with the sultanate, there should no longer have been those of a certain status who had the privilege of wearing songket. Were its users former nobles, or wealthy people who did not have a blood relationship to the royal family? If the non-noble wealthy people started to wear songket, its original function as a status marker of the nobles must have disappeared. It must also have been difficult to maintain the manufacture of such a luxurious cloth without the authority and wealth of the Sultan, and after the disappearance of the traditional political system. Those questions will be addressed in Chapter 4, in a discussion of the history of songket during the Dutch colonial period (1823 – 1942).

There are similar questions regarding the revival of songket weaving in the 1960s; who started to weave songket, and who bought it? Did the procedure and techniques change after the revival of songket at that time? Djohan Hanafiah (2001) has argued that songket was woven by noblewomen in the court during the sultanate period. Is the cloth still woven by women who are related to the nobility now? The history of songket after the Second World War, and the present condition of the songket industry, will be examined in Chapter 5.
c) Uses of songket in the past and present

Palembang adat regarding ceremonies prescribes certain uses of songket, but the adat explained by Akib (1975b) is different from that of Djohan Hanafiah (2001, n.d.). Furthermore, Heringa’s explanation differs from both of them on some points (1994). Where do the differences come from? Is there a certain correct protocol of uses for songket, or is there a range of different protocols? Are the uses of songket changing over time? Whatever the case, it is necessary to obtain more information on the ceremonial uses of songket at the present time. Non-ceremonial uses of songket which Saragih (1995) has suggested also need to be reported.

Songket had been used as the status marker of high-ranking people, but this function disappeared after the abolition of the sultanate (Heringa, 1994: 16). I shall consider the current use of songket in Palembang and analyse how the functions and significance of songket have changed since the Second World War, when it was detached from its roots in the sultanate and the nobility. Those points will be discussed in Chapter 6.

1.2 Research methodology

This study is based mainly on historical records, including photographs, obtained in libraries and collections of cloth and written materials stored in museums in Indonesia, the Netherlands and England, as listed below; also on information and data obtained through field research in Palembang from October 2001 until September 2002, and in June-July 2005.
1.2.1 Library research

In order to reconstruct the historical background of Palembang songket in the pre-colonial period, I have mainly used Dutch language materials. Some of these are printed documents, such as the *Daghregister*, the *Generale Missiven* and the *Corpus Diplomaticum*. The *Daghregister* (1631-1682) recorded the Indian textiles and gold thread which Dutch officers brought to Palembang as gifts and as a means of payment. The gold thread imports indicate the existence of songket weaving, or at least other handicrafts using gold thread.

The majority of Dutch records to which I referred are handwritten archival records. The VOC (Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie, the Dutch East India Company) records kept in the National Archives (Algemeen Rijksarchief: ARA) in The Hague, in particular, contain considerable information on the Dutch East Indies regarding administration, trade, industry and other conditions from the early seventeenth century until the end of the eighteenth century. It was a laborious task to find scattered references in the records buried in a mass of material, although Andaya (1989) has provided a substantial amount of information on archival sources relating to Palembang's cloth trade from the seventeenth to the eighteenth centuries. I have used the inventories of the VOC records in the ARA and taken advice from scholars, and succeeded in finding the relevant information for reconstructing the historical background of the songket industry in Palembang.

Logbooks of the port of Palembang provide a series of records of native ships arriving in and leaving the port, and lists of goods carried on them (see Appendix F). The logbooks, which started in 1722, continued intermittently until 1791 in the VOC
records, and subsequently in the records of the Comité tot den Oost-Indische Handel en Bezittingen (Committee of East Indian Trade and Posts: OIC) from 1793 to 1796. These records reveal that Palembang imported massive amounts of gold thread, and various kinds of Indian textiles and Javanese painted cloth, in the eighteenth century.

In order to discover the relationship between Indian cloths and Palembang songket, the imported Indian textiles need to be identified. However, detailed information about them is largely missing. I gathered some information and understanding of them from Laarhoven’s massive work on the VOC’s cloth trade, in particular Appendix A, which details the places of origin and import, and the motifs, sizes and prices of old Indian, Arabian, Chinese and European cloths imported to the Dutch East Indies (Laarhoven, 1994). Among all the Indian cloth mentioned in the Palembang import lists, only *patola* and some painted cloth like *sembagi* have been studied. Several books and articles, such as those by Bühler (1959), Sen (1962), Singh (1988), Maxwell (1990; 1991; 2003), Barnes (1997), Crill (1998) and Guy (1998) briefly explain features of these Indian textiles, but they mainly discuss the influences of these Indian textiles on Southeast Asian textiles, not specifically on Palembang textiles. These gaps need to be filled by this research.

Important information about Palembang songket during the colonial period, from 1823\(^\text{13}\) until the Second World War, was found in records of successive Dutch Residents, the *Memorie van Overgave*, and other official documents. Those documents are kept in the ARA, the Royal Institute of Linguistics and Anthropology (Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde: KITLV) and the University Library

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\(^{13}\) The sultanate was abolished in 1824, but the Dutch had already started their control over Palembang in 1823 (see Chapter 4).
(Universiteitsbibliotheek Leiden: UBL) in Leiden, the Royal Tropical Institute (Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen: KIT) in Amsterdam, and the National Archives of the Republic of Indonesia (Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia: ANRI) in Jakarta. I referred to the catalogues at those libraries to identify relevant documents regarding Palembang songket, and examined almost all of them. Apart from those manuscripts, the series of *Overzigt van den handel* and *Statistiek van den handel*, trade statistics between 1846 and 1923, are published, and with these I traced the import of materials for songket during the colonial period. The ARA, KITLV and KIT also have collections of old photographs of people wearing songket, taken from the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, and these were very helpful in determining how songket was used at that time in Palembang.

When I was examining Dutch documents, I experienced certain problems in translating Old Dutch in the printed documents, let alone in handwritten manuscripts. The latter were written with ink and often contain blurred and illegible letters. Photocopying was not permitted in relation to some manuscripts due to their fragility; it therefore took me a lengthy time to transcribe them. Some archives were available on microfilm, which could be photocopied, but they were sometimes more difficult to read due to the patchy and dark condition of the resulting replication. Fortunately, I gradually became used to the handwriting, and also managed to read Dutch documents with my knowledge of German, or with help from friends who are fluent in Dutch.

Dutch official documents do not always record songket. Officials who were interested in indigenous handicrafts and recorded them in official documents, as did Praetorius (1843 [1832]), seem to have been rare. Many Residents and officials tended to record only what directly affected their activities, such as the local administration.
system and the cash crops produced in the hinterland. It is also necessary to be aware that these records were written from a European viewpoint, and may contain some prejudiced and one-sided attitudes.

I discovered many useful locally-published books on the history, culture and traditions of Palembang from an indigenous perspective, in the National Library in Jakarta and in regional libraries in Palembang, such as the Library of the Archaeological Bureau, the Library of the province of South Sumatra and the Library of Museum Balaputra Dewa, as well as the Library of Sriwijaya University in Indralaya (a city near Palembang). I shall refer to the books on Palembang adat written by Akib (1975a; 1975b), Djohan Hanafiah (2001; n.d.), and the Dinas Pendidikan Nasional (the National Education Service, henceforth DPN, 2001) to elucidate the ceremonial uses of songket in Palembang, although I shall need to discuss their accuracy and validity in Palembang society today.

1.2.2 Museum research

A considerable number of songket cloths are now preserved in museums, especially in the Netherlands. Some were sent from Palembang to the Netherlands for exhibitions in the nineteenth century; some were collected by colonial officers and brought to the Netherlands before the Second World War, subsequently to be deposited in museums; some were purchased by or donated to museums. Museums usually recorded only the year of donation or purchase, so it is hard to date the cloths, unless the former owners had some information about them. In most cases, then, museums indicate the date of a cloth as 'before xxxx', giving only the year of donation. Most of the
songket cloths in museums were, however, probably woven in the nineteenth century or the early twentieth century.

The National Museum of Ethnology (Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde: RMV) in Leiden houses about ninety examples of fine textiles and clothing from Palembang. According to Mr. Pieter ter Keurs, the curator of the Indonesian and Southeast Asian collections of this museum, most of them were probably woven before the 1930s. Two series of nineteenth-century songket collections, in particular, contain several masterpieces, suggesting excellent workmanship at that time. One is the 300-series (the exhibit numbers starting with 300), which was collected for the International Exhibition in Paris in 1878, and the other is the 370-series, which was for the International Colonial Export-Trade Exhibition in Amsterdam in 1883.

The Museon in The Hague houses the so-called 'Steinbuch Collection', comprising about forty examples of textiles and clothing using gold thread which are supposed to have been woven or made in Palembang at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century; it forms the major part of the holding Palembang songket there. This collection was donated by W. Steinbuch, who was the Resident of Palembang between 1933 and 1936. While serving there, he brought together a collection of fine local textiles. The Wereldmuseum in Rotterdam houses about twenty-five pieces of Palembang songket, including six pieces that were clearly made in the nineteenth century. The Museum Nusantara in Delft keeps 105 examples of textiles and clothing from Palembang, including songket; most of them cannot be dated exactly, though they are thought to have been woven before the early twentieth century. The Tropen Museum in Amsterdam also holds about eighty

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examples of Palembang songket, many of which were probably woven in the late
nineteenth century or early twentieth century. Mrs. Heringa argues that museums tend
to collect beautiful old textiles as representing materials of historical value and
significance, and that this can be misleading since local people’s lives and beliefs can
also be reflected in their use of modern ordinary cloth\(^{15}\). Research into the present-day
use of songket is therefore needed, to supplement the limited museum resources relating
to modern cloth.

In Indonesia, the Museum Balaputra Dewa in Palembang has a good collection
of textiles, estimated at about 250 pieces, including 150 pieces of songket from
Palembang and other places. According to the curator, the collection contains three
pieces of nineteenth-century songket. The Textile Museum and the National Museum in
Jakarta also hold songket from various parts of Indonesia which were made using
metallic and non-metallic supplementary weft.

I also visited the Victoria and Albert Museum in London to see textiles from
India and Southeast Asia, such as Indian brocade, *sarasa* and *patola*, including one
discovered in Jakarta, and *ikat* cloths and brocades from Cambodia and Thailand, which
might have been examples of the ones imported to Palembang after the decline of Indian
textile imports (see Chapter 3). Malaysian songket and Sumatran songket, including
four pieces of Palembang songket, are also kept in this museum. It proved worthwhile
to examine them to analyse the influences of Indian cloths on Palembang songket and to
establish the differences between Malaysian and Palembang songket\(^{16}\).

\(^{15}\) Mrs Heringa, 2004, personal communication.
\(^{16}\) The Ashmolean Museum in Oxford also holds a large collection of Indian textiles, but most of them
were traded to Egypt between the 10th and 15th century, and a few traded to the eastern part of
Indonesia (Dr. Barnes, personal communication, 2003).
I examined and photographed dated songket pieces in those museums, which provided me with important information on materials, colours and motifs used during the colonial period. Photographs, taken in difficult conditions and under certain restrictions, are used in Chapter 2 to introduce the motifs of Palembang songket, and in Chapter 4 to support the reconstruction of the history of songket during the colonial period. Other photographs of significant pieces are shown in Appendix H.

There are museums in other parts of the world which have songket cloths, such as the Textile Museum in Washington, D.C., the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra and the Museum der Kulturen in Basel (Gittinger, 1979; Maxwell, 1990; Suwati Kartiwa, 1996), but I was not able to visit them due to the limitations of finance and time. Instead, I have referred to data and photographs of songket at these museums in books and on the Internet.

1.2.3 Fieldwork

Fieldwork was conducted from October 2001 to September 2002 and from June to July 2005 in Palembang, where I observed present-day songket and its manufacture, and talked with the weavers. Occasionally I asked them questions by telephone or via my acquaintances. I had already visited Palembang several times before, but staying there for prolonged research was very different from visiting the place merely as a tourist. Preparation for the research took some time. First of all, I struggled with the local language, bahasa Palembang. Weavers and older people did not speak bahasa Indonesia. I initially asked for help from my Indonesian friends who could speak


English, but I often had difficulty trying to join in conversations. Since I was worried that I would not understand enough in this way, I decided to pursue my studies on my own, and started to learn bahasa Palembang from my friends. In this endeavour I often needed to ask people to repeat the answers to my questions, but they were always happy to do so.

In the first stage of research, I also had problems in finding the centre of songket weaving. It was unfortunate that I did not discover the work of the PIKM (1997/1998), which clearly indicates the locations where songket weaving flourishes, at the beginning of the fieldwork. It was surprising that my friends, who had been in Palembang for more than twenty years, had no idea where songket weaving was taking place. The officers in provincial and city offices, whom I contacted to obtain a research permit, also had no clear idea about it, though it became apparent later that I might have asked the wrong people. One of my friends took me to a songket weaving area, Tuan Kentang, but it seemed the craft had already declined there. By coincidence, a university student with whom I became acquainted through my local sponsor lived in 32 Ilir, near the centre of the songket industry. She took me to a weaver's house in 30 Ilir, known locally as Daerah Suro, which was the centre of the industry. I spent most of the time in these two areas (see Map 5).

After studying the basic terms for materials, the loom, equipment and weaving methods, I decided to learn from a weaver how to weave songket. The people in Daerah Suro were, however, unwilling to teach me, because they suspected that I would start my own songket business in Palembang in competition with them. Although I repeatedly explained my purpose in studying there, they did not believe that I was a researcher. Finally, I found a teacher by offering to pay for instruction. In the early
stages I experienced considerable physical pain at the end of a work session; this was caused by adopting an unnatural posture and handling a heavy sword-beater. This was graphic proof that weaving songket is a demanding task. Personal experience, however painful, was the best way to gain knowledge and understanding of the weaving process.

While I was learning songket weaving, I became acquainted with many weavers, motif-stick arrangers, shop-owners and assistants working in Daerah Suro, and from them I learned about songket motifs and the process of arranging motif-sticks. Some people showed me their own private collections of dated songket. I compared the pieces seen in Palembang with those examined in museums in Europe, to find evidence of changes in designs and motifs over time.

From February to May 2002 I conducted a survey of 56 songket weavers, asking questions about their background and social and economic conditions (see Appendix I). Before starting this survey, I decided that I would first ask the basic questions on the questionnaire to as many people as possible, and then come back to some of them for their individual stories. Weavers whom I knew well were happy to cooperate in my questionnaire survey, but I found that the informants became tense when they saw the questionnaire sheet, and gave only superficial answers. In response to this, I soon changed the process into an open-ended and flexible one. As a result, they often digressed from the subject, but this sometimes provided me with other useful information. Other weavers were reluctant to cooperate, and initially I had difficulty finding sufficient respondents for my survey. One weaver told me that I should pay informants a fee, because they would need to give up their time to talk to me.

However, I gradually gained the weavers’ confidence, and they became friendly and helpful. Even when I was in a hurry to move to another weaver’s house, they often
tried to prevent me from leaving, saying ‘balek kage bae’! I later extended the interview research to the mothers of the weavers and the proprietors of songket shops, most of whom used to be weavers, to build up a picture of conditions in the songket industry after the Second World War up to the present time.

In the one-month research in 2005, I worked mainly on the motifs and designs of Palembang songket. I asked local people, principally descendants of the nobility, weavers, motif-makers and the proprietors of a songket shop, whether they knew the names and meanings of motifs and designs, and accepted the answers as they were given with Gavin’s arguments in mind.

I was very fortunate in becoming acquainted with some descendants of the Sultan of Palembang. Bapak Djohan Hanafiah patiently explained to me the history and traditions of Palembang. He also showed me old photographs and maps of Palembang, and lent me some local documents regarding songket. Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo, who pioneered the revival of the songket industry in Palembang, was also generous with her time, explaining the old traditions of songket.

As my acquaintances increased, I started to be invited to ceremonial events which involved my informants’ relatives and friends. I did not have the opportunity to see a funeral, although it was certainly delightful that none of my friends and acquaintances passed away while I was there. I made up for this deficiency, however, by gathering oral information from local people, and from written materials. Meanwhile, at very frequent intervals during my stay in Palembang, I was invited to ceremonies of marriage and cukuran, during which I was able to gather information on ritual sequences and on the uses of songket cloth today. Whenever I attended

18 This is bahasa Palembang, which means ‘Stay a little longer’.
ceremonies, I strongly sensed the great joy of the host family, their relatives and neighbours in their celebration of the happy event, and I saw, again and again, that one of the indispensable articles in every ritual was the subject of my study — songket.
Chapter 2

Songket of Palembang

In the previous chapter, I stated that songket is cloth patterned by a supplementary weft technique, using mainly gold thread, but occasionally also silver, silk and cotton. What does it actually look like? In this chapter, I shall analyse the characteristics of Palembang songket, comparing it with other traditional gold-adorned cloths and woven textiles produced in Palembang. I shall also describe typical designs and motifs, and compare them with those woven in songket from other areas. Finally, I shall describe the procedure of making Palembang songket.

2.1 Traditional textiles of Palembang

2.1.1 Gold-adorned textiles

In Palembang a cloth adorned with gold leaf is called kain perada or prada (= gold leaf¹). Cloth of this kind is not peculiar to Palembang; it is also found in other places such as Java, Thailand, China, India, Iran and Japan. A cloth fragment with flower-motifs in gold and silver pigment was found while excavating the tomb of a governor’s wife buried in 186 B.C. in Hunan Province, China (Yoshimoto, 1989: 9);

¹ Yoshimoto, 1989: 173.
this indicates the long history of this technique, and the precious materials suggest the special significance of this type of cloth.

Regarding Palembang, Akib suggests that noblemen wore *kain perada* for ceremonies during the sultanate period (1975a: 66). In the 1830s a Dutch record mentions that *kain perada* was manufactured in Palembang, using European chintz as the base (see Chapter 4). Today according to Yoshimoto, however, there are two main types of pre-1950s *kain perada* still found in Palembang. One is imported Indian painted or printed cotton cloth, *kain semagi* (or *sebagi, sembagi*), decorated with gold leaf, or sometimes with silver or tin leaf mixed with glue, which was gilded in Palembang; the other is batik with the same kind of adornment, which was made in Pekalongan to order from Palembang (Yoshimoto, 1989: 173, 183). Most of the *kain panjang* (long cloth to wrap around the lower part of the body) of *perada* made before the 1950s have gold adornment only on a visible part, to avoid any damage by being rubbed when it is worn.

Nowadays, batik from Java, mainly Pekalongan, *kain pelangi* or *jumputan* (silk tie-and-dye cloth) and organdie are used as the base of *perada* decoration. Motifs are traced over the cloth with a small brush (*kuas*) using rubber powder dissolved in water as a glue. Thin gold paper coloured with a synthetic dye is stuck to the motifs to apply the colour. Finally, the finished cloth is dried in an airy, shadowy place for a while. *Kain panjang* and *selendang* (shoulder-cloth) are made of *kain perada*. *Dodot* (a wide wraparound) of *perada* can be worn as a chest cloth of *aesan gedeh*, the traditional Palembang wedding costume (see Chapter 6), but it is not much favoured since the gold motifs are easily damaged by the

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2 Ibu Ida, 2005, interview. Presumably gold leaf was used instead of gold paper in the past.
3 Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo, 2005, interview.
belt which fastens the dodot\(^4\).

Embroidery (sulam) using gold thread is popular in Palembang. Once real gold thread was used, but nowadays artificially dyed thread is used. It seems there are generally two types of decoration. The first type can mainly be found over women’s veils called muzawara or mudjawara (a square one) and mispak (a rectangular one); these are usually worn by women who have a title, hajjah (female who has made a pilgrimage to Mecca), in ceremonies and parties, and by the bride in a wedding ceremony. The veils are made of organdie, over which motifs like flowers are depicted with long stitches using flat gold strips or ribbon called kelengkan\(^5\). The veil shown in (Plate 2.1) has gold lace edging with maple-leaf figures called oya\(^6\).

The second type, generally called angkinan, is used to decorate ceremonial costumes such as a man’s long jacket (jubah) and trousers, a woman’s tunic (baju kurung), and small articles such as cushion covers and a ceremonial door decoration called tirai. The base is velvet or silk, over which metal sequins are attached, and motifs such as flowers, chains, stars and bamboo shoots are embroidered using coloured silk and gold thread. Flowers are embroidered with satin stitches using coloured thread, and

\(^4\) Cek Amnah Nawawi, 2005, interview.

\(^5\) Jasper and Mas Pirngadie mentioned this ribbon as klèngkam, which was named after the French word, clinquant (1912: 22), which means tinsel.

\(^6\) Cek Amnah Nawawi, 2005, interview. Jasper and Mas Pirngadie described two similar edgings (renda koelat kerikit): tadjam boenganja and boendar boenganja (1912: 310-311).
trimmed with couched gold thread. Gold couchwork is also used for the chains surrounding the flowers (Plate 2.2).

Lace edging (*pinggiran renda*) using real gold or silver thread was often applied to *selendang* during the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries (see Plate 4.2 in Chapter 4). Nowadays, real gold thread is not used due to the shortage of the material. Instead, tufts made of artificial gold thread are often used to decorate a *selendang* (Plate 2.3).

### 2.1.2 Woven textiles

Woven textiles produced in Palembang today are classified into two broad categories: weft *ikat* cloths and songket. The former has three types: *kain tajung*, *kain blongsong* and *kain limar*. *Kain tajung*, which is usually worn by men, is striped, chequered or splashed-pattern (Plate 2.4), while *kain blongsong*, which is worn by women, has small and flowery motifs, occasionally also with stripes. Although Jasper and Mas Pirngadie noted that *kain blongsong* was woven with cotton warp and silk weft (1912: 234), now both are made of silk only. They are produced on

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7 Though strictly, the technique used to dye the threads of these cloths nowadays is not tie and dye, but simply dye brushed on to the threads prior to weaving (see p. 38-39).

8 Bpk Usman Agus, 2002, interview.
the frame loom, using a striped warp and a weft dyed in several colours. *Kain tajung* is composed of two panels of the same size, about 58cm (weft) and 214cm (warp), sewn together to produce a finished cloth of 116 x 214cm, and then the shorter edges are stitched together to make a man’s *sarong* (tubular skirt-cloth). This can also be folded in two along the warp and worn as a short *sarong*. A long *sarong* should be worn so that the *kepala* comes at the back, while the *kepala* should be at the front when it is worn as a short *sarong*, under which trousers should be worn\(^9\). A *sarong* made of *kain blongsong* is as large as *kain tajung*, composed of two panels as well. It is sold together with a matching *selendang* as a set. When a woman wears the *sarong*, the *kepala* should be at the front.

*Kain limar* is a silk cloth woven with a red warp and a *limar* weft on the traditional back-strap loom. Before the Second World War, excellent *kain limar* was produced in Bangka, a small island off the coast of Palembang, but it is no longer produced there\(^10\). *Limar* weft thread is now produced mainly in 15 Ulu. Dyers buy a pack of Chinese pre-dyed silk thread at the market. Firstly, three threads are reeled together. The triple thread is then

\(^{10}\) Mr Donald Harper, 2002, interview.
Chapter 2. Songket of Palembang

reeled onto another special spool called a *panian*, which has two sizes; the large one is for reeling the weft for a *sarong*, and the small one for a *selendang*. It also serves to measure the amount of yarn required for a *sarong* or a *selendang*. The reeled yarn is taken off the *panian* and set over a frame for painting. Dyers paint coloured motifs over the bundled yarn with a brush-like tool called a *gelekan* and a synthetic powder coloured red, yellow, blue, grey, green, purple, and so on, dissolved in water. After the painting, the yarn is hung over a rack outside for drying. The pattern of *limar* weft thread was traditionally created by tying the thread with dye-resistant bindings and then dyeing by immersion in dyestuffs (Hitchcock, 1991: 80), but I could not find a person who remembered this technique. The finished *limar* weft thread is sold at the market or delivered to Daerah Suro where *kain limar* decorated using the songket technique is produced.

Songket is silk woven cloth with a plain, chequered, or *limar* background, over which motifs are interwoven with a supplementary weft. The word ‘songket’ is often translated as ‘embroidery’, but this is incorrect. Woven cloth is usually made by interlacing the warp and weft. When a weaver inserts a shuttle (weft thread) into the web, she lifts one of the two heddles to raise a set of alternate warp threads, and then she alters the heddle to raise the other set of warp threads the next time she inserts the shuttle. In order to interweave the gold thread to make motifs, she needs to use motif-sticks, and alternately raise the heddle to insert the ordinary weft thread and then the motif stick to insert the gold thread\(^{11}\). It is therefore technically different from embroidery, in which the thread is worked on a finished cloth with a needle.

Needless to say, songket is the most highly valued of Palembang textiles

\(^{11}\) The detailed weaving technique will be explained later in this chapter.
because of its materials: gold and silk thread. Before the Second World War, baju (jackets), baju kurung (women’s tunics) and celana (trousers) were tailored with songket, but they are no longer produced. A woman’s sarong and a matching selendang, and a man’s long or short sarong and a matching kain tanjak or songko (man’s head cloth), are the main products today. Songket is regarded as formal dress only worn for special occasions, like ceremonies and parties, and particularly for weddings. The bride and groom wear the traditional costume of Palembang, aesan gedeh, which includes a dodot and sarong of songket. Guests at the ceremony, especially the mothers of the couple and their close female relatives, usually wear a kebaya12 made of lace, traditionally a blue or black one, and a sarong and selendang of songket (Plate 2.7). Songket also plays an important role in other ceremonial articles, such as providing the cloth used to cover a baby in the first hair-cutting ceremony. In recent times a range of everyday cloths, including wall-hangings, table runners and cushion covers, have been produced from songket (see Chapter 6).

As I mentioned in Chapter 1, songket is not peculiar to Palembang. Nowadays it can be found widely in Indonesia, for example in the provinces of West Sumatra (Minangkabau), Jambi and South Sumatra, West and East Kalimantan, Bali, Central and

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12 Kebaya is a woman’s blouse the front of which is pinned together, usually worn with a sarong (Echols and Shadily, 1997: 267).
Chapter 2. Songket of Palembang

South Sulawesi, Lombok and Sumbawa (Hauser-Schäublin, Nabholz-Kartaschoff and Ramseyer, 1991a; 1991b; Suwati Kartiwa, 1996; Hitchcock, 1996). Songket is also woven in neighbouring countries such as Malaysia (Terengganu and Kelantan), Brunei and Thailand\(^\text{13}\) (Selvanayagam, 1990; Conway, 1992; Borneo Bulletin, 1996: 96). The Batak peoples in North Sumatra also weave cloth interwoven with gold thread, but this is a twentieth century development. According to Sandra Niessen, the authority on Batak cloth and clothing, the original Batak cloth is dark-blue dyed with indigo, bearing stripe- and cross-patterns representing the weavers’ lineage and their desire for their family’s prosperity. However, after the Dutch colonial regime introduced a Malay hierarchical social structure to Batak society in the early twentieth century, their cloth began to change to vivid colours including red and gold (Niessen, 1993: 65-66, 69). Although colours and some motifs were modified, Niessen has argued that the traditional tripartitioning composition of the field of the cloth can still be recognised; the cloth is divided into three panels along the warp, and the two side panels are sometimes as wide as a centre panel; the centre panel itself is also divided into three sections, the centre-field and two end-fields (ibid: 37). Elaborate lineal patterning, which is composed of geometrical figures, is interwoven in the end-fields, sometimes using gold thread.

The motifs and colours used differ from area to area, and songket in some areas even has its own name. For instance, designs of Hindu deities, the *garuda* (a mythical bird of Hindu legends), monkeys and the demon king, woven with gold and coloured silk threads to illustrate scenes from the Ramayana epics, are often found in old

\(^{13}\) According to Suwati Kartiwa, songket can also be found in the province of Riau (1996). V. Obdeyn, the then Assistant Resident of Indragiri (a region in the province), reported in 1929 that cloth interwoven with gold thread was produced there (1929: 93). Further research is, however, necessary to establish the present state of songket weaving in Riau.
Balinese songket\textsuperscript{14}. The figures are generally woven in a large size so that expressions of the God and demon king are visible. These motifs are woven in many colours with dyed silk threads, giving a bright and vibrant impression (Plate 2.8).

In Pasemah (an area in the hinterland of Palembang) and northern Lampung, a silk rectangular cloth interwoven with gold and silver weft called \textit{bidak} used to be woven (Plate 2.9). According to the Textile Museum in Jakarta, \textit{bidak} has two types; one is a long narrow one-panel (50 to 60cm wide and 200 to 250cm long), which served as a shawl, and the other is a larger two-panel (100 to 110cm wide and 200 to 250cm long), which was used as a man’s skirt cloth and to cover his corpse when he died\textsuperscript{15}. It generally has many strips of small figures, such as crosses, lozenges, stars, zigzags, slanting lines and small flowers, along the weft. Some pieces have borders along the selvages, but some do not. Colours are varied; there are

\textsuperscript{14} For Balinese songket, see Hauser-Schäublin, Nabholz-Kartaschoff and Ramseyer (1991a; 1991b).

\textsuperscript{15} The explanation of the Textile Museum in Jakarta, 2005.
reddish, brown and dark blue examples, and some pieces also have thin stripes in blue, orange and red.

Some designs of songket from West Sumatra and Malaysia resemble those of Palembang songket. Malaysian songket woven in Terengganu and Kelantan (both on the east coast of peninsular Malaysia) is strikingly similar to Palembang songket in its motifs, colours and composition. Selvanayagam has suggested that this might be because the weaving styles of the two regions influenced each other through the intermarriages of the royal families, or perhaps because the sultans of states in the peninsula employed skilled weavers from Sumatra, or as a result of a common or shared Malay culture (1990: xix). Interestingly, a Malay legend also refers to the common cultural background of the Malay Peninsula, Minangkabau and Palembang; the three princes who appeared on the sacred hill became the King of Minangkabau, Deli (North Sumatra) and Palembang respectively, and a descendant of the King of Palembang was said to have founded Malacca. Later, the Sultan of Malacca exiled his son, Raja Ahmad, to Pahang. Raja Ahmad became the first Sultan of Pahang and extended his territory to Terengganu (Brown, 1970: 13-15, 42, 88-90).

What, then, makes Palembang songket different from that originating in Minangkabau and Malaysia? After examining the composition and typical woven figures of Palembang songket, I shall analyse what characterises Palembang songket by comparing it to designs produced in the two other areas.
2.2 The composition and woven figures of Palembang songket

2.2.1 The composition

Palembang songket is generally characterised by a red background on which various motifs are interwoven with gold thread (Plate 2.10). Andaya has argued that red was thought to have protective qualities (1989: 34), while local people suggest that the use of red is simply a Chinese influence\(^\text{16}\). Apart from red, traditional colours such as green, maroon and purple, and other new colours like pink, grey, light blue, cream and white, are also used as a background. A two-colour-combined background, for instance, a purple centre-field with dark red borders along the selvages, and a chequered

![Plate 2.10](image)

Plate 2.10: A typical design of Palembang songket. Motifs are interwoven with real gold thread on a red background (Ibu Sity Rahmah private collection).

\(^{16}\) Bpk D Johan Hanafia h, Pak Usman Agus, Ibu Sity Bambang U tyo, 2005, interview.
background, are also often produced. *Kain limar* is also used as the base for the centre-field. These special backgrounds are, however, also found on Malaysian songket.

*Selendang, sarong,* and *tanjak* have different design compositions for their fields. The *selendang* is a rectangular cloth, generally 190 to 200cm long. There are roughly three sizes in width; the *kecil* (= small) is about 46cm wide, the *tanggung* (lit. large but not large enough) is about 60cm, and the *dodot* is 80 to 90cm, which is as large as the *sarong* and is usually worn as a chest-cloth for *aesang gedeh*\(^\text{17}\). Regardless of the sizes, the *selendang* has a large centre-field called *kembang* (= flower, since the flower-motif is often dominant) or *tengah* (= centre), sandwiched by the sections called

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Figure 2.1: The general compositions of *selendang* and *sarong.*

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\(^{17}\) Bpk Sidik, 2005, interview.
Chapter 2. Songket of Palembang

tumpal (originally signifying a row of triangular figures\textsuperscript{18}). They are surrounded by the borders called tretes or siku. The kembang, tumpal and tretes have different motifs.

The size of the sarong, by contrast, is about 85cm (weft) by 180cm (warp). A sarong usually has one large field or pemanjang (panjang = long), and one small field or pemendek (pendek = short), separated by a small section called tumpal or kepala (= head). On both selvages are the sections called minggir (or pipinggir = edge). This width, 85cm, is actually short for a sarong, so a wider cotton lining is added to make the width about 105 to 115cm, and then the warp edges are hemmed and stitched together to make it a sarong. This style looks ill-shaped, but it has at least one merit; a belt or a corset can be fastened over the cotton lining which projects above the songket, so the gold weaving of the sarong will not be damaged by the belt.

Motifs on each section of the selendang correspond to those of the matching sarong; the tretes of the selendang and minggir of the sarong have the same motifs, and so do the kembang of each. The composition of the tumpal is different on the selendang and sarong, but the two display the same patterns. The tumpal of selendang consists of six sections: from the section close to the kembang they are the ombak (= wave), apit (= hem or wedge), umpak (= pedestal), apit again, puncak rebung (= bamboo shoot), and tawur (or tabur = spread). As for the sarong, the centre is the tawur, on both sides of which the other five sections are symmetrically formed\textsuperscript{19} (Plate 2.11).

\textsuperscript{18} According to Selvanayagam (1990: 47), the tumpal or tumpul signifies a simplified puncak (or pucuk) rebung (a bamboo-shoot figure) in Indonesia.
\textsuperscript{19} Bpk Ali, 2005, interview.
Tanjak or songko is a square cloth, each side of which is about 85cm. It is first folded in two to make a triangle, then its base side is folded up several times to make a smaller triangle. This is put over the head and tied at the back. There are pieces with a single-colour background, with a two-colour background, and with a limar background. The traditional composition of the field of tanjak encloses it in a double frame (Plate 2.12, Tanjak A). Unlike the cases of selendang and sarong, there is some uncertainty over the names of each section. According to one source, the outer frame is called minggir and the sections on the corners surrounded by the two frames are called siku. The sections in the centre and on the sides between the frames are called kembang.
because flower motifs are often woven there\textsuperscript{20}, but there are pieces with plain weave in those sections. *Tanjak* A has small flower motifs on one corner of the centre section, which would be the front part when it is worn. There are pieces with a multiple-frame without *siku*-sections (Plate 2.12, *Tanjak* B), and also pieces with a single frame (see Plate 2.5).

### 2.2.2 Typical woven figures

Selvanayagam classifies ‘patterns’ of Malaysian songket decorating the main body (centre-field) of the cloth in five major categories: rhomboid patterns, striped or banded patterns, checked patterns, chevron patterns and spotted or scattered motifs forming patterns. As for the rhomboid patterns, she describes the central motifs woven in rhomboids in detail, classifying them by size and providing numerous illustrations, as well as the patterns forming chains, and some examples of special rhomboid patterns.

\textsuperscript{20} Bpk Sidik, 2005, interview.
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(Selvanayagam, 1990: 69-118). She mentions, however, that some of these central motifs are also used in the other four patterns for the centre-field as well as in other sections of the field of a cloth (ibid.: 101-183). As for these other four patterns for the centre-field, she focuses particularly on the patterns themselves, giving less explanation of the motifs, although, perhaps, certain of the motifs are peculiar to only one pattern, and are not found across several patterns. Regarding Palembang songket, local researchers Syamsir Alam, Muhamad Taufik (1995/1996: 8-9) and Yusef Rizal suggest three ‘motif’ categories: songket lepus, songket bungo (songket with flower motifs) and songket motif lain (other motifs). Another local research group, the PIKM (1997/1998: 8), provides four ‘motif’ categories: songket lepus, songket bungo, songket limar (kain limar adorned with songket-work) and songket rumpak (songket with a chequered background).

The problem is that the word ‘motif’ is used in different senses in these three studies. Selvanayagam uses ‘motif’ to mean a woven figure and ‘pattern’ as a design formed by a combination of figures and a background. The categorisation, songket lepus, songket bungo, songket limar and songket rumpak, mentioned in the local studies, are, according to Selvanayagam’s terminology, ‘patterns’ and not ‘motifs’. In dealing with the motifs of Palembang songket in this thesis I have found it more useful to employ three concepts, ‘figure’, ‘pattern’ and ‘design’, and to distinguish strictly between them. By ‘figure’ I mean individual woven shapes, such as flowers, stars, and certain geometric figures; by ‘pattern’ a combination of those figures to create, for example, rhomboids; and by ‘design’ a composition created by kinds of thread, woven patterns and a type of background. Selvanayagam in her study of Malaysian songket tries to deal with these three elements together, which imposes limitations on her.
Chapter 2. Songket of Palembang

explanation of motifs. I shall examine and explain the ‘figures’ of Palembang songket in this section, and the ‘patterns’ and ‘designs’ in the next section.

Syamsir Alam, Muhamad Taufik and Yusef Rizal state that the motifs of Palembang songket are categorised in four groups: flowers, plants, geometric figures and a mixture of those (1995/1996: 8). It is, however, rather more helpful to classify them as figures in three groups: flora, fauna and others. Human figures are never woven on Palembang songket, a practice explained by local people with reference to their Islamic faith, which prohibits idolatry\(^1\). Some figures are reserved for one specific section of the cloth, such as the centre-field or the borders, and some are favoured for any sections.

Akib wrote that motifs have symbolic meanings (1975a: 52, 62). I tried to identify as many names and symbolic meanings of woven figures as possible, but found it as difficult as Syamsir Alam, Muhamad Taufik and Yusef Rizal, who had already reported that few people remembered them (1995/1996: 11). One weaver said that figures might have had an important meaning when they were created, but as they had been handed down over generations the meaning, sometimes even the names, were not passed on\(^2\). Even when we find a symbolic meaning for a figure, as Gavin argues, this may not always be its original meaning (1995: 299-300). One could add that some figures might never have had any symbolic meaning, the names being simply an aide-memoire.

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\(^1\) This view is certainly shared by Peninsular Malays. Nevertheless, human figures can be found on bidak, which was woven in Pasemah and North Lampung, neighbouring areas of Palembang.

\(^2\) Bpk Ali, 2005, interview.
According to one artisan, there are hundreds of figures, and all of them are traditional ones which have been woven for a long time\textsuperscript{23}. It seems, however, that some traditional figures and patterns are no longer woven today, or not recognised by the same names. Jasper and Mas Pirngadie recorded the names of sixteen figures of Palembang songket (1912: 239-240), of which only eight names can now be recognized by local artisans (Table 2.1)\textsuperscript{24}. One artisan stated that *kembang cengkeh* must have been the present *bungo intan*, and another artisan speculated that *kembang matahari* was probably *bungo mawar jepang*.

Jasper and Mas Pirngadie illustrated three figures: *kembang tjengkeh* (*cengkeh*), *kembang tandjoeng* (*tanjung*) and *kembang kersadangan* (1912: 239, Plate 2.13). I showed several artisans these figures, without mentioning the names stated by Jasper and Mas Pirngadie. They responded that the figure described as *kembang cengkeh* was *bungo intan*\textsuperscript{25} (Plate 2.13, left). This seems to confirm that the figure once named *kembang cengkeh* is indeed now recognised as *bungo intan* in Palembang. Two other figures were also recognised under

\textbf{Table 2.1: Figures recorded by Jasper and Mas Pirngadie in 1912}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>names (→ present names)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+ <em>kembang tanjung</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ <em>kembang cengkeh</em> (→ <em>bungo intan]</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ <em>kembang padi</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ <em>kembang kacapiring</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ <em>naga sirat</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ <em>kembang matahari</em> (→ <em>bungo mawar jepang</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ <em>kembang biji pari</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ <em>kembang melati setanan</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ <em>mata punai</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ <em>lengkenai naik</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>+ <em>lawayan</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>+ <em>ular panggang</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ <em>pepadi</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ <em>juan panas</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ <em>kembang pandoman</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ <em>kembang karsadangan</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.1: Figures recorded by Jasper and Mas Pirngadie in 1912

\textsuperscript{23} Bpk Sidik, 2002, interview.
\textsuperscript{24} Bpk Sidik and Bpk Ali, Cek Yeni, 2005, interview.
\textsuperscript{25} Ibu Ida, Ibu Rohana, 2005, interview.
different names by the local people. The figure of *kembang tandjoeng* (Plate 2.13, centre) is recognised as *bunga tabur*, and *kembang kersadangan* (Plate 2.13, right) as *patah beras*\(^{26}\). This implies that other motifs might also have changed their names. It is also possible that, even where names are the same, the present motifs might not be the same as those recorded by Jasper and Mas Pirngadie.

In the next section I shall describe popular figures woven today, and examine whether or not they were woven on dated songket. More figures and detailed information can be found in Appendix D.

(1) Flora

According to Akib, *bungo* (= *bunga*) *melati* (jasmine) symbolizes purity and courtesy, *bungo mawar* (rose) functions as a charm against bad luck, and *bungo tanjung* (*Mimusops elengi*, a white eight-apex sweet-scented flower with a diameter of about 1 cm blooming on a tree\(^{27}\)), represents 'welcome' (1975a: 52, 62). These flowers were also used in woodcarvings on the walls of the *rumah limas* (a traditional Palembang house) to show hospitality towards visitors, or to wish for peace and a secure life for the family (Akib, 1975a: 52-53). Akib’s interpretation of the symbolic meanings of the three flowers is supported by some other scholars such as Suwati Kartiwa (1996) and Saragih (1995), though other local people I interviewed are no longer aware of them.

\(^{26}\) Ibu Ida, Ibu Rohana, 2005, interview.
\(^{27}\) Ridley, 1967 (1923): 278.
The figure of *bungo mawar* has a double or triple set of eight round petals. It usually appears in the centre-field and the *umpak*-section of the *tumpal*. The size ranges from about 3 x 3cm to 8.5 x 6.5cm, depending on the arrangement and the section in which the figure is woven. The *bungo mawar* has several variants (Plate 2.15, see also Appendix D). *Bungo mawar A* in Plate 2.15, measuring 5.5 x 5.5cm, is woven on the centre-field of a present-day wall hanging, creating a spotted pattern. *Bungo mawar B* (5 x 5.5cm) appears on the *umpak*-section of a *selendang* kept in the Museum Balaputra Dewa, and was probably woven in the early twentieth century. This *bungo mawar* has additional decoration called *rakam* on the centre of the flower, made with coloured silk thread. *Bungo mawar C* is found on the centre-field of a *sarong* which could also be dated as about 100 years old (see Appendix H, Plate H.2). This figure measures 3.5 x 4.5cm and is woven at the corners of rhomboids. Finally, *Bungo mawar D* is woven in rhomboids on a *selendang* kept in the Wereldmuseum, and was probably woven in the early twentieth century or earlier. This figure, which measures 8.5 x 6.5cm, is the largest rose-figure among those I investigated. Large *bungo mawar* can still be elaborate, with many layers of petals and a complicated figure in the central part.

![Plate 2.15: Figures of *bungo mawar*.](Image)
The figures which represent *bungo melati* and *bungo tanjung* are less certain. One source believes that Flower A in Plate 2.16 is *melati* and Flower B is *tanjung*, while other people say that Flower A represents *tampuk manggis* (calyx of mangosteen) and Flower B is *melati*, although some people name Flower C *tampuk manggis*. In Malaysia Flower A is called *bunga buah manggis* (Selvanayagam, 1990: 80). Jasper and Mas Pirngadie considered the figures of Flower A and Flower C together with five other figures as standard motifs for gold- and silver-weavings (1912: 240).

Flower A, whose size is generally about 2.5 x 2.5cm, is characterised by a double lozenge surrounded by eight circles. Both lozenge and circles have some variants (see Appendix D, Plate D.3). Flower A is used in many sections of present-day *sarong* and *selendang*; i.e. the centre-field, *tumpal*, *minggir* or *tretes*. This figure was also a popular motif in the past and can be found, for example, on a man’s jacket woven in the nineteenth century (see Plate 4.5 in Chapter 4), on the *tawur*-section of a nineteenth-century *selendang* (see Appendix H, Plate H.3), and on a ceremonial cloth stored in the local museum of Palembang (see Plate 6.13 in Chapter 6). Flower B measures about 2 x 2cm. It is woven in the centre-field and the *tawur*-section of modern songket to create a spotted pattern. It is also used as a space-filler in rhomboids. This figure can be found, for example, on the centre-field of a nineteenth-century *sarong* kept in the Museon (no.6862) and on a *baju kurung* kept in the Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde (no.370-2866). Flower C, whose size ranges from 2 x 2cm to 4 x 4cm, is

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28 Cek Amnah Nawawi, Cek Yeni, Cek Rohana, 2005, interview.
also used in many sections of the cloth. It can be found creating a spotted pattern on the centre-field of a *selendang* kept in the V&A (no.IS44-1985) and on the *tawur*-section of a nineteenth-century *sarong* kept in the Museon (no.6862).

*Bungo pacar* (*Lawsonia Inermis*)\(^{29}\) is a tiny (about 5mm in diameter) cream-yellow flower blooming on the tree. Its leaves are used to dye the nails of the bride and groom orange (see Chapter 6). The figure of *bungo pacar*, which measures about 0.5 x 0.5cm, is generally used in the centre-field and the *tawur*-section to fill a space (Plate 2.18, A). Many *bungo pacar*-figures closely woven together (Plate 2.18, B) are often found in the *tawur*-section, and sometimes also in the centre-field, as seen over the *kain singep* (a small cloth to cover a baby’s head in the first hair-cutting ceremony) which is stored in the local museum of Palembang (see Plate 6.17 in Chapter 6). There are also people who think this motif represents *biji timun* (cucumber seeds).

According to one weaver, the *bungo jatuh* (fallen flowers) figure does not refer to any particular flower. It probably simply represents a flower fallen on the ground. This figure has a star-shaped middle surrounded by four petals, forming a lozenge as a whole. The size of the *bungo*  

\(^{29}\) Backer and Bakhuizen, 1963: 256.
Chapter 2. Songket of Palembang

*jatuh* is about 8 x 8 cm. It can be found, for example, on the centre-field of a *selendang* kept in the Wereldmuseum (Plate 2.19). This figure is also popular for modern songket.

One informant identified the figure shown in Plate 2.20 as *bungo anggrek* (orchid). This figure is popularly used to create a spotted pattern in the *tawur*-section (see Table 2.2, *Tumpal E*), in particular for the *tretes midar* design. It is also found in the *tawur*-section of present-day songket.

*Puncak rebung* (bamboo shoot) is woven in the *tumpal*-section of almost all *selendang* and *sarong*. According to Akib, *puncak rebung* is a symbol of highness and greatness (1975a: 62), while Selvanayagam has explained that it symbolizes fertility in Malaysia (1990: 47). This figure is roughly divided into two groups: *puncak rebung* with a triangle-frame (Plate 2.21, *Puncak rebung A* and *B*) and those without it (*Puncak rebung C* and *D*). All *puncak rebung* figures have a ‘spire’ on the top. *Puncak rebung A*, a triple-framed triangle outside which hook figures are attached, is the one most

![Plate 2.20: Bungo anggrek (RMV, 370-2866)](image)

![Plate 2.21: Puncak rebung.](image)
commonly woven. *Puncak rebung* B also has a triangle-frame, inside which curvy patterns are woven. Other stick-like-figures with stylized decorations are usually woven between these framed *puncak rebung* to fill the space. *Puncak rebung* C and D do not have a solid frame. *Puncak rebung* C is composed of curvy lines to form a bamboo-shoot-shape. In many cases, small flower-figures are dotted between the *puncak rebung*. *Puncak rebung* D is not a triangle; it has a straight line with a spade-shape on the middle. A ‘paisley’-like figure is sometimes woven in the *tumpal*, in particular that of a design with a *limar* background. According to Lynton (1995: 172), this figure, called *kalga*, which is popular on the Indian sari, was developed from seventeenth-century floral and tree-of-life designs; therefore, the tapestry-figure should be differentiated from *puncak rebung*, although it proves the relationship between Indian textiles and Palembang songket.

(2) Fauna

The *naga* (*nago* in Palembang) is a mythical serpent or a snake which was worshipped in India. *Naga* cults appear to have been present in India by the time of Buddha (sixth century B.C.) and were incorporated into Buddhism, Jainism and Hinduism (Blurton, 1992: 50-51). The symbolism of the *naga* was presumably introduced to Palembang along with Buddhism and Hinduism, and was certainly established there by the Sriwijayan period from the late seventh century, since seven snake-heads can be seen carved on the top of a stone tablet, Telaga Batu, which is supposed to have been erected around 683 A.D. in Palembang. *Naga* is, however, interpreted as a dragon in Indonesia. *Naga*-figures woven on songket, which have legs and manes, also look like dragons, and local people suggest that the use of these figures
is evidence of a Chinese influence\textsuperscript{30}.

Usually \textit{nagas} woven in the centre-field appear in pairs facing each other, and two pairs of \textit{nagas} surround one figure such as \textit{bungo mawar} and \textit{nampan perak} (silver tray). The design with two pairs of \textit{nagas} is known as \textit{nago besaung} (\textit{nago} = \textit{naga}, \textit{besaung} or \textit{bersarang} = to nestle\textsuperscript{31}). According to a curator of the Museum Balaputra Dewa in Palembang, the \textit{nago besaung} pattern was often used for weddings as a symbol of the conjugal tie, since the shape of two pieces of the \textit{naga}-figure reminded the local people of the arms of a man embracing a woman. In my research, the \textit{nago besaung} design was found only in Indonesia, and not in museums in England or the Netherlands. The \textit{naga} shown in A in Plate 2.22 is found on present-day \textit{tanjak} sold in a local shop, and that in B can be seen on a \textit{sarong} probably woven in the nineteenth century, and which is stored in the museum in Palembang. \textit{Naga} is also often woven in the

![Plate 2.22: Nago figures.](image)

\textsuperscript{30} Bpk Usman Agus, 2005, interview.
umpak-section, mostly with the bungo mawar figure. The naga of C in Plate 2.22 was found on a fragment of an old songket kept at a weaver’s house, and D is woven on a selendang kept in the Wereldmuseum in Rotterdam. The use of naga in the umpak-section is still popular today.

The figure called kucing tidur (sleeping cat) looks like a coiled cat. However, there are weavers who name this figure sumping (an ear ornament)\(^{32}\). The kucing tidur is woven as a spotted pattern in the centre-field and in the tawur-section. Kelinci (rabbit) is a figure that depicts two animals standing up on their hind legs facing each other, holding something, probably a plant, between them. These animals, with their long tails and short ears, look like squirrels rather than rabbits, though. This figure runs through all of the minggir and tretes. The figure of ulat (caterpillar) appears in a grouping of four in the centre-field, surrounding a flower, or as two small ones sandwiching a flower woven in the umpak-section; these depict caterpillars eating the

![Plate 2.23: Fauna figures.](image)

\(^{32}\) Pak Ali, 2005, interview.
flower. The kucing tidur, kelinci and ulat were not found on dated songket in my research. Ayam (chicken) is depicted in the umpak-section of a sarong probably woven a hundred years ago. The one in Plate 2.23 is woven in a square, and was found in the centre-field of present-day songket sold in a shop. According to a shop assistant, this is a contemporary design. Burung (bird) has several variants, whose sizes range from about 2 x 2cm to 7.5 x 5cm. Small figures are generally used to fill limited spaces, such as between slanted lines in the centre-field (Plate 2.23, Burung A), the umpak-section (Burung C) and the space beside a spire of puncak rebung (Burung D). Burung B, which is the largest bird-figure among those I investigated, is used in the centre-field to form rhomboids (see Plate 2.29).

3) Others

Nampan perak (silver tray) and bintang (stars) are popular figures woven in the centre-field. The former, which measures from 8.5 x 8.5cm to 5 x 5cm, is of two types: the lozenge-shape (Plate 2.24, Nampan perak A and B) and the octagon (Nampan perak C). The octagon figure usually appears as berantai (chain) patterns, and

![Plate 2.24: Nampan perak and nampan emas.](image)
sometimes it has a *rakam*-decoration in the centre. *Nampan perak* A is woven on present-day songket, but a quite similar design is woven on a nineteenth-century *sarong* held in the local museum in Palembang. According to a daughter of the proprietor of a songket shop, a silver tray has some significance, since it is used to present a wedding gift\(^{33}\). One informant included the pattern D in Plate 2.24 in the *nampan perak* category without a clear explanation\(^{34}\). A few people identify a closely related figure, *nampan emas* (gold tray); this is a lozenge, smaller than that of *nampan perak*, in which a round figure is woven\(^ {35} \).

*Bintang* (star) is a figure with eight points. Some have lines to separate each point (Plate 2.25, *Bintang* A and B), and others have no such partitions, but a double-frame (*Bintang* C). Some star-figures have *rakam*-decoration on the centre (*Bintang* B). The size ranges from 7 x 7cm to 2.5 x 2.5cm. The larger ones are generally used in the centre-field and the smaller ones in the *umpak*, *tawur* and *minggir*. For example, *Bintang* A in Plate 2.25 is a very common figure often used in the centre-field of *sarong* and *selendang*, while *Bintang* D can be seen in the *tawur* of a nineteenth-century *selendang* (see Appendix H, Plate H.3).

![Plate 2.25: Bintang figures.](image)

\(^{33}\) Ibu Ida, 2005, interview.
\(^{34}\) Cek Yeni, 2002, interview.
In this section I have explored the popular woven figures of Palembang songket. There are figures which are popularly woven today but cannot be found on dated songket stored in museums used in this research. Some figures, such as *naga* woven in the *umpak*-section, rose and star, are found on both present-day and dated songket. Some figures are known by a fixed name, and some are called by several names. Even though Akib argues that some motifs had symbolic meanings, nowadays people are hardly aware of them. It is possible that the meanings which the figures originally bore have been forgotten over time, but it is also conceivable that the figures did not have any specific meanings at all. It seems that the most important thing for the artisans of Palembang is to continue weaving those figures that maintain the variety of local songket, and artisans simply need names to distinguish between different figures.
Chapter 2. Songket of Palembang

2.3 Designs of Palembang songket

2.3.1 Problems in naming and classifying designs

Figures are arranged with other supporting emblems such as tiny flowers, crosses, dots, spirals and zigzags to create a certain pattern. Each section of the cloth is decorated with one or several different patterns. Figures are woven with gold thread, sometimes with coloured or white silk or cotton thread, over a solid, a limar or a chequered background. The combination of woven patterns and colours of thread and background determines the design and name of the cloth.

Naming the designs of cloth often causes problems. Gavin, in her research on Iban textiles, has argued that Western researchers always expect names of motifs to be representational. In reality, however, names given to some archaic designs of Iban ritual cloths are often derived from the rank, power and function which the cloths embrace rather than from particular motifs (Gavin, 1996: 26-29, 73). She gives an example of the ‘trophy head’ pattern. This name is a vestige of one of the important functions of Iban cloth, which was to wrap an enemy’s skull to bring it to its taker’s house. The cloth was required to embody strong powers, which could protect the head-taker, his family and his community from the powers of the skull. The ‘trophy head’ pattern, which consists of branch-like lines and many interlocking spirals, is believed to have the strongest spiritual power, but “the pattern does not feature a ‘picture’ or a ‘symbol’ of a trophy head” (ibid.: 26-29, 46, 81-82). As Gavin herself has written, the meaning of the design is sometimes attributed to its use, and not to its form (1995: 295). Similarly, Leibrick explains in her study of the textiles of Bioki (West Timor) that a design which is mainly
composed of the diamond- or lozenge-shape with branching spirals, usually designates something specific, for example, ‘biting insects’ or ‘birds around flowering trees’; this name is then given to the pattern, although it does not necessarily depict ‘insects’ or ‘birds’ or ‘trees’ (1994: 27-31). How, then, do the Palembang people name and conceptualise songket designs?

Two groups of local researchers have listed typical designs, classifying them into several categories. Syamsir Alam, Muhamad Taufik and Yusef Rizal suggest that there are three broad categories: songket lepus (songket on which patterns are densely woven with gold thread), songket bungo (songket with flowery patterns) and a catch-all or miscellaneous category of songket motif lain (songket with other designs) (1995/1996: 8-9). Meanwhile, the PIKM group first identifies two main types


**Songket**

- **Songket lepus** (designs fully woven over the cloth with gold thread):
  - Lepus rakam, Lepus berakam bintang,
  - Lepus bintang mawar jatuh, Lepus bintang coketan,
  - Lepus bintang, Lepus mawar Jepang,
  - Lepus nago besaung.

- **Songket bungo** (flowery designs):
  - Bungo cino, Bungo inten, Bungo inten tepoleng,
  - Bungo jatuh, Bungo mawar Jepang,
  - Bungo mawar Jepang bekandang, Bungo pacar,
  - Bungo pacik, Bungo tabur, Bungo tanjung rumpak,
  - Bungo jengli, Bungo kapal sanggat, Singep bungo pacar.

- **Songket motif lain** (other designs):
  - Limar tepak kucing, Limar kembang, Pulir kembang,
  - Pulir siku rakam, Tetes mider, Rumpak, Bubur talam,
  - Jando berais [berhias], Nampan perak, Nago besaung,
  - Cik sina, Cantik manis, Emas jantung, Tigo negeri,
  - Bintang rante.

(2) Classification after the PIKM (1997/1998)

**Songket**

- **Songket lepus**:
  - Lepus nago besaung, Lepus mawar Jepang bekandang,
  - Lepus pulir lurus, Lepus cik sina,
  - Lepus rakam bintang kayu apoi,
  - Lepus rakam bintang kayu apoi bekandang,
  - Lepus rakam bungo pacar.

- **Songket bungo**:
  - Bungo cino, Bungo tawur, Bungo inten, Bungo pacik.

- **Songket limar** (designs with a limar background):
  - Limar lepus nago besaung, Limar lepus bintang berantai,
  - Limar lepus nampan perak, Limar bungo tawur.

- **Songket rumpak** (designs with a tajung background)

**Figure 2.2:** Two classifications of Palembang songket.
of songket: *songket lepus* and *songket tawur* (songket on which patterns woven with gold thread are not densely arranged), and then classifies the designs into four categories; *songket lepus*, *songket bungo*, *songket limar* and *songket rumpak* (songket with a *kain tajung*-like chequered background) (1997/1998: 10-12). As a logical consequence, the last three groups are supposed to belong to the *songket tawur* category, although the PIKM does not clearly explain this point (Figure 2.2).

*Songket lepus* does not refer to a certain woven pattern; it indicates a design created by densely woven patterns using gold thread. Since gold thread was made of real gold before the early twentieth century, *songket lepus* was extremely expensive. It was the most highly-regarded type among all Palembang songket designs, so only high-ranking noblewomen were allowed to wear it during the sultanate period. Nowadays *songket lepus* is mostly woven with artificial gold thread, due to the scarcity of the real material, and the price is not very different from that of non-*songket lepus* or *songket tawur*\(^\text{36}\). *Songket lepus* is still considered to be a special type of songket, however, because of its historical importance.

In the classification by Syamsir Alam, Muhamad Taufik and Yusef Rizal, some patterns can be found in two categories; for example, *nago besaung* appears in *songket*

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\(^{36}\) Cek Yeni, 2002, interview.
lepus- and songket motif lain-categories. A daughter of the songket shop proprietor states, however, that nago besaung has only a lepus-weaving. According to her, songket tawur consists of designs with a centre-field without any woven figures, those with a spotted pattern, or those with figures woven with non-gold thread. Another problem with this classification is that many designs are lumped together in the last category as miscellaneous designs. Some of these are recognised by many local people as distinctive types of Palembang songket, such as the famous songket design for widows, songket jando (or janda = widow).

The PIKM also uses songket lepus and songket bungo categories. The difference between the two categorisations can be found in the songket bungo category. Alam Muhamad Taufik and Yusef Rizal include in this all designs related to flowers. Meanwhile, the PIKM considers only flowery designs woven with both gold and non-gold threads; this criterion can clearly differentiate the songket bungo from songket lepus.

Other categories which the PIKM suggests are songket limar and songket rumpak. These two categories refer to designs with a special background. Songket limar is woven with limar weft thread; in consequence, patterns woven with gold thread appear over kain limar (Plate 2.27, A). Songket limar has its own variation, tretes midar, the design decorated with patterns woven with gold thread in the tumpal and minggir or tretes, but no patterns woven with gold thread in the centre-field (Plate 2.27, B). This background creates artistic effects together with the woven patterns, whose varieties are the same as those woven on a plain background. Meanwhile, songket rumpak, generally called songket tajung rumpak, is a design with a chequered

37 Ibu Ida, 2005, interview.
background. This design requires the striped warp and two or more sorts of weft whose
colours are the same as those of the warp threads. In its centre-field, small figures,
flowers or stars, are regularly dotted in the squares or on the crossings of lines (Plate
2.27, C and D). This background greatly affects the designs, limiting patterns woven
over it. Selvanayagam also considered the chequered background to be one of the
design-categories of Malaysian songket (1990: 70). It is reasonable to consider the
songket rumpak as an independent category of songket design.

Although the PIKM’s categorisation appears to be more precise, it still misses
out some popular designs. How can the designs of Palembang songket be categorised,
then? I shall analyse the classification of designs, basically following the framework of the PIKM, which seems to me to be the most satisfactory and useful for analysis.

2.3.2 Designs of Palembang songket

I shall firstly focus on patterns woven in the centre-field of the songket lepus and songket tawur categories and analyse how these patterns create designs. After that I shall explain the songket rumpak design and designs of the tumpal and minggir.

(1) The songket lepus category

Designs whose patterns are densely woven with gold thread all over the cloth belong to the songket lepus category. Both a solid- and a limar-background can be used for this category. Patterns often have additional decoration with coloured silk thread, usually in the centres of flower- or star-figures. This decoration is called rakam or berakam (=embroidery), though these coloured threads are technically not embroidered. They are supplementary weft threads, similar to the gold thread. The weaver inserts the coloured silk thread, following the pattern, instead of the gold thread.

1) The rhomboid patterns (berantai or berkandang)

A flower-, star-, or geometric figure like nampan perak is often enclosed by a rhomboid. This pattern is called berantai (= to have a chain) or berkandang (= to have a fence). The name of the pattern varies according to the figure woven in the rhomboid; i.e. berantai bintang, berantai nampan perak, or berantai mawar bintang.
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The size of the rhomboid ranges from 7 x 7cm to 15 x 15cm. The figures of 'chain' or 'fence' also vary. There are croissant-like figures (Plate 2.28, A), two comma-like figures (B), geometric figures (C), curvy lines (D), and a flower-decorated curvy figure on both sides (E and F). These figures are usually connected with flower- or star-figures to make a rhomboid. Inside the rhomboid, not only a dominant figure, such as a flower or star, but also some tiny figures are usually woven to fill the space.

Plate 2.28: Berantai (or berkandang) patterns.
ii) The rhomboid patterns with a special name

There are some other patterns which are technically composed of rhomboids, but have a special name. In the motifs of nago besaung and kenango dimakan ulat (kenanga eaten by a caterpillar), nagas and caterpillars form a rhomboid surrounding a flower, a star or a nampan perak (Plate 2.29, A, B). The pattern shown in Plate 2.29, C can be found on the centre-field of a selendang stored in the Wereldmuseum. I did not find this type of rhomboid-pattern using bird-figures during my research in Indonesia, although the museum ascription to Palembang of this cloth was reasonable, judging from the composition of the field of the cloth. Selvanayagam shows a similar pattern in

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38 Kenango or kenanga (Canangium odoratum) has “large flaccid fragrant flowers, at first green, gradually becoming yellow” (Ridley, 1967 [1922]: 43).
which chickens form rhomboids, and explains that this is a Sumatran-influenced cloth (1990: 99).

The pattern of *biji pare* (seeds of *pare*, a cucumber-like green vegetable with a bitter taste, see Plate 2.30, A) has relatively smaller rhomboids (5.7 x 5.7cm) composed of four boat-shape figures, surrounding an eight-petal flower and a star alternately (Plate 2.30, B). This pattern does not represent the plant, and I could not find any person who knew the reason for this name. There is also a *biji pare* motif for batik cloth (Plate 2.30, C). According to local people, Palembang used to produce its own batik, and *biji pare* was one of the traditional motifs. Palembang stopped producing batik some time during the sultanate period, however, and started to send orders to Pekalongan

The import of massive amounts of batik from Java to Palembang in the seventeenth century is demonstrated in the VOC records (see Chapter 3), but I cannot corroborate the assertion that the *biri pare* is a traditional pattern of Palembang. Careful observation identifies some similarities between these two *biji pare* patterns. The batik version also has boat-shape figures, which are sandwiched by comb-like shapes (shown in a whitish colour in Plate 2.30, C). Four T-shape figures which surround a small square also appear in the batik version (painted in dark blue in Plate 2.30, C), although they are

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bigger than those of songket. Finally, the composition of these figures is almost the same.

*Bintang mawar jepang* has alternately a rose- and star-figure, each of which is enclosed by a rhomboid formed with broad straight lines, in which some geometrical patterns are woven. Only a few local people recognise this design, and none of them could provide any convincing explanations of why this rose is called *mawar jepang* (Japanese rose). According to one weaver, this design should have star- and rose-figures, and the roses should be woven in a large size (the rose in Plate 2.31 measures 5 x 5cm). This weaver also speculated that the *kembang matahari* (sun-flower) recorded by Jasper and Mas Pirngadie (1912: 239-240) could be the *mawar jepang*.40

*Bintang* is a pattern with stars, four of which are densely arranged to form a rhomboid. A flower is woven in the rhomboid, according to which the name of the pattern varies, such as *bintang mawar* and *bintang bungo kayu apoi*.41 Syamsir Alam, Muhamad Taufik and Yusef Rizal named the pattern on the left in Plate 2.32 ‘*bintang coketan’* (1995/1996: 16), but my informants insisted that it was *bintang bungo kayu apoi*, explaining that ‘coketan’ simply meant to pick up the thread to create motifs.42

*Nampan perak* is also a rhomboid design. Some have a pattern composition similar to *bintang* (Plate 2.32, *Nampan perak* A). Others have rhomboids woven tightly over the cloth (*Nampan perak* B). One nineteenth-century *selendang* kept in the Wereldmuseum

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40 Bpk Ali, 2005, interview.
41 According to one weaver, *kayu apoi* is a tree which is similar to cork oak. Ridley mentions *kajoe apoe* as being a floating herb (1967 [1925]: 85).
42 Bpk Ali, Bpk Sidik, 2005, interview.
has an unusual pattern in the centre-field (Plate 2.32, left below). It is a berantai-pattern, forming crosses as a result of the shape of the berantai. In each cross, a star-figure is woven, surrounded by four other smaller stars. I saw songket with this pattern at a shop in Palembang in 2002, but local people were not sure about its name. One informant stated that it was a pattern called lepus bintang.

Plate 2.32: Other rhomboid patterns.

iii) Other patterns

Slanting lines and zigzags are also used in the centre-field. The width of the line is from 1.5 to 2cm. Some geometric figures or hook-figures are woven on the lines. The design with slanting lines is called pulir (= diagonal\(^{43}\)) and that with zigzags is pulir

\(^{43}\) Ibu Mala, 2004, interview.
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siku (siku = right angle) or ombak (= wave). Between the lines, tiny figures, such as flowers, birds, guinea pigs, butterflies or elephants, are woven\footnote{Ibu Amnah Nawawi, 2005, interview.}.

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{Plate2.33.png}
\caption{Pulir and pulir siku.}
\end{figure}

\section*{(2) The songket tawur category}

The songket tawur category includes designs in which figures are dotted, those in which some figures are woven with non-gold thread, and those in which no patterns are woven in the centre-field.

\subsection*{i) Designs with a spotted pattern (tawur)}

The design with figures which are dotted in the centre-field is called tawur. The figures can be flowers, stars, and other round figures such as kucing tidur. According to the figures, the name varies, e.g. bintang tawur mawar. Both solid and limar backgrounds are possible for this sub-category. The arrangement of figures has regularity. When one type of figure or same-sized different figures are used,

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{Plate2.34.png}
\caption{Tawur designs.}
\end{figure}
figures of odd rows are arranged in-between figures of even rows (Plate 2.34, A). On the other hand, when figures in two different sizes are woven, these two figures are alternately arranged in a straight line (Plate 2.34, B).

ii) Designs which contain figures woven with non-gold thread

This sub-category includes bungo cino, pacar cina\footnote{Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo, 2005, interview.} (or bungo pacar\footnote{Bpk Ali, 2005, interview.}), bungo...
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*Pacik*, *cantik manis* and *bungo intan* (or *inten*). A *limar* background is apparently not favoured for this sub-category. *Bungo cino* (lit. Chinese flower) is technically a rhomboid pattern. Dominant figures and chain-figures are woven with coloured silk thread, but only one type of small figure is woven with gold thread (Plate 2.35). The name came from the wearer’s status; it used to be worn by people of Chinese descent (Akib, 1975a: 69). Nowadays, however, *bungo cino* is a popular design for anybody.

*Pacar cina* is also a rhomboid design which is composed of tiny (2 x 2cm or less) figures woven close to each other (Plate 2.35). The chain-figure is woven with gold thread, but the figure inside the rhomboid is woven with silk thread in dark blue, turquoise blue, green, mint-green, pink or white.

*Bungo pacik* (*pacik* signifies Arabian women) is technically the *tawur* design with a lesser amount of gold thread. *Bungo pacik* A in Plate 2.36 has star- and flower-figures woven with blue cotton thread in the centre-field, while the *tretes* and *tumpal* are woven with gold thread. Meanwhile, *Bungo pacik* B has less gold thread than *Bungo pacik* A; only the grape-figures (4 x 3cm) dotted in the centre-field are woven with gold thread, while other figures in the centre-field (star-figures of 5 x 5cm and tiny flower-figures), the *minggir* and *tumpal* are woven with white cotton thread. According to Akib, this design was worn by descendants of Indians or Pakistanis (1975a: 69). Another design with the *tawur* pattern is *cantik manis*. This design has two types of flower figures in different sizes which are alternately dotted. The larger figure has petals woven with gold thread (the design in Plate 2.36 is, however, with silver thread) and the centres woven with coloured silk thread.
According to the PIKM, *bungo intan* (= diamond) is a design with tiny flowers forming lines along the weft. Most of these flowers are woven with white silk thread, with the addition of some flowers woven with gold thread (1997/1998: 11). There is also *bungo intan* in which tiny motifs are woven with gold thread and silk thread on a chequered background (Plate 2.37). This design is woven using a complicated technique. The warp has two-colour stripes of 5mm width. Two silk threads are used for the weft to produce the chequered motif, and gold thread and another silk thread are used as supplementary weft threads to make the figures. For the *sarong* in Plate 2.37, the warp has stripes in red and green, and red and green threads are also used for the weft. Dotted lines are interwoven with gold thread, between which crescent shapes and figures with four dots are woven with white silk thread. Motifs of *Bungo intan* A in
Plate 2.37 have checks in red and dark blue or purple, over which gold dotted lines and other figures with dots in blue are woven.

![Sarong songket bungo intan](image)

**Plate 2.37: Bungo intan.**

**Detail of the sarong (warp end)**

**Bungo intan A**

### iii) Designs without patterns in the centre-field

This category contains two designs: *tretes midar* and *jando*. *Tretes midar*, which has been briefly discussed above, has the *limar* centre-field with no motif woven with supplementary weft. Woven patterns on the sections of *tumpal* and *tretes* or *minggir* are woven with gold thread on a solid background\(^47\) (see Plate 2.27, B). Meanwhile, *jando* (or *janda* = widow) has a solid background in the centre-field (Plate 2.38). There are two names of *jando* design, *jando berhias* and *jando pengantin*, but some local people do not recognise the latter.

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\(^{47}\) *Limar* thread is designed for motifs only in the centre-field. When the *tumpal* section is woven, usually one-colour silk thread is used.
There are various ideas about the characteristics of these two types. Some people believe that *jando berhias* has a centre-field in a bright colour, traditionally green or yellow, while that of *jando pengantin* is in a dark colour, traditionally purple or maroon\(^48\), although various colours are now available for this design, including pastels; this suggests that synthetic dyes have widened the variety of colours available, or that people's preferences have diversified. Other people state that *jando pengantin* has both *minggir* and *tumpal* woven with gold thread (Plate 2.38, A), while *jando berhias* has a

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tumpal woven with gold thread and minggir decorated with limar (Plate 2.38, B)⁴⁹. As the name suggests, this design used to be worn only by widows. According to Suwati Kartiwa, jando berhias was worn by widows who were willing to marry again, while jando pengantin was worn by widows who did not wish to remarry (1996: 34-35). Locally, there is an alternative idea that songket jando berhias was worn by young widows who liked to dress up, while songket jando pengantin was worn by widows when they remarried⁵⁰. There are also people who think that either design was worn by widows, irrespective of their intentions.

In spite of the two names, the jando design has three different types of border. The first type is that on which patterns using gold thread are woven on both the minggir and tumpal (Plate 2.38, A). The second is that on which patterns using gold thread are woven only on the tumpal, and the minggir are decorated with limar-motifs (Plate 2.38, B). The third is that on which the tumpal and minggir are mainly decorated with limar-motifs, and a small number of patterns using gold thread are woven in the tumpal (Plate 2.38, C). The last type can mainly be found on a traditional design of selendang. Nowadays the jando design can be worn by anybody. According to a shop proprietor, songket jando is often called tretes midar, since the word ‘widow’ might disturb some people⁵¹.

(3) The songket rumpak category

Songket rumpak is a design with a tajung-like chequered background, over which motifs are woven with gold thread; therefore, it is also called songket tajung

⁴⁹ Ibu Ida, 2005, interview.
⁵¹ Cek Yeni, 2005, interview.
**rumpak.** As mentioned above, the striped warp is used for this design, which is woven with some weft threads in different colours to create a chequered pattern. In each square, or on each crossing of lines, a small figure is woven with gold thread. Uniquely in this design, the size of a man’s *sarong* is different from that of a woman’s. A woman’s *sarong* is the usual size (85 x 180cm). A man’s *sarong* is composed of two panels, each of which has a *tumpal* as do other designs, and a *minggir* only along one selvage, so that a finished *sarong* has the usual two *minggir* after the plain selvages are sewn together. One panel measures 55 to 60cm (weft) x 180cm (warp), and two of these are sewn together to make a cloth of 110 to 120cm x 180cm. This *sarong* can be worn long, but also short, if folded in two; this short *sarong* is called *setengah tiang* (lit. half house post, i.e. half-mast). There is a special package called a ‘*mama papa*’ set, which contains a man’s *sarong*, a woman’s *sarong*, a *tanjak* and a *selendang*, all woven with the same patterns.

(4) **Designs of the tumpal and minggir or tretes**

Various motifs are available for the centre-field. Many people apparently choose their songket by the patterns woven in the centre-field. However, the patterns woven in the *tumpal* and *minggir* or *tretes* also have a great effect on the overall design. One artisan said that when ordering a piece of cloth people can freely combine any patterns of the centre-field with any *tumpal* and any *minggir* or *tretes*. Despite this freedom of choice, however, in practice there seem to be tacit rules.
i) Designs of the tumpal

As discussed above, the *tumpal* is composed of several sections: *tawur*, *puncak rebung*, *apit*, *umpak*, and *ombak* (see Plate 2.11; for the patterns of the *puncak rebung*, see Section 2.2.2 (1)). Each section has a different pattern. Firstly, patterns for the *tawur*-section can be categorised into *berantai* patterns, other *lepus* patterns including *bungo pacar* and *nampan perak*, and *tawur* patterns. In most cases, *tawur* patterns are chosen for the *tawur*-section, when the centre-field has a *songket tawur* design (Table 2.2, *Tumpal* E and G). The reverse is not true; some *songket tawur* designs have a *lepus* or *berantai* pattern in the *tawur*-section (*Tumpal* D and F). Some *umpak* have rose-figures which are woven with *nagas* or tendrils. Other *umpak* have flower-figures, curvy lines, stylised H- or X-figures, and geometric figures. The *umpak* of the first type is slightly wider than the latter type. As for the *apit*-section, a row of chevrons is most commonly woven. The *ombak* has two types of motifs: wavy lines and triangles.

**Table 2.2: Designs of the tumpal**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tumpal A</th>
<th>Sarong of <em>songket berantai bintang</em>.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tawur</strong>: <em>berantai</em> pattern.</td>
<td><strong>Puncak rebung</strong>: a long triangle with curvy figures inside. Birds are woven beside the spires.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Umpak</strong>: <em>nago</em> and <em>mawar</em> alternately.</td>
<td><strong>Ombak</strong>: a big wavy line, under which some figures are woven.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Apit</strong>: a row of double-frame rhomboids.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tumpal B</th>
<th>Sarong of <em>songket berantai bintang</em>.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tawur</strong>: <em>berantai</em> pattern.</td>
<td><strong>Puncak rebung</strong>: a multiple-frame triangle with needle-figures outside. Birds are woven beside the spires.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Umpak</strong>: <em>diamond-</em> and <em>H</em>-figures.</td>
<td><strong>Ombak</strong>: low triple-frame triangles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Apit</strong>: a row of chevrons.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2.2 (cont’d): Designs of the tumpal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tumpal C</th>
<th>Sarong of songket pulir</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tawur: berantai pattern.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puncak rebung: a short triple-frame triangle with needle-figures outside.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Umpak: decorated chain-figures.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ombak: small triple-frame triangles.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apit: a row of chevrons.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tumpal D</th>
<th>Sarong of songket bungo cimo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tawur: rhomboids (nampan perak?).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puncak rebung: a triangle with curvy lines inside and hook-figures outside. Birds are woven beside the spires.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Umpak: nago and mawar alternately.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ombak: small double-frame triangles.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apit: a row of chevrons.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tumpal E</th>
<th>Sarong of songket bungo cino</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tawur: tawur of kucing tidur and bungo pacar (bijji timun).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puncak rebung: a bamboo-shoot figure formed with curvy lines.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Umpak: nago and mawar alternately.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ombak: big waves.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apit: a row of chevrons.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tumpal F</th>
<th>Sarong of songket bungo pacik</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tawur: bungo pacar.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puncak rebung: a double-frame triangle with hook-figures outside.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Umpak: eight-petal flowers decorated with some figures.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ombak: double-frame triangles with A-figure on the top of them.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apit: a row of chevrons.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tumpal G</th>
<th>Sarong of songket tretes midar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tawur: tawur of flowers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puncak rebung: a triangle with curvy lines inside.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Umpak: flower decorated with some figures.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ombak: small triangles.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apit: a row of chevrons.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are some special designs of the tumpal-section with an irregular composition. The gribek design represents the wall of a house made of woven bamboo bark (Plate 2.39). The ombak-, apit- and umpak-section of this tumpal is the same as in other tumpals, but there are two types of puncak rebung of different heights, which are
covered with zigzags. In the centre, between the zigzags of the two sides, there are rhomboid motifs. An artisan drew my attention to the detail, explaining that this tumpal-design does not have the tawur-section\(^{52}\). As he explained, right and left zigzags which cover puncak rebung just touch, forming rhomboids in-between. It is noteworthy that the appearance of Tumpal gribek A in Plate 2.40 is similar to the kepala of batik from Pasisir called kepala gigi balang (Heringa and Veldhuisen, 1996: 58-59).

There is also an irregular tumpal in which, in place of puncak rebung, two kucing tidur and one tiny flower are alternately arranged on a sarong of songket bungo intan. In the centre, a line of chevrons is also woven. Finally, there is a tumpal in which several dotted lines are woven along the weft (Plate 2.41). The figures of the dots are tiny flowers or geometrical shapes. This tumpal-design is called bungo intan.

\(^{52}\) Pak Sedik, 2005, interview.
A man's sarong with a bungo intan design in the tumpal. This sarong has a matching tanjak.

Plate 2.41: Tumpal bungo intan.

A nineteenth-century long cloth (Wereldmuseum, 2235). According to a weaver in Palembang, the design of the tumpal woven with gold thread is bungo intan.

ii) Designs of the minggir or tretes

The minggir or tretes is usually composed of three to five strips in which flowers and geometric figures are woven. In the inner strip, waves or triangles are woven, just as the ombak-section in the tumpal; in most cases, the same motifs are used for those two sections. For the centre strip, tendrils, flowers, crosses or animals are used. In the outer strip, spirals and small rhomboids are woven with dots forming spires called kuku (nail or claw) at the edge. On some kuku tiny star-figures are interspersed between the spires (Plate 2.42, below).

Plate 2.42: Minggir.

Plate 2.43: Designs of the minggir (examples).
Songket usually has one set of minggir or tretes, but there is a design which has one extra frame between the minggir or tretes and the centre-field. These three fields, the minggir or tretes, the extra-frame and the centre-field, are different in terms of colour or pattern. This traditional design, which is called tigo negeri (tigo or tiga = three, negri = country, land), had at one time disappeared, but one weaver revived it in the 1970s. Javanese batik has also a design with the same name; that is, according to Veldhuisen, cloth "produced in three different centers, with each applying their craftsmanship to the cloth". For example, regarding a batik produced around 1880, he explains that the "overall design in red was done in Lasem, the parts in blue with white tiny motifs were done in Kudus, and the background in soga [brown] was produced in Solo" (Veldhuisen, 2004: 51, 84; see also Smend, 2004: 51). Meanwhile, local people in Palembang say that this design is called tigo negeri because of the three different fields.

There are two other types of special decoration for the borders. One is a series of tiny figures, such as flowers and stars, that is woven on the borders of the centre-field of sarong and selendang (Plate 2.45, A). The other can be found in the warp-end of...
selendang. On the plain-weaving field outside the kuku, dots are woven with gold and coloured silk thread. This decoration is called intan (Plate 2.45, B).

Plate 2.45: Other decorations of the borders.

Finally I shall mention the colour of the background in the minggir or tretes as an important element in the design. There is a type of songket with one solid colour background all over the cloth. There is another type where the background of the minggir or tretes has a different colour from that of the centre-field. How is this two-colour background produced? There are two methods. One is that the warp has two colours; when the warp is organised, a large bunch of thread in one colour is set between two small bunches of thread in another colour. For example, the warp shown in Plate 2.65 has two colours: lilac in the centre-field and dark red in both minggir. Woven with lilac weft, the cloth will have a lilac centre-field and purple minggir. There is also the warp whose centre-field is zone-dyed (see Plate 2.58). The other method is to use limar weft, which is dyed so that it has a limar motif in the centre-field and a solid colour in the minggir.
2.3.3 Characteristics of Palembang songket

I have briefly mentioned that designs of Palembang songket resemble those of Malaysian and Minangkabau songket. In this section I shall compare songket from these three places, and discuss their common features and how one can distinguish Palembang songket from the other two.

(1) Comparison with Minangkabau songket

Designs of Minangkabau songket differ from village to village. Some villages have their own characteristic designs, which easily differentiate them from songket woven in other areas. For example, according to Anne Summerfield, *selendang* of songket woven in Pariangan, a village in Tanah Datar, has no selvage patterns (*minggir* in terms of Palembang songket); instead, bands of motifs along the weft extend across the entire width of the textile (1999: 120). *Selendang* from Pandai Sikek, another village in Tanah Datar, has selvage patterns which go from one warp-end to the other, or are interrupted by the patterns on the warp-end panels. Such compositions on the borders are clearly different from the *selendang* of Palembang songket, most of whose borders or *tretes* are continuous, going around the four edges of the cloth (see Plate 2.53 and Plate 2.46: Minangkabau songket (Nusantara, S2412). Tiny star-figures are woven in the centre-field. On both weft-ends, three strips, in which diamond figures are depicted, are woven from one warp-end to the other.
Figure 2.1). Traditional types of *selendang songket janda* design of Palembang songket do not have *tretes*, but have the *limar* motifs in the *minggir* (see Plate 2.38, C).

The selvage designs of *selendang* from Pandai Sikek have bands of geometric patterns such as diamonds arranged point to point, chevron patterns or zigzags (Anne Summerfield, 1999: 120). According to Anne Summerfield, the diamond figures signify pumpkin seeds, which represent “the detailed but all-encompassing nature of Minangkabau adat” (ibid). On the other hand, there are many designs on the *tretes* of *selendang* woven in Palembang, with figures such as flowers, tendrils and animals, as well as geometric figures such as spirals, chevrons and crosses, and there are *kuku* in the outermost rows. The curvilinear figures such as flowers, tendrils,

The warp-end panels of Minangkabau *selendang* often have bands of geometric figures. There are also some pieces which have *puncak rebung* in the warp-end panel, which make them look similar to Palembang songket at first sight. The section next to the *puncak rebung* is often filled with large rhomboid figures, which stand out more than the figures woven in the centre-field. Outside the section filled with the large rhomboid figures, there are several other bands of geometric figures woven from one selvage to the other (see Plate 2.46). The geometric figures woven in the warp-end panel
are also said to have symbolic meanings. For example, a row of slanting z-figures represents a line of waddling ducks, which indicates a teaching that people should not stray from adat, just as the ducks rarely stray from their line (Anne Summerfield and H.A. Sutan Madjo Indo, 1999: 176-177). In comparison, almost all selendang of Palembang have puncak rebung in the warp-end panel. Next to the puncak rebung there is a section called tawur, filled with patterns which are usually smaller than those woven in the centre-field.

As for the centre-field of selendang of songket, Minangkabau songket has three designs similar to those of Palembang. One is that in which figures, generally small diamonds, are scattered in regular rows over a solid background. This might correspond to the tawur design of Palembang songket, but the tawur design has larger woven figures and less plain space. Another popular design is one that has a chequered background over which small figures are scattered. This is similar to the tajung rumpak design of Palembang songket, but the tajung rumpak design has more and larger figures over the field. The other design has a plain centre-field in a dark colour, such as maroon and deep blue, without any woven figures, which resembles the jando design of Palembang songket; in this case, one can distinguish a Minangkabau selendang from a Palembang one by examining the designs of the borders and warp-end panels.

Most sarong of songket woven in the Minangkabau area are clearly different
from those of Palembang in construction, composition of the field and patterns. The Palembang woman’s sarong would normally be sewn from a single rectangle of cloth, while the Minangkabau woman’s sarong sometimes uses narrower strips of cloth sewn together to make the rectangular cloth to be sewn into a sarong. Some women’s sarong from Pandai Sikek with pucuk rabuang (puncak rebung) or tumpal (two rows of triangles) in the kapalo (kepala) have slightly similar features to Palembang songket, but the pucuk rabuang of Minangkabau sarong are filled with geometric figures; this is different from the figures woven on Palembang songket. On Palembang sarong there is a section called tawur between two rows of puncak rebung, while the kapalo of Minangkabau sarong does not have a space. Meanwhile, many of the men’s short sarong from the Minangkabau area have a chequered background, and these are similar to the tajung rumpak design of Palembang songket. However, the sarong of songket tajung rumpak in Palembang is composed of two panels to make a long sarong, that is often worn short by folding into half. Figures woven with gold thread on Palembang sarong are flowers and stars, while many of the Minangkabau sarong have diamonds.

As designs woven in the Minangkabau area vary from village to village, it may be over-simplifying the matter to discuss them collectively as ‘Minangkabau songket’. It does seem, however, that the woven figures of Minangkabau songket are generally more geometric and more symbolic than those woven on Palembang songket.

(2) Comparison with Malaysian songket

Malaysian songket is traditionally larger than that of Palembang. According to Selvanayagam, a Malaysian sarong measures about 120 x 225cm, and kain panjang and kain panjang sembilan (long shawls) are 120 x 270cm and 120 x 400cm, respectively
(1990: 8, 45). Those are larger than the Palembang sarong (approx. 85 x 180cm) and large selendang or dodot (approx. 90 x 200cm). In Malaysia, selendang, which are defined as narrow shawls, vary in size, measuring 75 to 100cm wide and 180 to 200cm long (ibid.: 10); those are about the same sizes as Palembang dodot. Nowadays small selendang, measuring 45 x 135cm, are also produced in Malaysia (ibid.: 10).

Some designs of Malaysian songket are similar to those of Palembang songket at first sight. For example, the nineteenth-century shawl from Terengganu shown in Plate 2.49 has a reddish-brown background, over which motifs are woven using gold thread; this combination of colours is very common in Palembang songket. The composition of the field of this shawl also looks similar to that of selendang made in Palembang. Close observation reveals, however, that there are some differences between Malaysian and Palembang songket. Firstly,
regarding the design shown in Plate 2.50, A, if a row of eight-petal flowers and a row of rhomboids were alternately arranged over the centre-field, it would be the same as the tawur design of Palembang songket. This Malaysian shawl has, however, other figures, tiny parallelograms, connecting the flower and rhomboid. Meanwhile, on a similar design produced in Palembang shown in Plate 2.50, B, stars and flowers are alternately woven in rows, and rows of § shapes are woven between the rows of flowers and stars.

Secondly, figures woven on the Malaysian songket look solid, while those woven on Palembang songket look lacy. This is because the figures of Malaysian songket are generally composed of regular picks woven closer together, lining up straight along the warp (Plate 2.51, A and B), while figures woven on Palembang songket usually have irregular picks with many tiny spaces, even on their contours (Plate 2.51, C).

The two end borders of the shawl, which are called punca in Malaysia (Selvanayagam, 1990: 54-55), are also different from the tumpal on Palembang
songket. Selvanayagam has explained that the *punca* is composed of the *tepi tutup kepala*, the *kepala punca*, the *badan punca* and the *tepi hujung punca* (1990: 54-56).

The *tepi tutup kepala* consists of three strips of motifs, the *tepi ibu kepala* (1 in Plate 2.52) sandwiched by two *tepi kapit ibu kepala punca* (2 in Plate 2.52); this composition is similar to that of the *umpak* and two *apit* on Palembang songket, but the Palembang design has a row of wavy figures called *ombak* between the centre-field and the *apit* (see Plate 2.11). Next to the *tepi tutup kepala*, the Malaysian shawl has a section called *kepala punca* (3 in Plate 2.52), in which a row of triangles or *puncuk rebung* (the *puncak rebung* of Palembang songket) is woven. The *kepala punca* shown in Plate 2.52 has a row of *puncuk rebung* with alternate reversed triangular figures, which is unusual on Palembang songket (see Table 2.2). Next to the *kepala punca* there is a section called *badan punca* (4 in Plate 2.52), which corresponds to the *tawur*-section on Palembang songket.

Selvanayagam refers to strips of figures called *tepi hujung punca* (5 in Plate 2.53) woven on the border of the warp-end into the *punca*. The extreme edge of the *tepi hujung punca* has a row of wavy figures, which is different from the *kuku* of Malay songket. The extreme edge of *tepi hujung punca* has a row of wavy figures, which is different from the *kuku* of Malay songket.

Palembang songket. Furthermore, the border of the weft-end of the Malaysian shawl, which is called *tepi kain* (6 in Plate 2.53), has different motifs from the *tepi hujung punca*, and these two sections are separated. Meanwhile, the borders of Palembang *selendang* are continuous, going all round the cloth.

Regarding the *sarong*, one can distinguish Malaysian ones from Palembang ones by examining the composition of the *kepala*. Firstly, unlike *sarong* woven in Palembang, most of which have the section called *tawur* between two rows of *puncak rebung*, there are many Malaysian *sarong* lacking this feature. As Plate 2.54 shows, the point of a *puncuk rebung* touches the point of the opposed *puncuk rebung*. Between the points a flowery figure is woven. There are, however, also *kepala* which have the section between two rows of *puncuk rebung*, as does Palembang songket (Selvanayagam, 1990: 141).

Secondly, the *kepala* of old Malaysian *sarong* is bordered with three bands of figures, *tupi ibu kepala* sandwiched by two *tepi kapit ibu kepala*, which resemble the composition of *umpak* and *apit* on a Palembang *sarong*, but Palembang songket also has the *ombak* between the centre-field and the *apit* (see Plate 2.11). According to
Selvanayagam, some Malaysian sarong now have the wavy figures called tepi gunung kepala between the tepi kapit ibu kepala and badan (centre-field), but it is a new tradition started in the 1930s (1990: 127). Furthermore, the width of the tepi kapit ibu kepala of Malaysian songket is wider than the apit of Palembang songket, and the figures woven in the former are more curvy than those woven in the latter, which are mostly a series of chevrons or diamonds. Each of the three bands of Malaysian songket is apparently an independent decorative section, while the apit of Palembang songket seem simply to function as borders of the umpak section (see Table 2.2).

There are, however, some examples of Malaysian songket which cannot be readily distinguished from Palembang ones. For instance, a selendang shown in Plate 2.56, which was, according to the Victoria and Albert Museum records, made in Negeri
Sembilan in the early nineteenth century, fulfils all the conditions which characterise Palembang songket argued above; woven figures are lacy, the *punca* has the *tepi gunung kepala* (a row of wavy figures), the pattern-strips on the borders are continuous, going round the four edges of the cloth, and the woven figures are ones often found on Palembang songket. In this case, the single anomaly might be explained by the provenance being the place of acquisition rather than of manufacture. Selvanayagam also illustrates some Malaysian songket which are the very image of Palembang types, explaining that these are Sumatran designs or influenced by Sumatran songket (see Selvanayagam, 1990: 151). As Selvanayagam has speculated, the appearance of such identical designs in Palembang and states in the Malay Peninsula might have been the result of royal intermarriages. Princesses of Palembang who married into the royal family in the peninsula might have woven songket using their own techniques in the new place, or they might have brought their weavers with them. If this was indeed the case, it would no longer be clear whether the piece could be called Palembang or Malaysian songket.

(3) **Definitive characteristics of Palembang songket**

Although songket from Minangkabau, Malaysia and Palembang, particularly the last two, resemble each other, there are some elements which clearly distinguish Palembang songket from the others. The composition of the field of the cloth is the key element in establishing the place of origin. In particular the *tumpal* (or *kepala*), its presence and the composition, differs from area to area. The *tumpal* of Palembang songket is, in my opinion, ingeniously organised. The *ombak*, a line of wavy or triangular figures woven on the outer border of the *tumpal*, functions as a sort of
Chapter 2. Songket of Palembang

Plate 2.57: The tumpal of sarong of Palembang songket (Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo private collection).

‘introductory’ section for the tumpal. It also responds symmetrically to the row of puncak rebung. Next to the ombak, the umpak appears with curvy elegant figures, such as roses, tendrils and nagas, sandwiched by apit, rows of angular geometric figures such as chevrons, diamonds or zigzags. Regarding the sarong, there is the tawur filled with tiny figures between two rows of puncak rebung. Strips of curvy figures and those of angular figures are arranged in the tumpal, and that makes the design pleasingly varied. The composition of the borders is also different. In particular, the borders of selendang are continuous, enclosing the centre-field.

Compared to Malaysian songket, figures of Palembang songket have irregular picks of gold thread; some are short and some are long. This manner of picking gold thread creates elaborate curvilinear figures which resemble lace patterns; it is characteristic of Palembang songket.
2.4 The procedure of making songket

The process of songket weaving is long and complicated. It takes around two months on average to finish one piece of sarong or selendang. When one knows the procedure of making songket, one can understand why it requires this amount of time. “However, we succeeded in reducing the time,” says an artisan. “It took almost one year to make one piece in our grandmother’s time, since weavers did everything from dyeing to weaving”. In this section I shall explain the current procedure for making songket, after discussing the tools and material.

2.4.1 The loom

Plate 2.58: Gedokan.

1. por: back strap  
2. pengapit: cloth beam  
3. sisir: comb  
4. gun matu: front heddle / gun slang: rear heddle  
5. lidi kembang: motif-sticks  
6. dayan: warp beam  
7. cacak: legs of the dayan  
8. tapakan: stands of the cacak  
9. beliro: sword-beater  
10. penipilan: flat shed-stick
In Palembang, songket is woven on a back strap or body tension loom called a *gedokan*. According to Achjadi, the back strap loom is most widespread in Indonesia (1998: 17-18). To be precise, the back strap loom has several types. For example, there is a simple one which Ling Roth has called the Dusun and Iban loom; this is equipped with a warp beam, a cloth-beam, a back strap, continuous warp, a comb and one heddle. There is another type, which Ling Roth has called the Java loom; this is fitted with a wooden-board warp beam resting on legs, a cloth-beam, a back strap, discontinuous warp, a comb, two heddles, and motif-sticks (Ling Roth, 1981 [1918]: 64, 89). The *gedokan* is of this type.

Old *gedokan* have a warp beam and legs decorated with carving and painting. The warp beam has a square, tongue-like loose device carved out in the centre. If one pushes this device it clatters, knocking against the back. This device produces a rattling sound when a weaver beats. Ling Roth has mentioned other types of sounding warp beam from Sulawesi and Java, which have more complicated shapes of tongue. He has suggested that the sounding warp beam was constructed to conduct the ritual noise of weaving to propitiate or warn some spirit (1981 [1918]: 83-85). One Palembang weaver has said that this device might reduce the shock of beating\(^5\).

\(^5\) Pak Ali, 2005, interview.
Meanwhile, in the Minangkabau district in Sumatra, songket weavers use a frame loom with foot-operated heddle, and there is no evidence of using a back strap loom there (Summerfield and Summerfield, 1999: 211). In Malaysia, songket is also woven on the frame loom, which replaced the back strap loom in the sixteenth century (Selvanayagam, 1990: xviii). In Palembang, the frame loom called ATBM (Alat Tenun Bukan Mesin) is also used, but only for kain tajung and kain blongsong, which used to be woven on the back strap loom before the Second World War. Why, then, did the songket weavers of Palembang not change to the frame loom? Several weavers mentioned that some foreign researchers had attempted to weave Palembang songket with ATBM several years ago. These attempts were all unsuccessful. The weavers insisted that the motifs of Palembang songket are too numerous and too sophisticated to reproduce with motif-sticks on the warp of the ATBM; they proudly explained that “it is only possible to use the ATBM if patterns are simple, like those of Minangkabau songket”\textsuperscript{56}.

It seems, however, that the weavers’ explanation is dubious. If the problem is the numbers of motif-sticks, Malaysian songket also requires many of them. Bapak Heru Sumarsono, who works for Dinas Perindustrian dan Perdagangan (the Industry and Commerce Service) at Palembang, argues that it must be possible to weave

\textsuperscript{56} Mbak Sanaria, 2002, interview.
Palembang songket on the ATBM. He suggests that songket weavers in Palembang are too conservative to change their methods, or they are simply unable to think about the improvement, as the Malaysian weavers have already done. Bapak Hero Sumarsono also suggests that the people’s insistence on keeping to traditional methods might be evidence that songket weaving originated in Palembang\(^57\).

It is, indeed, a serious matter for each weaving society to choose the right loom. The choice of a back strap loom, a frame loom or a power loom is primarily influenced by the type and amount of textiles which the people want to produce. They also have to consider how much money they can afford for the purchase of looms. Oki cites the case of a West Sumatran village which faced difficulties after they introduced an improved loom in the 1930s, since the new loom required five or six times as much yarn as an old-type loom. Especially after the price of coloured threads went up in 1934, the rate of new-type loom operation was reduced, and it is recorded that only 17% of all the new-type looms in the village were in use in 1941 (Oki, 1979: 150-154). In South Sumatra, a report on the feasibility of a textile factory was produced by the Industry Service in 1970. It explored the effective investment in plant and equipment, considering the cost of materials, labour costs, the capacity of material supply, production targets, possible prices and so on (Department of Industry, 1970). Although the focus of the research was mass-produced cotton textiles, the report claimed that it was necessary to consider a wide variety of factors in deciding the most appropriate equipment. It was probably easier for *tajung* weaving to transfer from *gedokan* to ATBM, because it is a more commonly used cloth than songket, and people thought that it would have a much wider market.

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\(^{57}\) Bpk Heru Sumarsono, 2002, interview.
Although it is more time-consuming and laborious for weavers to use, there are some advantages to the gedokan; it does not require a large working space, as well as being easy and cheap to make. Songket weavers can, therefore, weave at home, easily switching to housework. Even if their house is not large, they can accommodate it because it can be folded up easily, if necessary. If, for example, the weaver’s daughter wants to start weaving, the family can make a new gedokan quickly and cheaply. On the other hand, tajung weavers need to do their work in a factory, which an owner runs with several ATBMs, since the loom is expensive to build and too big to have at home. It is easier to work with numerous motif-sticks on the back strap loom than the frame loom because they are closer to the weaver. It is probable that these features of the back strap loom explain its retention for songket weaving in Palembang.

2.4.2 Materials

For songket weaving, a weaver needs to prepare the arranged warp, weft thread and gold thread. Silk thread is mainly imported from China today and sold at the market. The price is affected by the exchange rate, since it is purchased in US dollars. Limar-weft-makers first reel three threads together to make ‘triple’ thread and then paint it with synthetic dyes. Other solid-colour-yarn-makers first dye the thread, and then arrange it to make the warp. As for the weft, the yarn-makers just sell the skein of dyed thread, and the weavers wind three threads around a spool of a shuttle to make the triple thread. Coloured silk thread produced in Sulawesi is also sometimes used. It is more expensive than the locally produced silk thread and has to be specially ordered, but
Chapter 2. Songket of Palembang

fabric made of this thread is crease-resistant\(^{58}\). Nowadays, weavers sometimes use one cotton thread and two silk threads for the triple-weft thread in order to produce cheap songket, although songket made wholly of silk is, of course, considered better.

The gold thread used before the Second World War contained real gold of from 14 to 18 carats (Suwati Kartiwa, 1996: 33). Gold strips were wrapped around a fibre core, normally silk, which was usually dyed yellow or orange. The Palembang region has traditionally been known as a source of gold, which was brought to the city from its hinterland. A Chinese monk observed that gold was widely used to make goods for daily use in the palace of Sriwijaya in the seventh century AD (Takakusu, 1896: 45-46). It is also said that the King at that time threw bars of gold into the river, saying, ‘There is my treasure’ (Tibbetts, 1979: 29). Palembang’s connection with gold is also suggested in a Malay legend; when three princes, one of whom was to become the King of Palembang, appeared on the top of Bukit Si Guntang, the sacred hill located in the suburbs of Palembang, the rice plants on the hill turned to gold (Brown, 1970: 13-21, 42). In the early nineteenth century, the then English Resident of Palembang, Court, recorded that gold was one of the exports of Palembang during the sultanate period (1821: 108).

Although the realm of Palembang was abundant in gold, it seems that Palembang people relied heavily on imported gold thread. The situation was the same in West Sumatra. Montegut, Indictor and Summerfield (1996) have scientifically examined gold thread used in some West Sumatran songket which was woven in the nineteenth century. According to them, there were several types of gold thread, but only two main types were used in West Sumatra; one was composed of a fibre core wrapped

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\(^{58}\) Cek Rus, 2002, interview.
with gold strips, and the other had a fibre core covered in an organic wrapping to which a metallic surface was applied (ibid.: 101-103). The first type is called *Makau* (derived from the island of Macao); it possibly originated in India, Persia, or more likely in Europe but trans-shipped through Macao (ibid.: 102, 105). According to them, the second type is usually attributed to China or Japan, although they suggest that it might also have been produced in Indonesia because of its abundant presence among Indonesian textiles (ibid.: 109, 110). Palembang also imported gold thread from several places. Dutch records from the eighteenth century mention that gold thread was brought from such places as Terengganu, Malacca, Siam, Cambodia and Indragiri\(^59\). It is not certain whether they were original sources or simply relay points. Dutch records in the nineteenth century mention such sources as China and Thailand\(^60\). Some people are of the view that Thai gold thread might have been made of the gold which Palembang had exported there\(^61\) (Suwati Kartiwa, 1996: 17-18).

Some local people also state that several different types of imported real gold thread were used in Palembang. According to one informant, a good thread was imported from China, and a whitish variety was brought from the Netherlands\(^62\). Another informant explains that there were four types of real gold thread: in descending quality, *jantung* (lit. heart), *kontan* (cash), *jagung* (corn) and *kawat* (wire)\(^63\). According to Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo, the *benang emas jantung* was named after a banana flower called *jantung*, since the thread was reeled in a cone shape which resembles that flower\(^64\). The PIKM, on the other hand, has suggested that *jantung* was derived from

\(^{59}\) ARA, VOC 2965.
\(^{60}\) ANRI 63.2.
\(^{61}\) In Bima, gold thread was produced in the court (Professor Hitchcock, personal communication).
\(^{62}\) Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo, 2005, interview.
\(^{63}\) Bpk Ali, 2005, interview.
\(^{64}\) Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo, 2002, interview.
Chapter 2. Songket of Palembang

Shantung, a region of China, probably where the gold thread came from (PIKM, 1997/1998: 9). According to Suwati Kartiwa, songket of high quality was called songket jantung because it was trademarked with a heart, cap jantung (cap = trademark, jantung = heart) (1996: 33). This suggests another possibility, that the jantung could simply mean a heart, although the design of the trademark might have been made in response to the name of the gold thread.

In the twentieth century, real gold thread disappeared from the market. Some Palembang people say that factories manufacturing gold thread in China were burnt down in a war, although they do not have any further information (see Chapter 4). Wealthy people still want to obtain songket woven with real gold thread. To meet this demand, benang emas jantung is taken from an old piece of songket and recycled for a new piece. Sometimes a dealer calls on songket shops and workshops, selling this kind of thread. According to Kerlogue, many old pieces of Jambi songket were sold to Palembang dealers who recycle benang emas jantung (1997: 59). It seems that benang emas jantung is still in demand in Palembang, as the chief assistant in a songket shop asked me whether I could find it in Japan⁶⁵.

In practice, most songket is woven with artificial gold thread imported from Japan, India, Thailand, Singapore and Europe. It is generally made of a thin film, which is dyed gold with a synthetic dye, wrapped around a rayon thread⁶⁶. It is much

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⁶⁵ Cek Yeni, 2002, Interview.
⁶⁶ I would like to acknowledge with gratitude Mr. Masui of Oike Tech Ltd., who explained to me the manufacturing process of gold thread.
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cheaper than real gold thread and reasonably attractive. The most popular types in 2002 were a shiny one called jeli and a matt one called sartibi (Plate 2.61). In 2005, one new type called kristal was in demand for high-class songket. This gold thread is thicker than other types of artificial gold thread and has a strong yellow colour. The price is roughly five to ten times higher than that of the jeli or sartibi. According to some weavers, however, the finished cloth is lighter and looks more beautiful than that woven with other gold thread, and weaving it is very easy. The kristal was created in Singapore under the direction of an antique collector who often visits Palembang. He said that he wanted to produce attractive gold thread to assist the songket industry of Palembang.

2.4.3 The procedure

It generally takes around two months to finish one piece of sarong or selendang; about one week for reeling and dyeing the thread, at least two weeks for arranging the warp and about four to five weeks for weaving. If the customer wants to have special colours, an extra few days may also be required for preparing the thread. Sarong and selendang are different in size and composition, so the arranger of the warp needs to do the work for the sarong separately from that for the selendang.

67 Pak Sidik, Bpk Ayub, 2005, interview.
68 Mr. Donald Harper, 2005, interview.
(1) Dyeing

Pre-dyed silk thread bought at the market needs to be dyed in synthetic dyes. One local woman questioned about it barely remembered that natural dyes were still used in the 1970s as well as synthetic dyes. The Department of Industry and Development (Departemen Perindustrian dan Pengembangan: DPP) identifies 31 kinds of natural dye which were used for the textile industry in South Sumatra (2000: 3-4; Table 2.3: Natural dye stuffs)

Table 2.3: Natural dye stuffs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local name</th>
<th>Latin name</th>
<th>Part used</th>
<th>Colour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tingi</td>
<td>Ceriops candolleana, Arn.</td>
<td>bark</td>
<td>red brown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jati</td>
<td>Tectona grandis, Linn.</td>
<td>leaf</td>
<td>brick red</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bawang merah</td>
<td>Allium ascalonicum, Linn.</td>
<td>skin</td>
<td>brown red</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>secang</td>
<td>Caesalpinia sappan, Linn.</td>
<td>wood</td>
<td>red</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mengkudu</td>
<td>Morinda citrifolia, Linn.</td>
<td>root</td>
<td>red</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nila</td>
<td>Indigofera tinctoria, Linn.</td>
<td>leaf</td>
<td>blue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kembang telang</td>
<td>Clitoria ternatea, Linn.</td>
<td>flower, leaf</td>
<td>violet blue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bunga sepatu</td>
<td>Hibiscus rosa-sinensis, Linn.</td>
<td>flower</td>
<td>violet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sapu angin</td>
<td>Acasia golden</td>
<td>flower</td>
<td>violet pink</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tegalan</td>
<td>Cudrania javanensis, Trecul.</td>
<td>wood</td>
<td>yellow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jambal</td>
<td>Peltophorum pterocarpum, Back.</td>
<td>bark</td>
<td>beige</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>putri malu</td>
<td>Mimosa pudica, Linn.</td>
<td>flower, leaf</td>
<td>green-yellow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nangka</td>
<td>Artocarpus integra, Merr.</td>
<td>wood</td>
<td>yellow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kembang pulu</td>
<td>Carthamus tincorius, Linn.</td>
<td>bud</td>
<td>orange-yellow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kesumba</td>
<td>Bixa orellana, Linn.</td>
<td>aril</td>
<td>orange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kenikir sayur</td>
<td>Sonchus oleraceus, Linn.</td>
<td>leaf</td>
<td>golden yellow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sari kuning</td>
<td>Sophora japonica, Linn.</td>
<td>flower</td>
<td>yellow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>srigading</td>
<td>Nycanthes arbor tristis, Linn.</td>
<td>flower</td>
<td>golden yellow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>potromenggala</td>
<td>Caesalpinia pulcherrima, Swartz.</td>
<td>flower, leaf</td>
<td>green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>apokat</td>
<td>Persea gratissima, Gaertn.</td>
<td>leaf</td>
<td>brown green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pacar kuku</td>
<td>Lawsonia inermis, Linn.</td>
<td>leaf</td>
<td>orange green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pacar air</td>
<td>Impatiens balsamina, Linn.</td>
<td>flower, leaf</td>
<td>yellow green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ketepeng kebo</td>
<td>Cassia alata, Linn.</td>
<td>flower, leaf</td>
<td>yellow green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mangga</td>
<td>Mangifera indica, Linn.</td>
<td>bark, leaf</td>
<td>green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mahoni</td>
<td>Swietenia mahagoni, Jacq.</td>
<td>tree, leaf</td>
<td>brown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pinang</td>
<td>Areca catechu, Linn.</td>
<td>fruit</td>
<td>brown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gambir</td>
<td>Uncaria gambir, Roxb.</td>
<td>latex</td>
<td>brown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kepel</td>
<td>Stelechocarpus burahol, Hook.</td>
<td>leaf</td>
<td>brown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jalawe</td>
<td>Terminalia belerica, Roxb.</td>
<td>ari</td>
<td>black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lobi-lobi</td>
<td>Flacourtia inermis, Roxb.</td>
<td>fruit</td>
<td>grey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kibedali</td>
<td>Spotodea campanulata, B.</td>
<td>fruit</td>
<td>pink, grey</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the information by DPP (2000: 3-4), and confirmed by Heyne (1927: lvi-ccxii); Backer and Bakhuizen van den Brink (1963; 1965; 1968); Ridley (1967).

69 Ibu Maimuna, 2002, interview.
Table 2.3), and they were probably used in Palembang as well. Another informant, however, named only a few plants for the production of dye, such as *mengkudu* (*morinda*) for red, *nila* (indigo) for blue and *kunyit* (turmeric) for yellow\(^70\).

Nowadays, natural dyes are no longer used in Palembang; instead, synthetic dyes imported from Germany are generally used. Synthetic colour powder is dissolved in water in a washtub, and thread is soaked in it. According to the sort of dye stuff, salt, lime soda, or other materials need to be added in the water, and the temperature of the water and the way of rinsing also need to be changed (DPP, 2000: 10-14).

(2) Organising the warp

Silk thread needs to be organised to form the warp. For this task, two tools are used. The first tool is a wooden bar with forty small rings (Plate 2.63, Tool A), and this is hung on the wall. The second one is a wooden frame with eleven pegs (Plate 2.63, Tool B), and this is put on the floor near Tool A. Some bobbins on which silk thread is reeled are prepared beneath Tool A. An artisan demonstrated the procedure using only five bobbins on which there was pre-dyed silk thread, to simplify the procedure. However, the silk thread should be dyed and more bobbins than this are used. According to the artisan, the number of bobbins is not fixed; sometimes 20, sometimes 40. The more bobbins that are used, the faster the work can be completed.

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\(^{70}\) **Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo, 2005, interview.**
Threads are pulled out from each bobbin and passed through the rings on Tool A; one ring has one thread. The threads are pulled down to Tool B and guided to travel round the pegs on it. The threads first turn round peg A, and then pass outside of peg B. Then the threads trace a path to and fro round the pegs from C to I. After turning round peg I, the threads go by the upper side of peg J. When the threads come to point L, they are separated, and each of them is guided one by one to turn by peg K and to come back to point L. Then the threads are gathered again and go round the lower side of peg J towards peg I, making a cross between pegs K and J; because of this cross, the warp can be separated into two sheets. After turning by peg I, the threads reverse and go back to peg C. Then they go round the lower side of peg B, then the upper side of peg A, making another cross between pegs A and B. This loop made around peg A is for a wooden stick which is later attached to the warp beam. The winding needs to be
repeated many times, until the artisan feels that he has got enough thread for the warp. I asked him whether he counted the number of windings. He answered “no”, explaining that he could increase or reduce the number of windings at will later. The crosses are tied at A/B and J/K, to enable the worker to keep the threads in order, and then the wound thread is taken off Tool B. The threads are organised as a bundle six metres long with three loops.

![Figure 2.3: Winding of warp threads.](image)

In order to make the warp for songket rumpak, threads in different colours are required. They are reeled on bobbins which are arranged according to the colour order of the stripes. While the threads are guided round the pegs, it is necessary to maintain the correct order.

(3) Arranging equipment on the warp

It is necessary to carry out several steps to arrange the warp; i.e. setting the comb, winding the warp around the warp beam, setting the two heddles, arranging
motif-sticks on the warp, and adding a leash and a heddle-rod to each motif-stick. These steps are divided between several specialist operators. At Bapak Sidik’s workshop in 30 Ilir, for example, one artisan undertakes the first three steps, and two artisans called tukang cekit (motif-maker) and tukang guni (heddle-maker) are responsible for the last step.

A bundle of warp threads is organised to have three loops. For a songket whose minggir has a background in a different colour from the centre-field, three bundles are required; one large one in a colour for the centre-field is arranged in the middle and two small ones in another colour for the minggir is on either side. First, the loop of the bundle made by peg A on Tool B (see Figure 2.3) is hung on the top of a standing pole and the bundle is straightened onto the floor. On another end of the bundle, there is a cross (point L in Figure 2.3) to create a

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71 Bapak Sidik’s family produced songket at home in his large house. He, his wife, and his nieces and nephews mainly set motifs on the warp, and his sisters and sisters-in-law did the weaving.
shed. An artisan puts a sword-beater through the loop made by peg K of Tool B and the flat shed-stick through another, in order to keep the loops clear.

The artisan picks up two warp threads with a tool like a chisel and puts them into thin slots between the teeth of the comb. The comb for a *sarong* has 1800 teeth and that for *selendang* has 800 teeth. He repeats the process from one end of the comb to the other (Plate 2.65, left). For each of the twenty slots at each end of the comb, four threads are put through in order to create the selvage. Now the comb is set on the far end of the warp (Plate 2.65, right).

Next, the artisan takes out the warp from the pole, disentangling the twist and stretching every thread straight out on the floor. He inserts a squared wooden pole into a loop at the other end of the warp (the loop on which the comb is not set), divides the warp-ends into small bundles, and ties them to the pole (Plate 2.66, Step 1). Then the artisan puts the warp beam (a wooden plank) next to the wooden pole tightly and rolls them on the

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**Step 1:** A worker ties a wooden pole on the edge of the warp.

**Step 2:** He also puts the warp beam on the warp and winds the warp around it.

**Step 3:** The warp beam is set on the legs.

**Step 4:** After he has fixed another edge of the warp, two sheds can be clearly seen.

**Plate 2.66:** The procedure for warp setting.
warp so that the warp is wound around them (Plate 2.66, Step 2). The warp is left with one metre unwound, then the warp beam wound with the warp is set on the legs (Plate 2.66, Step 3).

The artisan pulls the warp-end to straighten the warp, then sets a wooden bar on the very end of the warp next to the comb, and puts the bar on the stands so that the warp is kept tight and straight. The artisan turns the sword-beater and flat shed-stick on their edges so that the two sheets are clearly separated by the sword-beater and the shed-stick, forming two sheds of \( \infty \) shape (Plate 2.66, Step 4). Now two heddles are set on the warp. The artisan puts a white nylon thread through one shed. Next, he thrusts his fingers between the first two warp threads and picks up the nylon thread to lift it up through the warp (Plate 2.67). Then he hooks the lifted nylon thread on a thin wooden rod (\( \text{lidi} \)). He repeats this process for each part of the warp threads from one end to the other, and then he ties both ends of the stick so that the hooked nylon thread does not come off. The first heddle is thus finished. He then puts a nylon thread through another shed and picks it up again. This time, he does not do every interval of warp threads, but every three intervals. After finishing the work from one end to another, he ties both ends. He has finished the second heddle as well. After that, he puts the cloth-beam on the end of the warp.
Then the work is handed over to the tukang cekit, who arranges motif-sticks. Following a picture of a design drawn on squared paper (Plate 2.68), the tukang cekit picks up warp threads with a tool like a chisel and puts a flat shed-stick under the picked threads (Plate 2.69). He turns the shed-stick on its edge, then puts a wooden rod, on whose tip a cotton thread is tied, through the shed, so that the cotton thread goes under the picked warp threads (Plate 2.70). Next, he picks up a different group of warp threads according to the figure, but the procedure is the same. If the figure is large or complicated, he will have to repeat this procedure many times to make one pattern.

The tukang cekit usually makes several sets of motif-sticks, such as for the minggir, for the warp-end, for the centre-field, and for the tumpal. The number of motif-stick increases with the variety and complexity of the design of sarong or selendang. After the tukang cekit has finished his work, the next stage is taken over by the tukang guni.

The tukang guni adds a leash and a rod to each cotton thread made by the tukang cekit to make it a heddle. She picks up one of the cotton threads, and puts the flat shed-stick through following the cotton thread. She turns the shed-stick on its edge to make the shed and puts a nylon thread through the shed. She picks up the nylon thread
from each interval of warp threads and hooks it on a wooden rod. After she has hooked the nylon thread from one end to the other, she ties both ends to fix it. She continues this work for all the cotton threads made by the tukang cekit. Now the motif-sticks are finished, and it is ready for weaving.

(4) Weaving

Many weavers usually produce both sarong and selendang, but some weavers specialise in one or the other, for efficiency. A weaver sets the warp beam, which the arranged warp is wound around, on the legs. First she has to prepare the shuttles of weft thread and of gold thread. Usually three weft threads are put through the warp at one time, so she winds, but not plies, three threads around a spool of a shuttle. She also winds three gold threads around a spool of another shuttle, and sometimes different types of gold threads are wound together but not plied. For example, three glittering gold threads might be used, or two glittering threads and one matt one, depending on the wearer’s preference.

The weaver sits on the floor in front of the loom with her legs extended in front of her. She fixes her sitting place, so that her feet touch tightly on a crosspiece between the two legs of the loom when she straightens her knees. The back strap is put on the weaver’s back and each end of the back strap beam is bound to each end of the cloth beam. The significant point is that the warp should be stretched when
the weaver straightens the knees (Plate 2.71).

Now the weaver starts weaving. The process for weaving is roughly as follows:

a) Tabby weaving for the first 10 or 20cm,

b) Copying the patterns from motif-sticks into the front space on the warp with wooden rods,

c) Interweaving patterns with gold thread,

d) Repeating the above mentioned ii) and iii) many times,

e) Tabby weaving for 10 or 20cm again, then,

f) Finishing and cleaning up.

a) Tabby (or plain) weaving

A weaver starts tabby weaving using only coloured silk weft. First, she slides herself forward bending her knees slightly so that the tension of the warp is relaxed. At the same time, she lifts the front heddle in order to get the shed between the sheets and puts the sword-beater into the shed. The weaver slides backward straightening her knees so that the warp is strained. She releases the heddle, turns the sword-beater on its edge and slides back the comb to the sword-beater so that she can get a clear shed between the cloth beam and the comb. She inserts the shuttle of weft through the shed from right to left, slides the comb toward the cloth beam to press the inserted weft, then she beats firmly over the comb with the sword-beater.

Now again the weaver slides forward, bending her knees, and lifts the rear heddle. This time she puts a bamboo shed-stick through the shed. While moving backwards to make the warp tense, she places the bamboo shed-stick, which is now under the rear heddle, over the front heddle so that the front heddle is covered by the
rear heddle with the bamboo shed-stick. She inserts the sword-beater through the space which the bamboo shed-stick is now making and turns the sword-beater on its edge to open the shed between the sheets. Then she slides the comb toward the sword-beater to make a shed between the comb and the cloth beam, inserts the shuttle from left to right through the shed, and slides the comb back toward the cloth beam, then beats over the comb with the sword-beater. The weaver repeats this process until she has woven 10 or 20 cm in length.

b) Copying the patterns from motif-sticks

This task is preparation for weaving patterns with gold thread. Even though a weaver tries to lift a motif-stick high, it is very difficult to open the shed between the comb and the cloth beam, since the motif-sticks are provided just in front of the warp beam, which is some distance from the place where the weaver wants to open the shed, with some obstacles between, such as two heddles and several sets of motif-sticks themselves. Therefore, a weaver has to copy the pattern from the motif-sticks onto the space just behind the two heddles using wooden rods to make the work easier.

Several sets of motif-stick are provided, so the weaver has to know which set manipulates which part. The weaver starts with three sets of motif-stick, i.e. one for the right *minggir* and another for the left *minggir* and the other for the warp-end between the *minggir* (for a *selendang*) or the centre-field (for a *sarong*). She lifts the first motif-stick on the right *minggir* to open the shed in the space behind the heddle and inserts a flat shed-stick through it. Sequentially, she lifts the first motif-stick for the warp-end between the two *minggir* or for the centre-field, and inserts the flat shed-stick through the shed in the same way (Plate 2.72). Then she lifts the first motif-stick on the
left *minggir* and inserts the flat shed-stick through the shed. Now one flat shed-stick is inserted through the warp from right to left. She turns the flat shed-stick on its edge to open a shed. She puts a wooden rod through the shed in the space between the sets of motif-sticks and the two heddles. She lifts the second motif-sticks of the three sets and does the same thing. The weaver completes this job with the third motif-sticks of the sets. She then moves on to the next motif-sticks of the sets, and so on. After copying around ten motif-sticks of the three sets, she stops and moves on to the weaving. On the warp, the pattern which is going to be woven is shown by the wooden rods. If all the motif-sticks are not yet copied, it is important to leave a mark on the next motif-stick so that she can find the right one with which she should start next.

![Plate 2.72: Weaving (2). A weaver is copying the pattern of a motif-stick.](image)

**Figure 2.4:** The system of motif-sticks. Most of the songket figures are symmetrical. A *tukang cekit* makes motif-sticks only for a half part of the figures (from A to B). Therefore, a weaver uses motif-sticks from one side to the other first (Arrow [1]), after finishing them, she uses them the other way around (Arrow [2]) to complete one figure.
Many figures are line-symmetrical; therefore the *tukang cekit* arranges motif-sticks only for one half of the figures. The weaver uses a set of motif-sticks forward then backward to make one complete figure, and repeats it several times to get a series of the figure (see Figure 2.4).

c) Interweaving patterns with gold thread

While the weaver loosens the tension of the warp slightly, she lifts the first wooden rod and inserts the flat shed-stick as she traces the rod. After she has inserted the shed-stick from right to left, she takes the rod away because it is no longer necessary.

The basic task is the same as tabby weaving, in addition to which the weaver should interweave the gold thread. She takes the first step of doing tabby weaving, i.e. opening the shed using the front heddle, and inserting a sword-beater and the shuttle of silk weft from right to left, then beating. Next, she turns the flat shed-stick on its edge to open the shed, slides it toward the two heddles and puts them together so that the shed from the shed-stick is reflected on the space between the comb and the cloth beam. She slides the comb towards the heddles, and inserts the shuttle of gold thread from right to left through the shed. She slides the comb toward the cloth beam to press the newly-inserted gold thread. Then she opens the shed using the rear heddle and puts through the shuttle of the silk weft from left to right in the same manner as in tabby weaving. She turns the shed-stick on its edge again and puts through the shuttle of gold thread from left to right. Then she lifts the front heddle again and inserts the silk weft. She turns the shed-stick on its edge again and interweaves the gold thread. The weaver continues the work in the same way, opening the shed with the rear heddle and inserting
the shuttle of silk weft. After she has used the flat shed-stick three times, she takes it away from the warp once and inserts it through again following the second wooden rod. Then she continues the same process. It should be noted that the weaver sees the reverse side of the cloth; therefore she has to turn it over if she wants to check the result.

d) Repeating steps b) and c)

When the weaver has finished all the wooden rods which were made before interweaving the gold thread, she has to copy figures from motif-sticks again. Copying figures and weaving are repeated alternately until the weaver has finished the patterns for the border. When the weaver has finished the border of a selendang, she starts the set of motif-sticks for the tumpal. As for a sarong, after finishing the centre-field, she moves on to a next section, the tumpal.

e) Tabby weaving

After weaving the centre-field and another border, the weaver does tabby weaving for 10 or 20cm again.

f) Finishing and cleaning up

After doing tabby weaving for a sufficient length, the weaver interweaves two wooden rods one by one, by putting through a rod together with the weft. Then she starts tabby weaving for the next cloth. After doing a few rows of tabby weaving, she cuts between the two rods with a razor. She also cuts the extra threads which protrude from the cloth. Then the weaving is finished.
2.5 Conclusion

Palembang songket is famous for its rich variety of figures, patterns and colours. Its elegant figures such as various types of flowers, chains and naga depicted with curvy lines are arranged with geometric figures such as zigzags, slanting lines, spirals, and squares and repeatedly woven over a plain background or a background of kain limar or chequered patterns. The diversity of figures, patterns, designs and colours must be the key element in the popularity of Palembang songket. Most of the figures are said to be traditional, handed down from generation to generation. The original names of some figures have been forgotten or might have been changed through time. Although some local scholars state that some figures have symbolic meanings, most of the local people know none of them. This suggests that these meanings are no longer important, or some figures might not have had any symbolic meanings from the start. Nowadays some figures are modified to create new designs, which further extend the variety of Palembang songket.

Making songket requires a long, meticulous and arduous procedure, to which many artisans devote their experience and skill accumulated over many years. If one artisan makes a mistake, the value of the songket is diminished. The arranging of motif-sticks and weaving are especially demanding, and require close and sustained attention to produce a well-made piece of cloth. Tukang cekit often damage their eyes due to the very fine work required. They pick up threads to create patterns according to design plans. The kepala section particularly needs many motif-sticks, since it is composed of several sections, each of which has different patterns. This minute elaborate design of the kepala is one of the elements which can distinguish Palembang
songket from others. A weaver wears the back strap tightly tied to the cloth beam all the time, and it is not particularly comfortable. When a weaver is at the loom, she has to keep her knees straight to give tension to the warp, and when she is copying patterns from motif-sticks, she needs to bend herself forward. It is not surprising that so many weavers suffer from severe backache. During weaving, if a warp thread happens to snap, the weaver has to fix it by joining the two ends together with another piece of the same thread. If the thread is snapped off from the heddles, motif-sticks or a comb, the weaver has to put the thread back in its right place. This work is complicated and requires experience and patience. This is why it is traditionally said that ‘a good weaver makes a good wife’. Some people think that weaving on a traditional back strap loom is time-consuming and less advanced and have tried to change to a frame loom, which songket weavers in Malaysia and West Sumatra are now using. Palembang weavers, however, did not agree with using the frame loom, and continue to use their traditional one. This might be because the weavers were reluctant to introduce any change in their methods, but over all the back strap loom is probably the most appropriate tool for Palembang songket, since weavers can easily deal with the motif-sticks provided over the warp.
Chapter 3

The Historical Context of Palembang Songket

Palembang, which is located at the entrance of the Malacca Straits, has always been exposed to foreign cultures. In its trade and commerce with China, India, the Middle East, other states in the Malay archipelago and Europe, Palembang obtained exotic commodities including textiles. Songket or gold brocade was not indigenous to Palembang; it is one of the articles introduced to Palembang by traders or official envoys. How did songket start to be woven in Palembang, and how has it developed to become a famous local handicraft and one which is closely identified with the city? In this chapter, I shall explore the historical context of Palembang songket during the pre-Dutch period, and how foreign textiles influenced the development of Palembang songket.

3.1 Early history

Since the Palembang area is situated at the gateway to the Asian maritime trade route, the Malacca Straits, it prospered from international trade from an early period. It is generally said that ‘Kandali’ or ‘Kantoli’, which is mentioned in the History of the Liang Dynasty (502-556), probably referred to what is now Palembang (Groeneveldt, 1887: 185 fn.; Cribb, 2000: 74). The ruler is supposed to have reigned over Kandali
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with great authority and power, possessing numerous soldiers. It seems that Kandali
was wealthy, as the king sent an envoy to China to present valuable articles of gold and
silver to the Emperor in the mid-fifth century (Groeneveldt, 1887: 185). According to
the Chinese record, Kandali cultivated cotton and produced flowered cloth
(Groeneveldt, 1887: 185, 185 fn.). The lowland close to the sea is not suitable for cotton
cultivation, but a hill with rich soil is the right place (Rini Andini Ambarwati Ekaputri,
2001: 27-28). It is, therefore, likely that the cotton was cultivated in the hinterland and
brought to the city. However, this record suggests that the noble people in Kandali wore
flowered cloth, which was presumably a particularly prominent cultural feature, since it
was thought worthy of noting in the Chinese record.

The great maritime empire, Sriwijaya, probably emerged in the Palembang area
by the second half of the seventh century. The oldest record of this empire was provided
by a Chinese Buddhist monk, I-Ching, who stayed there for six months to study
Sanskrit before he went on to India in 671 A.D. He reported that ‘Bhoga’ or ‘Sribhoga’,
which he called this empire, embraced Mahāyāna Buddhism, and that there were more
than a thousand monks in the capital, which must have been the centre for Buddhist
learning in the islands of the Southern Sea (Takakusu, 1896: xxxiv, 10-11, 14).

The wealth of the empire can also be inferred from I-Ching’s record that gold
was widely used in miscellaneous goods for daily use and in the decorations of the
palace (Takakusu, 1896: xli). In order to obtain such wealth, the king must have been
someone of considerable power and authority. The History of the Sung Dynasty reported
that he fortified the city with a wall of bricks, which went about nine miles\(^1\) (about 14.4
km) or more around the city. He located officials near the Palace, whilst ordinary people

\(^1\) According to Groeneveldt, it was several tens of \(li\), and ten \(li\) is about three miles (1887: 188).
lived beyond the city walls. The king was able to enlist ordinary people to participate in
the fighting in case of war (Groeneveldt, 1887: 188). The list of the people inscribed on
a late-seventh-century A.D. tablet discovered in Telaga Batu, the east section of the
town of Palembang, suggests that the society was stratified, because various statuses
were referred to in the empire, including the royal family, judges, merchants,
washer-men and slaves. The list of the Telaga Batu inscription indicates that various of
these people posed a possible threat to the king, and that anyone who rebelled against
him would be cursed. This inscription is thought to have been used for an oath of
allegiance toward the king; he poured water from the top of the stone into a small saucer
fitted at the bottom of the inscription and then ordered his subjects to drink it (De
Casparis, 1956). This inscription shows, on the one hand, that the king had the power
and authority to compel the people of the empire to pledge loyalty to him; on the other,
that he realised that his position was so unstable that he needed to administer an oath of
allegiance and threaten them with curses for their disobedience.

The king’s authority was supported by wealth, most of which came from trade.
According to Takakusu, I-Ching wrote that Sriwijaya was the chief trading port with
China, and there was a regular service between Sriwijaya and Canton conducted by a
Persian merchant (1896: xl). The king also owned ships, probably for commerce with
India (ibid.: xli). Foreign ships carrying goods from China, India, the Middle East and
the eastern isles of maritime Southeast Asia also arrived at the city following the
monsoon wind and stayed there until the next monsoon season. During their stay, the
I-Ching reported that ordinary people probably wore a cotton sarong (Takakusu, 1896:
12), but high-ranking people probably wore valuable imported cloth such as silks.
Chinese brocades, which had already been produced before the Christian era, might also have been imported, as well as exquisite cloths adorned with gold made in the Middle East or its neighbouring areas and brought via India. The capital of Sriwijaya itself supplied products brought from the hinterland such as rattan, areca-nuts, coconuts, beeswax and honey, which also attracted foreign traders (Groeneveldt, 1887: 187-188; Whitmore, 1978: 142). It was essential for the capital to obtain these forest products in order to attract foreign traders; therefore, it needed to maintain trade relationships with the hinterland. The communication between the capital and the hinterland was maintained only by river: the River Musi and its tributaries. The rivers, therefore played a significant role in trade, and it was important for the king to exercise his authority over the territory, by controlling the distribution of goods via rivers. However, the hinterland was so remote from the centre that the king’s authority did not extend there, so the people in the hinterland, though linked to the capital, were generally independent from it. The riverine-based trading system was not peculiar to Sriwijaya, and was found in other states on the south-eastern coasts of Sumatra (Bronson, 1977); the people in the hinterland provided their products to whichever centre offered them better terms. These centres, which needed to obtain products which were sought after by foreign traders and to gain advantages in international trade, therefore, had to provide the hinterland with goods in return, such as salt, salted fish, pottery, and silk cloth. This relationship between the capital and its hinterland was to continue during the sultanate period.

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2 Cloth interwoven with gold weft could have already been made in the second or third century B.C., since burial robes and kilts made of cloth whose weft was gold thread were unearthed in an archaeological site in northern Afghanistan in 1979 (Economist, December 20th 2003). It is uncertain whether elaborate Indian cloth was brought to Palembang at that time, since I-Ching reported that Indian cloths were not as beautiful as Chinese (Takakusu, 1896: 53), although it might have signified that it was only cloth for monks.
Apart from the need to maintain its position in international trade, Sriwijaya also needed to maintain a good relationship with Java and China. Sriwijaya established an alliance by a royal marriage to the Javanese Buddhist Sailendras in the mid-ninth century. It also sent envoys to the Chinese Emperor, presenting local products, such as cotton-cloth, rhinoceros horns, perfumes, crystal, lamp oil, ivory and rosewater, as tribute in return for Chinese patronage and favourable trading terms. The Sriwijayan envoys, on their return, brought back girdles adorned with gold and silver, and other precious goods. An envoy brought back silk thread from China in 962 (Groeneveldt, 1887: 187-189).

In the thirteenth century Chao Ju-kua recorded that silk thread and silk brocade were brought to Sriwijaya from China (Hirth and Rockhill, 1911: 61). The ‘Sriwijaya’ in his record probably referred to Muara Jambi, a town on the River Batang Hari, about 220km north from Palembang, since the capital of Sriwijaya is thought to have been transferred there in the late eleventh century. This record, however, suggests the possibility that these Chinese products would also have been brought to Palembang via Jambi. Sriwijaya, which continued to flourish after the transfer of the capital, finally declined in the late thirteenth century, and its empire disintegrated.

According to the *Nāgarakṛtāgama*, in 1275 the king of Singhasari sent a military expedition to the west and conquered Malayu in 1275 (Pigeaud, 1960: 47). Malayu is supposed to have referred to Jambi, but Palembang was probably also brought under the suzerainty of this Javanese kingdom from that time. Palembang was included in the list of Singhasari’s dependencies in the *Nāgarakṛtāgama* written in 1365 (ibid.: 16). It is believed that a prince of Palembang, Parameswara or Sri Tri Buana, fled from Palembang in the late fourteenth century following a Javanese attack.
and after travelling to Singapore and Muar, he founded Malacca around 1400 (Cortesão, 1944: 230-236). Malacca converted to Islam around 1410 and developed into the most important spice emporium in Asia.

It is unclear what the status of Palembang was during the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries, since historical sources are scarce. The Ying-yai sheng-lan, a fifteenth-century Chinese record, states that Palembang was still under Javanese patronage at that time, and the culture of Palembang, including various rituals, language, dress and food, was heavily influenced by the Javanese (Mills, 1970: 98-102). It also indicates that the Chinese Emperor had conferred the rank of ‘Principal Chief’ on a local Chinese man to exercise control in the territory. It suggests that Palembang continued to be an important port on the maritime trade route and was of commercial interest to both Java and China. This record also mentions the prosperity of the market of this town, in which cloth and silk as well as copper coins were important items in exchange.

According to Tomé Pires, Palembang was ruled by Raden Patah, the founder of the first major Muslim state in Java, Demak, in the early sixteenth century (Cortesão, 1944: 155). It is likely that Muslim suzerainty over Palembang commenced during his reign (Olthof, 1941: 20, 22-25). Tomé Pires recorded that Palembang owned many junks and cargo vessels, and conducted trade with Malacca and Pahang. Palembang brought local products such as rice, vegetables, cotton, rattans, gold, wax, honey and benzoin to Malacca, and carried back “a large amount of clothing of the coarse [kind]
from the Gujaratees and from the Kling\textsuperscript{4}. Their enthusiasm for Indian cloth was so great that Tomé Pires wrote that they spent all their money on it (Cortesão, 1944: 155-156).

Meanwhile, Europeans started to extend their influence in maritime Southeast Asia in the sixteenth century. The first to arrive were the Spanish and Portuguese. The Portuguese conquest of Malacca in 1511 urged Islamic states in Java to an action; one of these, Jepara, which was a close ally of Demak, attacked Portuguese Malacca in 1512 or 1513 (De Graaf and Pigeaud, 1974: 202; Cribb, 2000: 88). Palembang, which was ruled by Demak, also participated in the attack, and many Palembang men, including local high-ranking men, died in their unsuccessful war (Cortesão, 1944: 155).

According to Palembang’s historical tradition, a Javanese prince came to Palembang from Surabaya (Asal-usul, 2001: 7). His name was Ki Gede Ing Suro, and he was probably involved in a power struggle in Java in the mid-sixteenth century (De Graaf and Pigeaud, 1974: 202). Soon after he arrived at Palembang, he founded a city on the River Musi near Kemaro Island (now called Ilir), building a kraton (palace) in Javanese style (Djohan Hanafiah, 2002a [1996]: 33). This dynasty was to develop Palembang as an international city of trade again.

### 3.2 The structure of the spice trade

In the sixteenth century, the East India pepper trade to Europe was monopolised by the Portuguese crown and private merchants who were licensed by the crown

\textsuperscript{4} Kling signifies southern Indian traders from the Coromandel Coast.
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(Furber, 1976: 3). As a result of this Portuguese monopoly, pepper was expensive in Europe at that time (Bastin, 1960: 11). At the end of the sixteenth century, the Dutch and British, who wished to circumvent Portuguese control of the pepper trade, also began to travel to the Malay archipelago to obtain spices for themselves. In 1600 the British and in 1602 the Dutch established East India Companies (the English East India Company: EIC; the Dutch East India Company: VOC) and they became heavily involved in the spice trade. However, what they had to do first was to understand the significance of Indian cloth in the pepper trade.

Laarhoven has argued that the Dutch traders did not seriously consider what products would be favoured by the indigenous people of the Malay archipelago when they dispatched their first fleet (1994: 40-42). They loaded one hundred thousand guilders of coins and some European trade goods such as woollen manufactures, blankets, linen and scissors. Preliminary findings on Asian trade, including that coloured cotton cloth from India was sought after in the spice trade, were briefly reported to the merchants, but initially they apparently did not take this information seriously. However, they soon discovered that local leaders and traders in the Malay archipelago preferred Indian cloth to coins. Therefore, the Dutch traders had to exchange coinage with the Chinese and Javanese for rice, local cloth and imported textiles from India, which could be bartered for spices (ibid.).

The Dutch traders then began in earnest to study the tastes for Indian piece goods in each location in the Malay archipelago (ibid.: 42-45). In 1603, a record of the VOC mentioned that one of the popular Indian textiles, *tschyndes (cinde)*, was "multicoloured cloths about 6 yards in length, from which head cloths and sashes were

5 Regarding the general history of East India Companies, see Glamann (1958) and Furber (1976).
made, and which sold well in Banda and the Moluccas” (Rouffaer, 1914: 171). The Dutch traders were coming to understand the importance of Indian cloth, which was very much in demand in the archipelago, for building up a profitable trade. In 1604, the VOC established a trading post on the east coast of India at Masulipatam in Golconda to obtain Indian cloth directly from the producers (Furber, 1976: 34).

The British traders also soon realised the significance of Indian cloth, and founded trading posts in certain strategic places in India (Furber, 1976: 39-40). A British commander, Captain John Saris, recorded in the Moluccas in 1612 that “we traded with the Naturals for Cloues [(c)loves)], which for the most part was by bartering and exchanging Cotton cloth of Cambaya⁶ and Coromandell for Cloues” (Satow, 1967: 61). On 15 April 1619, the English Factories listed as the goods to be provided for Sumatra from Gujarat: “In Ahmadabad and Cambay: Sealas⁷ red; mutfoone⁸; cheentes⁹; baftas¹⁰ red; tapichinde¹¹; pattolas silke¹²; byrames¹³ blue. Total, rupees 4,405”. The record also mentions various kinds of piece goods such as cotton, wool and iekatt pingar¹⁴ in Surat and baftas and sealas in Broach¹⁵ (English Factories, 1618-1621, pp. 94-95).

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⁶ Cambaya is probably Cambay in Gujarat.
⁷ Sealas is probably sarassa, which is cotton printed cloth.
⁸ Mufuone (muttoon) or madafon is also cotton undecorated, chequered or striped cloth. The name came from the city, Madapollam near Madras (Laarhoven, 1994: Appendix A, pp. 41).
⁹ Cheentes is probably chintz, that is, “cotton or silk cloth with hand-painted or stamped patterns” (Laarhoven, 1994: Appendix A, pp. 18).
¹⁰ Bafta is “plain cotton cloth, either white or dyed; most commonly red, blue or black for the Southeast Asian market” (Guy, 1998: 187).
¹¹ Tapih cinde is a rectangular, wraparound cotton cloth with multicoloured geometric motifs, imitating those on cinde or patola (Heringa and Veldhuisen, 1996: 212).
¹² Pattolas silke is a silk patola, which is silk double-ikat cloth from Gujarat.
¹³ Byrames or beiramee is cotton cloth (Laarhoven, 1994: Appendix A, pp. 10).
¹⁴ It is probably ‘ikat pining’, a belt (see Sen, 1962: 101).
¹⁵ Both Surat and Broach are cities in Gujarat.
Why were Indian textiles demanded in the Malay archipelago? One of the reasons was that the Indian artisans were organised into single specialisations, such as washing, beating, dyeing, spinning, making gold and silver thread, weaving, embroidering and button-making, and they were able to elaborate their skills to make Indian cloth richer in its patterns, colours, textures, and sizes than the locally made fabrics in the Malay archipelago (Gokhale, 1979: 99). Different localities and castes made their own styles of cloth (Andaya, 1989: 32). Cheap coarse and durable everyday cloths with stripes, checks or just plain cloth were produced for ordinary people, while the production of luxury textiles such as silk was also encouraged by the Indian courts (ibid). Elaborate patterning like that found on the double-ikat cloth, *patola*, was one of the most attractive aspects of Indian textiles. Various types of painted cotton cloths with motifs such as flowers and tendrils dyed in red, blue, green, purple, yellow and black were also produced. A Dutch officer reported in the seventeenth century from south Coromandel that local artisans applied juice of a fruit, *Mirabolana citrini*, on the cloth before dyeing to fix the colours to the cloth (Guy, 1998: 34-36). According to Guy, two mordants, the fixative agents, were favoured in Indian trade textiles: alum and iron. The former produced a range of reds, when it was used with an alizarin dye such as madder, and the latter yielded black with alizarin when it was combined with tannin; therefore, the mordants also “produce a variety of colouring effects, depending on the dye and mordant combinations” (Guy, 1998: 22).

The VOC and EIC also tried to produce quality textiles which would satisfy different preferences in each area in the archipelago, although they were sometimes not successful. For example, the *English Factories* records that:
[Surat merchants] have tried to induce the weavers to comply with the [EIC's] wishes for the substantial making of the cloth, but ‘the close striking of the threedes would make the cloth shorter or use more yearne to accomplish its accustomed length, which being prejudicial to the poore workemen they will not be persuaded therto; for if your broker refuse, others do buy so fast as they are made’. They have, however, sent five bales, which they hope will be found satisfactory.

(English Factories, 1618-1621, pp. 209)

The VOC, which upheld a policy of ‘spice monopoly’, started to make exclusive contracts with local leaders, driving the Portuguese out of the Bandas, Moluccas and Amboina to extend its control over nutmeg and cloves (Furber, 1976: 52). Palembang was also one of the ports where the Dutch were to make a monopoly contract covering the pepper trade.

3.3 The sultanate period: trade and cloth

As we have seen, a new dynasty was founded in Palembang in the mid-sixteenth century. Its rulers did not use the title, ‘Sultan’, until Pangeran Kesumo Abdurrohim became the first Sultan of Palembang, Sultan Abdurrahman, in 1670, about eight years after his enthronement. Technically, the sultanate period of Palembang started at this point with the formal adoption of a Muslim title and name. However, I shall include the period starting from the foundation of the dynasty in the mid-sixteenth century until 1670 as the first part of the sultanate period. This is because Sultan Abdurrahman was of the same dynasty which dates back to the mid-sixteenth century. There were apparently no prominent changes in the policies and character of the dynasty, except for
the introduction of new noble titles, and also the ruler of Palembang had already embraced Islam before the introduction of the title of Sultan. Local scholars also follow this periodisation (see Mestika Zed, 1991: 24; Djohan Hanafiah, 2002a [1996]: 32).

During the sultanate period, Palembang increased in prosperity from the pepper (and later tin) trade. Traders brought various kinds of textiles from India and other countries including Persia and China to exchange for pepper and other forest products. In 1642 the Dutch, who pursued a positive policy of making exclusive contracts with local leaders in the Malay archipelago, won the exclusive right over Palembang pepper. They also brought exotic textiles for trade. The names of textiles brought by the VOC were often listed in its records, usually without any descriptions. In particular, landing and shipping inventories at the Palembang port were occasionally recorded from 1722 to 1731, and annually from 1757 until 1786 and from 1790 to 1796 (see Appendix F, Document F.1)\textsuperscript{16}. This yielded valuation lists of various textiles for later analysis. There is also a series of lists regarding textiles, most of which were made in India, brought to Palembang between 1690 and 1719 (see Appendix F, Document F.2)\textsuperscript{17}. These annual lists include names of imported cloth, quantities, buying costs, selling prices, profits and percentages of selling price over buying costs.

Apart from the VOC, the EIC also made contact with Palembang periodically. However, the EIC was more enthusiastic about Jambi; they recognised Palembang as an important geographical point on the sea route between Bantam and Jambi, calling it the “Straits of Palamban” or “point of Palambam” or “Ballambeen Point”, in the early seventeenth century (Foster, 1897: 122, 312; 1899: 161; Sainsbury, 1964 [1892]: 179).

\textsuperscript{16} ARA, VOC 2013; 2051; 2073; 2100; 2193; 2934; 2965; 2991; 3024; 3059; 3089; 3151; 3211; 3244; 3273; 3333; 3385; 3413; 3442; 3494; 3525; 3581; 3624; 3649; 3674; 3733; 3960; OIC 103.

\textsuperscript{17} ARA, VOC 1926, fols. 111-141.
The ruler of Palembang invited the EIC to cooperate with him in 1616 in the pepper trade, offering good terms, but the EIC was apparently not interested in the offer (Foster, 1900: 213); this might have been because, as the EIC recorded in 1621, “We have too many profitable factories already, and therefore desire no more, but rather to have them dissolved” (Sainsbury, 1964 [1892]: 499). Meanwhile, the VOC deepened their relationship with Palembang after their first contact with this state in 1616, and they left important written records on Palembang from the early seventeenth century. In the eighteenth century, particularly after tin was discovered in Bangka, the EIC attempted to extend its commercial interests in Palembang (Andaya, 1993: 212), but the VOC had already established a firm position there. I shall, therefore, mainly refer to and use Dutch records in this thesis.

Unfortunately, indigenous accounts written in the pre-colonial period are scarce. Djohan Hanafiah has assumed that nobles, who did not want to inform the Dutch about their knowledge, probably committed most documents to the fire before the Dutch conquest of Palembang in 1821; the matter is uncertain, though\(^\text{18}\). Customs and traditions of the Palembang court were probably handed down among high-ranking nobles after the abolition of the sultanate, and as I mentioned in Chapter 1, some of them have been explained by Raden Haji Muhamad Akib, a descendant of the Sultan (1975a; 1975b).

In the next section, using Dutch documents and previous studies on the textile trade, I shall examine what kinds of textiles were worn by the nobles in the court in the mid-seventeenth century, and how these textiles might have influenced the cloth culture of Palembang.

\(^\text{18}\) Djohan Hanafiah, 2002, interview.
3.3.1 The early period of Palembang-Dutch trade (1616 – c. 1665)

Black pepper was not an indigenous plant of South Sumatra. It probably started to be cultivated there after 1515, since Tomé Pires did not mention pepper in his detailed list of Palembang’s products, which only included rice, fresh vegetables, cotton, rattans, gold, wax, honey, wines, meats, garlic, onions, black benzoin, incense, and some animals and birds (Cortesão, 1944: 155-156). According to the Corpus Diplomaticum, the VOC sent envoys to Palembang in 1616, which was the first Dutch contact with that place (1596-1650, pp. 347). The VOC wanted to deal in pepper and other forest products from the hinterland of Palembang, and the pangeran (prince) of Palembang wanted to start a trade relationship with the VOC.

In 1619, the VOC succeeded in setting up a trading post in Palembang (Corpus Diplomaticum, 1596-1650, pp. 347), but they needed to continue to take further measures in order to obtain great advantage in the trade. The pangeran of Palembang was interested in cloth as were other rulers in the archipelago. It seems silk was an especially highly-regarded article, as the Chinese record, the Tung His Yang K’au, records around 1618 that “[w]hen a ship arrives at Ku-kang (Palembang), a present of fruit and silk is offered to the king, for which there is a fixed quantity” (Groeneveldt, 1887: 199). The Daghregister of 1632 recorded that “[…] the brig, de Brack, left from here [[Batavia, the headquarters of the VOC]] to Palembang shipping one assorted cargo of cloth from Surat and Coromandel […] in order to negotiate for pepper in store
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According to the *Daghregister* of 1637, Dutch fleets went to Palembang twice, bringing various articles, such as 180 pieces of cloth ("9 corge\(^{20}\) cleeden"), one *pikul* and ten catties of cotton thread ("cattoene gaeren"), and some porcelain on one occasion and 140 pieces of cloth ("7 corge cleeden") and some porcelain on another (*Daghregister*, 1637, pp. 71, 87).

In January 1641, the Dutch attacked Malacca and took the city from the Portuguese; the conquest provided the VOC a firm foothold in the spice trade. Regarding the trade with Palembang, the VOC continued to bring Indian cloth there in that year. A ship dispatched from Batavia to Palembang on 27 February, 1641 was loaded with some *kain gulong* ("eenige goelonghs"), *tapi sarassa* ("tapasarassen"), white *salem pore* ("witte salempourys"), a quantity of chintz ("parthye chits") together with 45 catties of cotton threads and other articles (*Daghregister*, 1640-1641, pp. 196). The first cloth in the cargo, *kain gulong*, was of a type produced at Pulicat on the Coromandel Coast and at Thanjavur in Tamilnadu. According to Laarhoven, the base was painted chintz, and expensive ones had the *kepala* woven with gold thread or adorned with gold foil (1994: Appendix A, pp. 36). Meanwhile, Guy has suggested that it was patterned on the loom and its *kepala* was often adorned with gold thread, "intended for use as Malay sarongs" (1998: 187). According to Laarhoven, the name, *gulong*, was derived from the Malay word ‘gulung’ which means ‘to roll’ (1994: Appendix A, pp. 36). She has argued that it was the Dutch idea to roll this cloth as the Javanese preferred (ibid.: Appendix A, pp. 36). It is also likely that the Dutch wanted to

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19 "[..] vertreckt van hier nae Palimbang het jacht de Brack met een gesorteert cargasoen Suratse ende Cormandelse cleeden [...] soo om den peper aldaer op voorraet zynde te negotieren" (*Daghregister*, 1631-1634, pp. 100).

20 *One corge* is a bundle of 20 pieces (Stapel, 1932: 818). According to Laarhoven, cloth was customarily traded in quantities of pieces in India. The Indians bundled twenty pieces, probably loosely stitching them together with thread (Laarhoven, 1994: 261).
avoid damage to this cloth by folding it, since it had elaborate decoration in expensive and fragile materials, such as gold thread and foils. The *kain gulon* might have been the forerunner of songket.

The second one, *tapi sarassa*, was "nicely flowered colourful sarong (fijengebloemde veelkleurige sarongs)" (Stapel, 1932: 834). Guy has explained that *tapi* or *tape* was derived from a Javanese word, *tapih*, that means skirt, and that *sarasa* or *sarassa* refers to "cottons finely hand-painted on both sides" (1998: 187). Laarhoven has also stated that *tapi sarassa* produced for Malay wearers was made of chintz painted on both sides (1994: Appendix A, pp. 64-65). The chintz (or *chits, sits* in VOC records) which was also on the cargo lists, was hand-painted or block-printed cloth, known as *sembagi* (or *sebagi, semagi*) in Palembang. According to Laarhoven, flowers, foliage, leaves, trees, birds, animals or other imagery were painted in red, blue, green, purple, black and yellow. She also explained that Batavia ordered chintz from Coromandel "painted with small and large flowers in mostly green and black colours" in 1628 (1994: Appendix A, pp. 19). Some local people of Palembang keep several pieces of *kain semagi*, which they believe were produced about 100 years ago in India. Flowery figures enclosed by rhomboids or circular motifs are painted on the cloths in blue, red and green (see Plate 6.22 in Chapter 6). The third cloth in the list, *salempore*, was also a kind of cotton cloth. According to Laarhoven, "white bleached and unbleached varieties were [mostly] sold at the beginning of the seventeenth century", and "the white cloth is said to have had a red stripe at each end" (ibid.: Appendix A, pp. 55-56). Since such cloth was often used to make imitation chintz in Europe, it is possible that the people of Palembang also painted on it to make a chintz-like cloth by themselves (ibid.: Appendix A, pp. 56).
In May and July in the same year, *patola* were brought to Palembang; ten pieces and twenty-three pieces respectively (*Daghregister*, 1640-1641, pp. 277, 368). A *patola* was a silk double-ikat cloth from Gujarat (Plate 3.1); this was unusual among Indian cloths, most of which were made of cotton, although cotton *patola* produced in Surat were also brought to Palembang in the eighteenth century. Many kinds of designs, such as leaf designs, floral designs, designs with animals or birds, and geometrical motifs, were used for the *patola*, and some designs, like elephant motifs, were very popular in the archipelago and often imported (Bühler, 1959: 13-14; Guy, 1998: 88). A *patola* was often called *cinde* (tijnde) or *cindai* (tjindai) in the Malay archipelago in Dutch records. Laarhoven argues that *patola* and *cinde* were originally different and clearly distinguished in VOC records. Since they were similar in motifs, these two words gradually became synonymous, and the differences are no longer clear (1994: Appendix A, pp. 21). Guy states that *cinde* might have signified “a cheaper version available in both silk (single ikat) and cotton” (1998: 187). In the Malay archipelago, *patola* became a special form of cloth which

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21 Strictly speaking, ‘*patola*’ is the plural form of ‘*patolu*’. Since this cloth is well known by the name ‘*patola*’, I use this plural form throughout this thesis.  
22 VOC1926.
demonstrated the owner's high status and enhanced his prestige. Bühler has argued that high-ranking people in the Malay archipelago might have even believed that this textile of foreign origin was credited with magical or supernatural powers to protect the owner, therefore, they desired patola as their precious possessions and heirlooms (1959: 10). Motifs of patola were often imitated in batik and other Indonesian textiles, probably in order to share these supernatural powers (ibid).

In 1641 the VOC agreed the first contract with the pangeran of Palembang (Corpus Diplomaticum, 1596-1650, pp. 347-348). In the following year, the VOC finally won an exclusive contract for the pepper trade from him. By this contract, the VOC was also allowed to build a warehouse made of any materials it chose and had the right to control all junks or vessels coming to Palembang. According to Van Dam, the contract also included 80 reales (ƒ268) for the pangeran and 25 reales (ƒ83.8) for the port controller to be paid as a toll for every hundred pikul of exported pepper. The toll could be paid in cloth according to the market price, in place of currency (Stapel, 1931: 301-302). In this way, cloth was often used by the VOC as a medium of exchange. In 1655, a Dutch buyer, Anthony Boey, also bought 450 pikul of pepper under the condition that it would be paid for at 2 ½ reales (ƒ8.375) per pikul in cash or 3 reales (ƒ10.05) per pikul in cloth (Generale Missiven, vol.3, pp. 17).

This was, however, only a honeymoon period between Palembang and the VOC. An argument between the VOC and the pangeran over a violation of the monopoly contract became acute, and finally led to the pangeran's attack on the Dutch fleet in 1658, which was followed by the Dutch retaliation against Palembang in the following year (Van der Kemp, 1911: 337). A brother of the former pangeran succeeded to the

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23 1 real = about 3.35 East Indies guilders before 1743 (Vos, 1993: Appendix IV).
throne in 1660 and became Pangeran Kesumo Abdurrohim. Since Palembang had been razed to the ground in the Dutch attack, the new pangeran moved the capital four kilometres up the River Musi, where he built a new palace (kraton) and royal mosque (mesjid). In 1662, he concluded a new contract with the VOC, which gave the Company “a monopoly of pepper at 4 reales (f 13.4) per pikul in cash and 4.5 reales (f 15.1) in goods” (Van der Kemp, 1911: 337; Corpus Diplomaticum, 1650-1675, pp. 209-212). The town started to prosper again from the pepper trade and had become one of the biggest pepper-export centres in the East Indies by the late 1660s.

The native (non-Dutch) vessels which carried pepper and other products to Batavia often returned to Palembang with a range of merchandise. Before 1670 these comprised mostly cloth in considerable quantities. On occasion, the VOC also sent vessels with several kinds of cloths to Palembang, as merchandise and as presents to the pangeran and other important royal members. It seems, however, that sometimes the pangeran was dissatisfied with the quality of imported cloth; in 1665 he wrote a letter to Batavia to ask for some good or pretty cloth (“eenige geode off fraeye cledinge”), appropriate to his status to be sent (Daghregister, 1665, pp. 365-366). In 1667, a Dutch vessel shipped some cloths such as 236 packs of various linens (“diverse lynwaten”), sixty-five pieces of patola (“patholen”), two of Chinese satin (“satynen”), two of white damask (“damasten”) and ten of armosin (“armosynen”), together with other articles (Daghregister, 1666-1667, pp. 328). According to Laarhoven, Italy and the Netherlands produced a good damask in the seventeenth century, while China produced a cheaper one, and more of the latter was consumed in Southeast Asia than the former (1994:

24 The value of the cloth was 2,990 rix-dollars (about 2,243 reales) in 1663, 12,274 rix-dollars (9,206 reales) in 1666, and 22,059 rix-dollars (16,544 reales) in 1667 (Daghregister, 1663; 1666-1667).
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Appendix A, pp. 24). The damask brought to Palembang, therefore, could have been Chinese. The designs were various such as “flowers, arabesques, monograms or coats-of-arms, but not geometric” (ibid.: Appendix A, pp. 24). This lustrous fabric looks elegant with elaborate motifs, especially when embroidery is also added. We can see these features on a pair of men’s trousers made in the nineteenth century (see Plate 4.3 in Chapter 4). According to Laarhoven, the armosin, which was named after Ormus on the Persian Gulf, was silk cloth, either plain, or with a multi-coloured striped, chequered, squared or flowered pattern produced in Europe, Bengal, Surat and Lamao Island off the China coast. “Armosin brocade was taffeta with a pattern in relief, or embroidered with gold and silver thread” (Laarhoven, 1994: Appendix A, pp. 4). The brocaded armosin must have been favoured by noblewomen in the Palembang court.

For Palembang, it was important to obtain beautiful cloth, since it was used not only by the pangeran and his family in the kraton, but also by local leaders in the hinterland who provided pepper and other forest products to Palembang. The people there were not subject to the pangeran’s rule, since they were relatively distant from the capital. Because of the relative freedom from the pangeran’s authority, they could access other port cities, whichever offered them better terms. Bronson (1977) has argued that large, organised societies in the mountain valleys, like the Minangkabau, had a choice of port-outlet. Therefore, the pangeran had to attract them by providing them with precious goods from abroad, such as salt, salted fish, cloth and other exotic goods.

Imports of cloths were recorded in VOC documents in this period. The imported cloths were both for uses in Palembang and for re-export to its hinterland. There is,
however, no clear evidence yet for the existence of local songket weaving, although it is quite likely that songket weaving could already have begun in the Palembang court.

3.3.2 The introduction of the sultanate and trade (1666 – 1680)

There was a significant change in the state of Palembang around 1670; the above-mentioned Pangeran Kesumo Abdurrohim became the first Sultan of Palembang, Sultan Abdurrahman²⁵ (r. 1670-1704). The reasons for the introduction of the sultanate remain obscure but Djohan Hanafiah suggests three reasons. Firstly, the Palembang monarch was of Javanese origin, but his forebears had intermarried with local women, and their children and descendants were born in Palembang. In the course of a century, therefore, the people in the Palembang court had gradually lost their sense of being Javanese, and had become more aware of being ‘Palembangers’ or Malays²⁶. Secondly, therefore, Sultan Abdurrahman wanted to demonstrate that Palembang was now of the same status as the Javanese kingdoms, and no longer a Javanese subject. Thirdly, people in the Palembang court might also have been disappointed that the Javanese had not helped them when the Dutch attacked Palembang in 1659²⁷. Ten years after the Dutch attack, they had already recovered from the destruction, and the pepper trade was

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²⁵ In a letter from the ruler of Palembang dated March 1670, the ruler still called himself ‘pangeran’, but he had changed this title to ‘sultan’ in a letter dated March 1671 (Daghregister, 1670-1671, pp. 26, 278). He was also known by the name, Cindai Bawang (or Cindai Balang). After his death, his body is supposed to have been buried in an area which is now called Cinde. It is not clear whether this area is called Cinde because he was buried there, or vice versa. According to Djohan Hanafiah, this area is called Cinde because there was a cemetery there, and people used to wear silk cloth to go there (Bpk Djohan Hanafiah, 2002, personal communication).

²⁶ On the other hand, they still held Javanese culture in high regard and the Javanese language continued to be used in the court.

²⁷ Bpk Djohan Hanafiah, 2002, personal communication.
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growing again *(Daghregister, 1656-1657; 1670-1671; 1672; 1673; 1674; 1675; 1676).*

The *pangeran* might have wished to show his and his state’s power and authority.

According to Djohan Hanafiah, it was presumably also at that time when noble titles were introduced into Palembang from the Javanese aristocracy; below the Sultan and *pangeran*\(^28\), two titles, *raden*\(^29\) and *mas-agus* were established\(^30\). The definition of each title used in Palembang is, however, uncertain now. According to the National Education Service (Dinas Pendidikan Nasional: DPN, 2001: 15) and Van Sevenhoven (1823: 63-64), the title, *raden*, was given to “sons of *pangeran*” (DPN), or in detail, “legitimate sons of a *pangeran* and his wife who was a daughter of a *pangeran*” (Van Sevenhoven), and the title, *mas-agus*, was given to “sons of a *pangeran* and his wife of non-noble origin” (DPN), or “legitimate sons of a *pangeran* or a *raden* and a woman of lower status” (Van Sevenhoven). Djohan Hanafiah, however, has argued that the noble titles were inherited from the father’s line; therefore, for example, a son of a *raden* became a *raden* even if his mother came from the common people\(^31\). In any case, these titles indicated that the title-holders were legitimate members of the royal family who had a blood relationship with the Sultan in the paternal line. According to Van Sevenhoven (1823: 65, 67, 69), below the nobles or *priaij* (*priyayi*) there were also some titles which belonged to a kind of ‘upper-class’ or aristocracy; i.e. officials called

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\(^{28}\) In Java *pangeran* was used as a title of religious leaders, afterwards of noblemen (Pigeaud and de Graaf, 1976: 181). According to Pigeaud and de Graaf, there was the *pangeran* of Lemah Duwur, who ruled West Madura, in the second half of the sixteenth century (ibid.: 28). According to Van Sevenhoven (1823: 64), in Palembang *pangeran* was the title given to legitimate sons of the Sultan or the *Pangeran*, while the Dinas Pendidikan Nasional (DPN, 2001: 15) states that it was the name given to the ruling class.

\(^{29}\) *Raden* is a Javanese word which refers to one of noble titles. For example, the founder of the first major Muslim state in Java, Demak, was Raden Patah, who also ruled Palembang in the mid-sixteenth century (see p. 129).

\(^{30}\) Wives of the sultan were titled *rato*, wives and daughters of *pangeran* and *raden* were *raden ayu*, and those of *mas-agus* were *mas-ayu* (Van Sevenhoven, 1823: 63-64).

\(^{31}\) Bpk Djohan Hanafiah, 2002, personal communication.
mantri and distant relatives of the Sultan called ki-mas and ki-agus\(^\text{32}\) (for women, nyimas and nyayu).

Around 1670 two major changes in trade can also be discerned. Firstly, the Sultan and noble people of Palembang seem to have begun in 1671 to prefer other articles, such as porcelain, iron pans and opium ("amphioen"), to cloth. This trend can be observed in the imports brought by native vessels (Daghregister, 1666-1667; 1668-1669; 1670-1671; 1672; 1673; 1674; 1675; 1676; 1677); the percentage of cloth in the total imports from 1666 to 1670 was 91.1% in average, while that from 1671 to 1677 was only 28.6%. The reason for this change is not clear. It might be that the Palembang nobles, who had become wealthy from the pepper trade, wanted to obtain other exotic and prestige goods. It is also likely that there might have been some changes in Indian textiles. Andaya has suggested that the prices of Indian textiles rose in the late seventeenth century and their quality declined in the early eighteenth century (1989: 38-39), but this phenomenon might already have started in the 1670s. In fact, the VOC exported a huge amount of cloth to Palembang in October 1671, but the assortment was poor, with no cloth decorated with gold thread such as kain gulon and armosin. The cargoes comprised 12,200kg of fine muri ("200 pikul fine mouris"), 29,280kg of parkallen ("480 pikul parcallen"), 9,760kg of blue salem pore ("160 pikul blauwe salempoeris"), 87,840kg of tapi telepocan ("1440 pikul tape talpocans"), 124,440kg of Surat chintz ("2040 pikul Suratse chits"), 76,250kg of red byrams ("1250 pikul rode berams"), and 9,760kg of broad black bafta ("160 pikul swarte brede baftas")

\(^\text{32}\) According to Van Sevenhoven, the title, ki-mas, was given to the son of a man who came from the populace and a mas-ayu wife, and a man with the title, ki-agus, was the son of a mantri (1823: 65). Djohan Hanafiah argues, however, that ki-mas and ki-agus also belonged to the nobility; especially k-mas was the old noble title which had already been used by the pangeran before the introduction of the sultanate (Bpk Djohan Hanafiah, 2005, personal communication).
and other goods worth f 42,753:12:12 altogether (Daghregister, 1670-1671, pp. 441-442). *Muri* and *parkkallen* were cotton cloths which were considered as the most suitable as a base for chintz (Laarhoven, 1994: Appendix A, pp. 44, 47-48), and *byrams* traded by the VOC was an inferior cotton cloth dyed in red or black (Laarhoven, 1994: Appendix A, pp. 10). *Tapi telepocan* was a cotton cloth with a red or black background over which special patterns, possibly circles and crosses, were painted (Stapel, 1931: 739). Laarhoven has suggested that those patterns were embellished with gold leaf (1994: Appendix A, pp. 65-66), but it is unclear whether the *tapi telepocan* in the list had gold leaf embellishment because large *tapi telepocan* exported to Palembang in 1691, twenty years later, was cheaper than the *parkkallen*\(^\text{33}\). The last cloth, *bafta*, was plain white or dyed cotton cloth produced in Gujarat and later on the Coromandel Coast. Laarhoven has suggested that some *bafta* were mixed with silk, and also that *bafta* with the *kepala* adorned with gold were needed between 1650 and 1700; she assumes that this was “gold thread embellishment in the last section before the cut” (ibid.: Appendix A, pp. 5-6), although it is also possible that it was adorned with gilt and not gold thread. According to her, shipping lists usually mention whether or not the *bafta* had the gold *kepala*, and those imported to Palembang were not recorded as having it.

Another change in trade was that Palembang probably started the regular import of gold thread from 1667. According to the *Daghregister*, native (non-Dutch) vessels (“inlandse vaertuygen”) first brought gold thread worth 165 rix-dollars\(^\text{34}\) (123.8 reales) from Batavia to Palembang in 1667 (*Daghregister*, 1666-1667), 65 rix-dollars (48.8 reales) in 1669 (*Daghregister*, 1668-1669), 130 rix-dollars (97.5 reales) in 1671.

\(^{33}\) VOC 1926.

\(^{34}\) One rix-dollar was about 0.75 reale (Vos, 1993: Appendix IV).
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(Daghregister, 1670-1671), 110 rix-dollars (82.5 reales) in 1673 (Daghregister, 1673), and 150 rix-dollars (112.5 reales) in 1674 (Daghregister, 1674). Foil threads ("florete gaeren") were also shipped to Palembang by a VOC vessel: 25 packs in June and 53 straw sacks and one pack in August 1671 (Daghregister, 1670-1671). Palembang, however, lagged behind other places such as Gresik, Japara, Cirebon and Bali, whose import of gold thread had already been recorded in the Daghregister from time to time. It is, indeed, possible that Palembang had also already obtained gold thread regularly via another route before 1667, such as from Siam or China, or by smuggling, but these are not recorded in the Daghregister, since it covered only official shipping from Batavia. In any case, the regular import of gold thread shows firstly the prosperity of Palembang founded on the pepper trade. It is also reasonable to suggest that weaving using gold thread was adopted among noblewomen in Palembang in the late 1660s, possibly because they needed it for their own use, probably because they were no longer satisfied with the quality and style of Indian textiles. Chintz and plain cotton cloth still continued to be imported from India, but the quantity of cloth adorned with gold thread could presumably have been decreasing around that time.

The Dutch needed to impress the Sultan with the high quality of Indian textiles to stabilize the pepper trade. In 1675, the Dutch presented the Sultan with purple and gold moire totalling 687cm ("10 ellenpurper goude moirha"), ten pieces of silk cindai totalling about 210cm ("10 stucx zyde chindos de 5 asta"), three pieces of fine white bafta from Broach ("3 stucx fine witte bafta brootchia"), five pieces of red bafta.

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35 Gold thread was also used for embroidery, but it is uncertain whether or not embroidery was executed in the seventeenth century. Van Sevenhoven later wrote that Palembang women were excellent embroiderers (1823: 79).

36 Ell (pl. ellen): the Amsterdam ell was 0.68781m (Laarhoven, 1994: 257).

37 Asta, or hasta was the length from the tip of the middle finger to the elbow, which is about 42cm (Generale Missiven, vol. 4, pp. 84).
from Broach ("5 stucx roode baftas brootchia"), about 816cm of scarlet muri and six pieces of fine plain muri ("12 ellen root scharlaaken en 6 stucx fine gebleekte moerissen"). The Dutch also presented about 687cm of green and gold moire ("10 ellen groen goude moirha") to the tax collectors (Daghregister, 1675, pp. 136). The moire was "a very stout, watered and heavy silk" produced in Europe probably with flower motifs (Laarhoven, 1994: Appendix A, pp. 43). It is probable that the 'purple and gold moire' or 'green and gold moire' might have been that with the purple or green background adorned with flower motifs of gold thread or gold leaf. The Dutch might have chosen gold, purple, and green on purpose, since they probably recognised that these were considered noble colours in the seventeenth century. In the same year, when a prince and princess of Palembang married, the Dutch Resident gave a wedding gift to the couple, which included ten pieces of silk patola and ten pieces of tapi sarassa with a flower motif ("tape sarassa blomwercq") (Generale Missiven, vol. 4, pp. 84).

From the late 1670s, the character of the textile trade started to change when the Dutch began to regulate it. In 1677, the Dutch prohibited merchants from bringing Indian textiles to Palembang, unless they were purchased from the VOC (Plakaatboek 1, pp. 581). In 1681, the VOC and the Sultan of Palembang revised the trade contract, in which they agreed to a pepper price of three rix-dollars (2.25 reales) a pikul, and to a Dutch monopoly of the cloth trade with Palembang (Daghregister, 1681, pp. 353-356). This new lower price setting perhaps reflected the situation in Europe; the price of pepper dropped, mainly as a result of the oversupply of Dutch pepper (Bulbeck, Reid, Tan and Wu, 1998: 64). In spite of the Dutch expectation of making more profit from

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38 The record says that "10 stux zijde patholen de 40 asta" (10 pieces of silk patola of 40 asta [16.8m]). It is, however, doubtful that each piece was such a length. 4 asta and 5 asta were the usual lengths for patola, therefore, it is more likely that they were 10 pieces of 168cm each (4 asta).
the pepper trade, the situation was becoming unfavourable for them. A result of the lower pepper price was that cultivators in the highlands stopped growing pepper and transferred to cotton (Andaya, 1989: 39); in consequence, the pepper supply from Palembang became unstable.

Andaya has argued that coincidentally, the price of Indian cloth also rose in the late seventeenth century (Andaya, 1989: 38-39). However, Laarhoven’s comparison of the prices of imported textiles between 1652 and 1704 does not indicate such a clear sweeping change. For example, armosin cost £2.71 in 1652 on average, and went up to £11.34 in 1704 (Laarhoven, 1994: Appendix A, pp. 4). Similarly, kain gulung, which had cost £2.27, also rose to £6.38 in 1704. Meanwhile, painted chintz cost £13.95 in 1652, and rose slightly to £14.75 in 1704, but went down to £12.66 in 1724 (Laarhoven, 1994: Appendix A, pp. 18). Committer was £5.56 in 1652 and declined to £3.39 in 1704 (ibid, Appendix A, pp. 22). Bleached muri cost £5.90 in 1652, declined to £4.21 in 1704, but then rose to £6.01 in 1724. It is difficult to make any definitive statement due to some missing prices for several cloths, but it seems that the prices of cloth adorned with gold thread or gold foil rose, while the prices of plain or painted cotton cloths declined. The VOC also put a large margin on some special textiles; for example, they set the price on bleached betille as much as for 230% of the original price in 1696-7.

39 In the Hikayat Banjar, the King of Banjar (South Borneo) warned his followers “Let people nowhere in the country plant pepper, as is done in Jambi and Palembang. Perhaps those countries grow pepper for the sake of money, in order to grow wealthy. But there is no doubt that in the end they will go to ruin. There will be much intrigue and food will become expensive, for the vapours of pepper are hot, and anything else planted will not grow very well” (Ras, 1968: 331).

40 Laarhoven examined the ledgers of textile trade and took an average of five prices of each cloth around 1623, 1652, 1704, 1724, 1734, 1757, 1770 and 1780, although most cloths have some missing years (1994, Appendix A, 1).

41 Committer was a hand painted cotton cloth produced on the Coromandel Coast (Laarhoven, 1994: Appendix A, pp.22).

42 Betille was muslin produced in Surat, Bengal and Coromandel, some cloths of which were embroidered. (Laarhoven, 1994: Appendix A, pp. 8-9).

43 ARA, VOC 1926.
Chapter 3. The Historical Context of Palembang Songket

In Palembang, the quantities of imported Indian textiles decreased at the turn of the eighteenth century; annually about 13,800 pieces on average from 1691 to 1700 and about 9,900 pieces from 1700 to 1710. The variety of the Indian textiles increased in the 1690s, numbering 47 in 1699, but after that gradually decreased to less than 30 in the latter part of the first decade of the eighteenth century, and finally 22 in 1717. The 47 varieties included, apart from usual plain and painted cloths, betille (387 pieces), tapi telepocan (2,332 pieces), gobar mataram (2 pieces), and silk patola (699 pieces)\(^4^4\). According to Laarhoven, some betille had the kepala adorned with gold or silver thread (1994: Appendix A, pp. 9). It might have given the local women some inspiration for weaving their own luxury cloths. Gobar mataram was an expensive type of chintz (ibid.: Appendix A, pp. 31). Betille and silk patola continued to be brought to Palembang until 1717, and tapi telepocan was imported until 1716, while gobar mataram was imported only in 1699 and 1700. Cloths imported from 1690 to 1717 were mostly ordinary plain, striped or painted chintz\(^4^5\). The VOC planned to make large profits by monopolising Indian textile imports, but they were apparently unsuccessful.

The VOC, then, monopolised the Javanese cloth trade with Palembang in 1688 (Plakaatboek 2, pp. 229). According to Andaya, imports of Javanese cloth arriving at Palembang were already substantial in 1683 and continued to increase in the eighteenth century (1989: 40-41). Indian painted and white plain cloths could have been replaced by Javanese cloth, but the Sultan and nobles must have been unhappy with the decreased availability of luxury cloth from India, and the VOC still tried to supply Indian cloth to Palembang. According to VOC records, during 1723 and 1724, Indian

\(^4^4\) ARA, VOC 1926.
\(^4^5\) ARA, VOC 1926.
cloth was still imported from Batavia to Palembang; 22 varieties were listed comprising 12,700 pieces (635 corge), while only 4,600 pieces (230 corge) of Javanese cloth were brought from Batavia and Semarang. However, as the import of cloth itself was declining from 1725, only 2,080 pieces (104 corge) of Javanese cloth and 1,980 pieces (99 corge) of Cambodian, Siantanese and Siamese cloths were brought to Palembang during 1725 and 1726. In the following years, cloth imports continued to stagnate; 1,280 pieces (64 corge) of Javanese cloth, 280 pieces (14 corge) of Indian cloth and 480 pieces (24 corge) of Cambodian cloth during 1726 and 1727, and 1,000 (50 corge) of Javanese cloth and 1,140 (57 corge) of Cambodian, Siantanese and Siamese cloths during 1727 and 1728. These continental cloths might have been adorned with gold thread or other types of exquisite cloth, and they were probably substitutes for luxury Indian cloth. For example the Victoria and Albert Museum in London stores Thai brocade (V&A, IM9-1936). Pre-1936.

Plate 3.2: Textiles of Thai and Cambodia.


ARA, VOC 2013.

Siantan probably signifies the island located between the Malay Peninsula and Borneo.

ARA, VOC 2051.

ARA, VOC 2073; 2193.
brocades and Cambodian silk weft-ikat cloths. One example of the former has a rhomboid pattern woven with gold thread over a red background. The centre-field and warp-end panels are sandwiched by the borders along the selvages with green stripes. The borders along the selvages have some narrow bands, on each of which geometric figures are woven. The warp-end panels have also some strips, and some figures woven on them are decorated with green silk thread (Plate 3.2, A). One example of the latter also has a rhomboid pattern over the centre-field. Some curvy figures are woven on the weft-ends, and animal figures on the warp-ends (Plate 3.2, B). These might not have been the same designs produced in the eighteenth century, but according to Conway, for example, a sarong with flower figures, each of which is enclosed by a rhomboid depicted with straight double lines, is carved on a fourteenth- or fifteenth-century statue in Thailand (1992: 97-99); therefore, it is likely that the rhomboid pattern was woven at that time.

According to Andaya, Palembang’s Indian textile imports declined after the prices of Indian textiles started to rise in the late seventeenth century (1989: 38) and their quality also started to decline in the early eighteenth century (ibid.: 39). By the 1770s the harbourmaster of Palembang was receiving payment in cash only, and not cloth (ibid.: 39). Andaya argued that noblewomen of Palembang were dissatisfied with Javanese painted cloth, which was already imported in large quantities in 1683 (ibid.: 40), and that the decline of the amounts and standard of Indian cloth led court women to weave their own luxurious cloth (ibid.: 41). I would suggest that the quality of Indian textiles could have started to decline around 1670; the lists of Indian cloths brought to Palembang by the VOC after 1670 may suggest this. It is also likely that songket weaving started in the late 1660s using imported gold thread. Noblewomen might have
been inspired by luxury imported textiles to weave their own cloths by themselves. Andaya mentioned that weaving by noblewomen was a traditional activity, since it was considered a female accomplishment. Cloth woven by noblewomen was also considered to have special significance. She cited the Malay legend of the Minangkabau hero, Cindur Mata, who received trousers woven by the daughter of the king of Bengkalis and a cloth woven by a princess of Johor for setting off on his travels. She also mentioned that a gilded silk cloth woven by the wife of the ruler of Jambi was presented to the Dutch Resident in 1640 (ibid.: 41).

3.3.3 The golden age of Palembang (1740 - 1800)

It was fortunate for Palembang that there was a new trade item in the eighteenth century to replace pepper as the primary product; this was tin from the island of Bangka. Exports started to increase around the middle of the 1740s (Vos, 1993: Appendix II). As a result, Palembang started to flourish again during the reign of Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin (r. 1724 - 1756). He built a new kraton, Kuto Lamo, in 1738, and a new mesjid, Mesjid Agung, behind the kraton in 1748. In 1758, a hexagonal tower 30 metres high was added to this mesjid. In 1797 another kraton, Kuto Besak, was completed next to Kuto Lamo by Sultan Muhammad Bahaudin (r. 1774 - 1803). These buildings occupied a large area on the River Musi (see Map 2). Marsden recorded in the late eighteenth century that the palace “being surrounded by a high wall, nothing is known to Europeans of the interior, but it appears to be large, lofty, and much ornamented on the outside” (1811: 361). Court also reports that “the palace of the Sultan [(Sultan)] is a magnificent structure, built of brick and surrounded by a strong
Chapter 3. The Historical Context of Palembang Songket

wall" (1821: 104). Kuto Besak was located in the centre, a ‘harem’ was behind the palace, and some other buildings were scattered in the premises, surrounded by a strong stone wall\(^{50}\) (see Map 3).

How did the Sultan obtain his wealth? Needless to say, the main source of revenue was trade. Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin strictly enforced his official monopoly over pepper and tin, supplying these exports only to the VOC, and he made himself very rich by doing so (Marsden, 1811: 360-361). There was, however, smuggling, and the Sultan himself dealt in tin with private traders, which also served to increase his wealth (Vos, 1993: 27). Besides pepper and tin, Palembang exported products of the interior, such as rattan, beans (kacang), betel nut (pinang) and gold dust (Court, 1821: 106-108).

Marsden noted that the Sultan’s profit from trade was already sufficient without any tax revenues (1811: 360-361). Apart from trade, the Sultan levied a port tax, a duty on imported commodities, land taxes and tribute from the capital and productive areas in the Sultan’s territory\(^{51}\). He gave lands in the capital and productive areas to his favoured nobles to control them. They collected land taxes and tribute on behalf of the Sultan, which were paid mainly in crops, part of which they kept (Van Sevenhoven, 1823: 90; Collins, 1979: 83-85).

According to one historical account of Palembang, the Raja (king) issued an order, possibly in the early 1720s, as follows:

\(^{50}\) KITLV, D17.7.

\(^{51}\) The Sultan’s territory covered almost the same area as the present-day province of South Sumatra and the islands of Bangka and Belitung. It is, however, more likely that the boundaries of his territory were not fixed, since the territory would have shrunk or expanded, depending on the economic and diplomatic ability of the Sultan (Djojan Hanafiah, 2002a [1996]: 37-38). The territory was divided into four types of area: the capital, the kepungutan (fertile area), the sikap (strategic areas, such as the mouth of the river) and the sindang (hinterland). The annual tax was imposed on the people in the first two areas. People in the last two areas had instead to provide certain services for the Sultan, such as building ships and royal buildings, and fighting in a war (Husni Rahim, 1998: 63-65).
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The people of Palembang [...] should start to wear tajung and sarong, according to the order of the Raja of Palembang. Previously people had worn kain panjang (long cloth) in a Javanese way, and now the Raja ordered that women should continue to wear the long cloth and men change to tajung or sarong.52

Sarong is cloth, whose edges are stitched to form a tube, and this is a Malay style of clothing. In contrast to the sarong, the kain panjang is an unstitched flat cloth; when one wears kain panjang, one puts the edges together and tucks them in to fit the body. It is unclear why the Sultan ordered only men to resume wearing tajung and sarong and allowed women to continue wearing the Javanese style. Andaya has argued that the 'tajung' could be translated as 'silk sarong' and suggested that in the first half of the eighteenth century silk weaving was encouraged at the court (1989: 42-43). Does it mean that only men were allowed to wear silk and women continued to wear cotton then? I would rather suggest that the Sultan started to notice the importance of local cloth and culture. During his reign it is very likely that Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin supported songket weaving using his own revenues in order to develop an elaborate and sophisticated court culture appropriate to his wealth and status.

It seems, however, that cloth imports mainly from Java recovered at the end of the 1750s, despite attempts to encourage local cloth. During the years 1758 and 1759,

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52 "[...] orang di negeri Palembang [...] bersalinlah kain memake tadjoeng dan saroeng menoeroet perinto radja dari Palembang sabab doeloenja orang memake kain tja ra ta na djawa semoenya berkain pandjang baroe inilah di atoer ole radja djika orang perempoean masi tetap berkain pandjang dan laki' beroebah kain tadjoeng atau saroeng [...]" (UBL, Or. 7653a, fol. 110-111). According to the account, this order was issued by Sultan Anam, the successor of Sultan Agung, soon after he came to the throne. It is now locally recognised, however, that Sultan Agung was succeeded by Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin around 1724 (see Appendix E). Sultan Anam was possibly the person also known as Depati Anom (or Anum), elder brother of Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin. Depati Anom challenged his uncle, Sultan Agung, for the throne, and a few local accounts record that he became the Sultan before the reign of Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin (see Heidhues, 1992: 4-6; Vos, 1993: 16-18).
more than 44,550 pieces (2,227.5 corge and 395 bundels\textsuperscript{53}) of several kinds of Javanese cloth were imported, while only 5,800 pieces (290 corge) of Indian cloth and 5,680 pieces (284 corge) of continental Southeast Asian cloth were brought to Palembang\textsuperscript{54}. Javanese cloths such as batik, white cloth and dodot were the main imports of Palembang until 1763, but from 1764 to 1768, the import of Indian cloths temporarily prospered. They were mainly shipped from Batavia; for example, 22 varieties of Indian cloths for 6,680 pieces (334 corge), including 1,800 pieces (90 corge) of cotton patola and 460 pieces (23 corge) of silk patola, 1,130 pieces (56.5 corge) of chintz, and 900 pieces (45 corge) of salempore, were supplied to Palembang during 1764 and 1765\textsuperscript{55}. According to Guy, the cotton patola probably consisted of block-printed imitations, which were also produced in India (1996: 91). Imports decreased to a total of 3,970 pieces (198.5 corge) with 17 varieties, such as 1,080 pieces (54 corge) of sembagi, 880 pieces (44 corge) of chintz and 640 pieces (32 corge) of karikam\textsuperscript{56} during 1766 and 1767, but recovered to 7,430 pieces (371.5 corge) with 24 varieties, such as 1,880 pieces (94 corge) of chintz, 1,140 pieces (57 corge) of sembagi and 1,480 pieces (74 corge) of muri (1,080 pieces of black and 400 pieces of white) during 1767 and 1768\textsuperscript{57}; the majority of imports were painted cloth like chintz and plain cloths with single colour. Meanwhile, some luxury cloth, such as 10 pikul of silk patola and 520 pieces (26 corges) of white and 100 pieces (5 corge) of black hamman, and 80 pieces (4 corges) of armosin, were also included in the lists of imports. According to Laarhoven, the hamman was a cotton cloth with strong and thick weave, some of which had stripes

\textsuperscript{53} It is uncertain how many pieces one bundel contains.

\textsuperscript{54} ARA, VOC 2965.

\textsuperscript{55} ARA, VOC 3151.

\textsuperscript{56} Karikam was chintz in white, red or blue background (Laarhoven, 1994: Appendix A, pp. 38-39).

\textsuperscript{57} ARA, VOC 3211; 3244.
using gold weft thread in the kepala; the price was £5.53 in 1652, and went up to £8.23 in 1704, and then to £16.69 in 1734 (1994: Appendix A, pp. 34-35). The kepala with gold stripes might have been a similar design to songket with a tumpal of the intan design (see Plate 2.41 in Chapter 2). Hamman was apparently so popular in Palembang that 2,000 pieces were ordered in 1770 (Laarhoven, 1994: Appendix A, pp. 34-35), and it might have influenced the design of Palembang songket.

From the end of the 1760s onwards, however, only a small amount of Indian cloth was imported to Palembang. The main reason for the decline was that the prices set by the VOC were extremely high. A letter from Palembang to Batavia dated 23 April 1768 points out that a parcel of the ordinary type of bleached Guinea cloth made in Coromandel and another of Bengal cloth were returned to Batavia, the writer complaining that these two cloths, particularly the former, were very expensive for the local people, and there were requests to send cheaper cloths, even though they would be coarser. It was also a result of the fact that Indian cotton manufacture was declining, since cheap British cotton cloth was increasingly being brought to India (Hunter, 1892: 702).

It was at about the same time that the import of gold thread to Palembang became conspicuous. 17,080kg (140 thong) of gold thread were brought to Palembang in the period 1757 and 1758, while only about 183kg (3 kists) had been

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58 ARA, VOC 3273; 3333; 3385; 3413; 3442; 3494; 3525; 3581.
59 Guinea cloth was striped, chequered or plain white durable cotton cloth (Laarhoven, 1994: Appendix A, pp. 32-34).
60 ARA, VOC 3244, vol. 2 fol. 3.
61 I would like to acknowledge gratefully the help of Professor Tsuneyuki Suzuki and Professor Barbara W. Andaya on giving me information about this series of data.
62 1 thong (or thon) corresponds to 2 pikul or 244 ~ 250 Dutch pounds or approx. 122kg (Knaap, 1996: 192-193; Vos, 1993: Appendix IV).
63 1 kist of gold thread equates to 1 pikul (about 61kg) (Knaap, 1996: 191-192).
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imported during 1722 and 1723. During 1758 and 1759, imports increased to 38,613kg (315 thong and 3 kassen); 9,760kg from Cancauw; 26,840kg from Terengganu, 1,830kg from Cambodia and 183kg from Malacca. From 1773 to 1778, a considerable amount of gold thread continued to be brought to Palembang every year, mainly from Terengganu and Indragiri (Table 3.1). The gold thread was probably used for luxury cloth for the noble people, who were no longer able to obtain Indian cloth. The gold thread must also have been expensive, but it was imported in huge amounts. This might suggest that high price was not the only problem with Indian cloth, and that there was also dissatisfaction with the quality and design.

Table 3.1: Palembang's gold thread imports 1773-1778, 1779-1780 (kg)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Terengganu</th>
<th>Cambodia</th>
<th>Siantan</th>
<th>Indragiri</th>
<th>Riaw</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1773-74</td>
<td>1,220</td>
<td>976</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3,660</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9,028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1774-75</td>
<td>1,952</td>
<td>732</td>
<td>976</td>
<td>6,588</td>
<td>610</td>
<td>7,564</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1775-76</td>
<td>1,098</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>610</td>
<td>2,196</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4,148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1776-77</td>
<td>1,952</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1,830</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3,050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1777-78</td>
<td>1,220</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2,318</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3,904</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1779-80</td>
<td>1,586</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1,220</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total 28,914

(Sources: ARA, VOC 3413; 3442; 3494; 3525; 3581)

Was all the gold thread really consumed in Palembang? An important fact is that gold thread was also shipped from Palembang (see Table 3.2). The ships loaded with gold thread usually arrived at Palembang from December to April, sometimes in June and July, from Terengganu, Siantan, Cambodia, and Indragiri. This seasonal concentration was, of course, because of the pattern of monsoon winds. Meanwhile ships loading gold thread left Palembang between February and April. The destinations

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64 ARA, VOC 2013; 2934.
65 1 kas of gold thread is equivalent to 1 kist or 1 pikul (Knaap, 1996: 191).
66 It is probably present Ha Tiên, Vietnam, the town on the Gulf of Thailand, near the border with Cambodia. According to Andaya (1993: 123), Ha Tiên was also known as Kiang K'ou or Pantai Mas (Gold Coast), which "developed into a rendezvous for the junk trade from China, Formosa, Macao, Vietnam, and Siam". I would like to acknowledge Professor Suzuki's help in identifying the place.
67 ARA, VOC 2965.
were various in the 1760s; to Gresik, Bangka, Jambi, Riau and Indragiri, and also to Malacca. In the 1770s, however, the range of destinations narrowed, being confined mainly to Java, particularly Semarang, Ceribon, Gresik and Surabaya. Palembang was in a sense a collecting point for the gold thread trade.

The point at issue is whether the gold thread, which was recorded as Palembang’s import, was partially reshipped to the destinations mentioned above. Examining the record of 1774 and 1775 in Table 3.2, 7,564kg of gold thread were imported to Palembang between December and June, while 1,830kg were shipped from Palembang...
from January to March and in October; the difference was 5,734 kg. Similarly, during
the following period 1775-1776, 8,052 kg were imported to Palembang from December
to April, while 3,538 kg were shipped to Java from February to April; the difference was
4,515 kg. Clearly, imports were partially reshipped elsewhere, but a considerable
amount of gold thread was used in Palembang after the mid-eighteenth century.

Raw silk was also sometimes brought to Palembang. 305 kg (10 bunkus\textsuperscript{68}) of
Chinese silk and 457.5 kg (15 bunkus) of silk in 1757-1758\textsuperscript{69}, 244 kg (4 pikul) of raw silk
in 1760-1761\textsuperscript{70}, and 793 kg (26 baaZ\textsuperscript{71}) in 1762-1763\textsuperscript{72} were imported to Palembang.

The word ‘songket’ is hardly found in the sultanate period records on
Palembang; neither in local records nor in Dutch records. However, with regard to
Aceh, for example, the \textit{Hikayat Aceh}, a seventeenth-century account, mentions a word
‘sungkit’, describing, “kain sungkit decorated with gold foil, and kain sungkit with
bamboo-shoot motifs”\textsuperscript{73}. At the end of the eighteenth century, a Palembang court
document describes noblemen’s clothing, including silk cloth coloured and adorned
with red, orange, green and gold\textsuperscript{74}, but it does not explicitly refer to songket, since there
is a possibility that gold adornment on cloth could have referred to motifs made with
gold leaf. In the \textit{Syair Bidadari}, whose date is unknown, there is a repeated phrase
“berkain songket tekat celari (to wear a sarong of songket, a silk cloth adorned with
motifs using gold thread)\textsuperscript{75}”.

According to Millie (2004: 3), some scholars suggest that

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{68} 1 bunkus is equivalent to 1 bundel, which is 0.5 pikul, approximately 30.5 kg (Knaap, 1996: 190, 192).
\textsuperscript{69} ARA, VOC2934.
\textsuperscript{70} ARA, VOC3024.
\textsuperscript{71} 1 baaZ of silk is equivalent to 1 bundel (Knaap, 1996: 190).
\textsuperscript{72} ARA, VOC3089.
\textsuperscript{73} “[. . . ] kain sungkit yang betelapuk mas, dan kain sungkit yang berpucuk rebung” (Iskandar, 1958: 105).
\textsuperscript{74} UBL Berg Collectie 146; Andaya 1989: 43.
\textsuperscript{75} Millie translates this phrase “His \textit{kain} was embroidered with gold” (2004: 159), “A \textit{kain} of silk, 
embroidered with gold” (ibid.: 125), and “they wore fabrics woven with gold” (ibid.: 209).
\end{footnotesize}
this *syair* originated from Palembang for lexical reasons, although this suggestion cannot be corroborated (see also Liaw, 1982: 296).

Considering the fact that such a huge amount of gold thread was imported in the mid-eighteenth century and that songket was to become famous outside Palembang by the early nineteenth century, it is likely that songket, which possibly had started to be produced in Palembang around 1670, was developed to a certain level in Palembang by the mid-eighteenth century. The question arises as to why songket was not registered in the lists of exports of Palembang. The Dutch probably paid more attention to exotic goods from the forest for trade than to locally woven sophisticated cloth at that time. It may well be that songket was woven at the harem in the *kraton*76, which the Europeans were never able to enter before the beginning of the nineteenth century (Marsden, 1811: 361). Songket was possibly worn only by noblewomen, who rarely went out of the *kraton*, following the local custom that women should stay at home unless there were formal events or businesses outside (*Kota Palembang*, 1956: 141); therefore, the Dutch might have been unaware of songket before the nineteenth century.

Local rulers in other places sometimes gave local textiles to Dutch officers; for example, the ruler of Jambi presented a gilded silk cloth ("een side vergult cleet") woven by his wife to the Dutch Resident in 1640 (*Daghregister*, 1640-1641, pp. 110; Andaya, 1989: 41). In 1819, the Sultan of Yogyakarta sent to the then Dutch King, William I, a complete royal outfit, including "a velvet waistcloth embroidered with gold thread and lined with *cinde* cloth" (Wassing-Visser, 1995: 60). However, songket was

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76 According to De Clercq and Djohan Hanafiah, during the sultanate period, craftsmen of the same kind lived in the same village, forming a village of mat-makers, blacksmiths, or coppersmiths and so on. Old village names often indicate what kind of craftwork was conducted in the village (De Clercq, 1877: 174-5; Djohan Hanafiah, 1989: 83; 2002c: 16). Although a considerable number of weavers might already have engaged in songket weaving, a village name associated with songket weaving did not exist. Special articles used only in the court were probably produced in the *kraton*. 

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not included in the lists of presents from the Sultan of Palembang to the Dutch Governor-General. They consisted of pepper, tin, wax, gambier, elephant tusks, rattan mats and so on, but songket was not in the lists in the eighteenth century. It is likely that the local nobles viewed songket as so significant and precious for them that they were unwilling to allow it to be taken from the kraton at that time. It was only after 1823 that the Dutch started to record songket and songket weaving.

According to Akib, during the sultanate period, cloths adorned with gold were the privilege of the nobility; songket in particular was worn only by married noblewomen when attending adat ceremonies and performing dances at the court for important guests (1975a: 65-66). He also argued that noblemen had never worn songket before 1821 (ibid.); the flowery motifs of Palembang songket would suggest that songket was cloth for women (Saragih, 1995: 35). Noblemen might not have worn a sarong fully decorated with flowery motifs, but they might have worn trousers, a short sarong or a jacket on which checks or small motifs were interwoven using a songket technique.

According to Akib, the status system was strictly observed in the life of the upper class during the sultanate.

Plate 3.3: Rumah limas. The traditional Palembang house (28 Ilir, Palembang).

77 See, for example, VOC records in 1736 (ARA, VOC 2345, fol.110), in 1752 (VOC 2780, fol.71) and in 1754 (VOC 2818, fols.65-66).

78 The tradition that unmarried women were not able to wear songket was apparently practised until the Second World War (Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo, Bpk Usman Agus, 2002, interview).
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period. At ceremonies conducted in rumah limas, the Palembang traditional house for wealthy people (Plate 3.3)\(^79\), the seating arrangement was decided according to social rank. The stilt house, which was generally long from the front to the back, had tiers (traditionally five) called kekijing, starting low in the front section, and rising like steps towards the centre (Siregar and Abu, 1985: 15-17). When ceremonies took place, distinguished people, such as men of higher rank or elderly men, sat on the upper tier in the centre, and people of lower rank sat on the lower tier near the entrance. For example, if there were a man titled raden and one titled mas-agus, the former would have had his seat on the highest tier and the latter would sit on the lower tier.

Similar strict regulations must have existed for clothing. According to Akib, women who bore the title rato wore songket lepus, cloth fully adorned with gold thread, and those titled raden ayu wore cloth with less gold (1975a: 72-75). Such regulations related to clothing were strictly observed before the abolition of the sultanate, and some of them were practised until the Second World War\(^80\). It was probably easier to keep such local customs and culture during the sultanate period when Palembang people were forbidden to marry people from outside the region\(^81\). Subsequently these customs were to be dispensed with, especially after the Second World War.

\(^79\) This house was also described by Court as follows; “[the houses] have tiled roofs, supported by strong pillars of timber, and are divided into rooms by wooden divisions of plank” (1821: 104).

\(^80\) Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo, 2002, interview.

\(^81\) The Piagam Sukabumi (Sukabumi Charter) issued by Sultan Ahmad Najamuddin (r.1756-1774) in 1764 says “people of the countryside are not allowed to get married to Palembang people, and one who violates this will be punished (tidak boleh orang desa bersuami-istri dengan orang Palembang, jika dilanggarnya ia akan dihukum)” (Machi Suhadi, 1990: 274).
3.3.4 Foreign influences on Palembang songket

Various foreign cultures were brought to Palembang through time. Hindu-Buddhism was introduced during the Sriwijayan period, and then Islam in the sixteenth century. Traders brought their exotic products to Palembang from China, India, the Middle East and the eastern part of the archipelago. During the sultanate period, a great range of textile imports, from India in particular, was recorded by the VOC. The Sultan’s wealth and that of his retainers could support the acquisition of imported clothes, and expensive materials for cloths such as gold thread and silk. This was possibly also the era when songket weaving started to develop in Palembang, absorbing the influence of foreign textiles and cultures brought in through international trade. What kind of external influences can be recognised in Palembang songket? In this section I shall consider these elements in Palembang songket (in the materials, motifs and structural arrangements) which are traceable to foreign sources.

According to VOC records, gold thread was transported to Palembang from several places including Terengganu and Indragiri (see Table 3.2). The original sources of the thread are uncertain, but it is likely that they were China, Siam or India. Evidence for the local production of gold thread in Palembang has not yet been found. Again, silk thread was probably originally introduced from China, but the influence of Indian silk might also have been considerable, since the Sanskrit word for silk, *sutra*, is used in the archipelago.

How did foreign textiles influence Palembang songket? The textiles imported to Palembang by the VOC during the sultanate period can be classified roughly into three categories. The first consists of plain woven cloth, such as *muri*, Guinea cloth,
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salempore, parkkallen and byram, some of which also had simple patterns, such as stripes or checks. The plain cloth was possibly used for making chintz in Palembang. The second category consists of painted or printed cloths, i.e. chintz, also called sembagi (semagi) or sarassa. Floral motifs, stylised trees, tendrils and birds are supposed to have been painted or block-printed on these cloths, and gold leaf was applied on some of them, which added to their expense. Some motifs might have influenced those of Palembang songket despite the fact they are found on different types of cloth. The last category includes elaborate luxury cloths with sophisticated motifs, such as patola, kain gulung, armosin, moire, betille, hamman and damask. Some kain gulung, armosin, moire, betille and hamman were adorned with gold thread or gold leaf, and these cloths might have inspired the noblewomen of Palembang to make their own luxury cloth using gold thread. What did these Indian cloths adorned with gold look like? How did the designs, patterns and colours of the cloths influence Palembang songket?

The problem here is that we do not have much information about the designs of many of these cloths, since the Dutch did not record them in detail. In addition, VOC traders often called textiles by names taken from their place of origin or the market place rather than from their materials or designs, and this makes it difficult to identify them. What we can do is to refer to Indian gold brocade produced in later periods, examples of which survive in museums, and infer from them the designs of the cloths imported into Palembang by the VOC.

The Victoria & Albert Museum has a large number of Indian textiles including patola, chintz and brocade or kincob (or kikhhab) produced in the mid-nineteenth century. Kain gulung, the cloth produced in Pulicat or Thanjavur in Tamilnadu, had the
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_kepala_ adorned with gold thread (Laarhoven, 1994: Appendix A, pp. 36; Guy, 1998: 187), and _betille_, which was produced in Surat, Bengal and Coromandel, also sometimes had the gold _kepala_ (Laarhoven, 1994: Appendix A, pp. 9), but I did not find cloth of this kind during my research. _Armosin_, cloth produced in Bengal and Surat (Gujarat), had a variety of patterns, such as plain, multi-coloured stripes, checks, squares and flowers (Laarhoven, 1994: Appendix A, pp. 4). According to Laarhoven, _armosin_ brocade was “taffeta with a pattern in relief, or embroidered with gold and silver thread” (ibid.), but it is unclear again what kinds of patterns are depicted on the _armosin_ brocade. However, some cloths produced in Gujarat have a plain design, or stripes or a chequered pattern, with the warp-ends adorned with some patterns using gold thread (Plate 3.4, A). Ahmedabad in Gujarat produced some patterns which resemble the _berantai_ pattern of Palembang songket (Plate 3.4, B). The wavy pattern woven in the section next to the centre-field and the narrow strips of chevrons sandwiching broader bands into which flowers and leaves are woven are also similar to the composition of Palembang songket. Nevertheless, there are also many designs
which are different from those of Palembang songket, for example, large figures such as trees and birds woven over the cloth.

It needs to be emphasised that local responses to Indian textiles varied from area to area in the archipelago. For example, Indian printed and painted textiles with narrative designs depicting processions and hunting scenes, or scenes from epics and legends, were exported to the archipelago. These designs proved popular in Bali and are still found on Balinese songket, but they never appear on Palembang songket. As another example, \textit{palampore}, one of the Indian painted cloths, in the centre of which was depicted a large asymmetrical tree with flowers, often associated with birds or animals, might have inspired certain designs with a stylised tree woven on \textit{tampan}, a cloth produced in Lampung (Maxwell, 1991: 111). In the archipelago, the tree-design was acknowledged as a ‘tree of life’, which had “an equally fitting image of the Hindu-Buddhist wishing tree and of Islamic Paradise”, and was favoured for hanging at important rituals because of its symbolic meaning and impressive composition (Maxwell, 1991: 110; 2003: 143). However, again it was not adopted in Palembang. Similarly, \textit{patola} pieces with a design of four large elephants filling the entire length of the cloth were found in the eastern part of the archipelago, such as in Flores and Timor, and in south Sumatra, where they were used as banners or hangings (Crill, 1998: 53). According to Crill, the large hangings called \textit{palepai} or ship cloths which were produced in Lampung share not the designs but the scale and layout of \textit{patola} (ibid.: 53, 57). Yet, with regard to the layout of the field of cloth in Palembang songket, one never finds a design in which one large motif occupies the centre-field or expands from one weft-end to the other. This might have been because songket was used mainly for \textit{selendang} and \textit{sarong}. Interestingly a design with a large stem of flowers has been
found on a *sarong* of Minangkabau songket, although Anne Summerfield suggests that this floral figure might have been copied from European pattern books rather than directly from an Indian source (1999: 118).

Palembang songket has repetitive patterns of small or medium-sized figures, which can be found on many Indian *patola*. As Crill explains, the *patola* design of huge elephants was rare, and the majority were composed of a grid or trellis pattern (1998: 53). According to Bühler, there are three popular types of Indian-derived designs imported into the archipelago; one is the jlamprang motif (a Javanese word which means ‘eight-pointed star’; see Plate 3.1), which has a series of circles in which flowers and other motifs are depicted; another is a design with several groups of four lozenges, each of which is filled with a star; and the third has quadrangles depicted with small leaf-like figures, in each of which a lion or an elephant is woven (1959: 13-14). Bühler has suggested that *patola* designs had often been imitated in batik and other textiles in the Malay archipelago, probably because people had wanted to obtain magical or supernatural powers which they believed the cloth contained (ibid.: 10). Such repetitive motifs are also found on *kain sembagi*, on which Palembang artisans often applied gold leaf, as well as some brocade. Some of the motifs of *patola*, *kain sembagi* and brocade are shared with those of Palembang songket. For example, the *berantai-* and *nampan perak-*patterns, a flower- or star-figure enclosed by a square or rhomboid repeatedly woven over the centre-field, are similar to the trellis, rhomboid and quadrangle designs in *patola*. Bands of patterns on ends of a cloth, and rows of triangles on the warp-ends, which can be found on these Indian cloths, are also found on Palembang songket.
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Apart from examining designs on real cloths, some motifs on old imported Indian cloths can be inferred from those carved on statues of Hindu deities or Buddhist images found in Indonesia. These statues were probably produced locally, and appropriate motifs were carved on their cloths, possibly chosen from Indian textiles. For example, in Plate 3.5, floral motifs are arranged over the *sarong* or trousers of a Ganesa figure sculpted in the eighth or ninth century. On the *sarong* of a Tantrayana Buddhist figure, Sudhanakumara, the rhomboid design is curved. These motifs resemble the songket patterns of *bungo tabur* and *berantai* respectively (see Plates 2.34 and 2.28 in Chapter 2). Other motifs can also be found on a Hindu statue recovered from the Palembang area (see Plate 6.5 in Chapter 6); rhomboid figures decorated with curvy lines inside are arranged on its jacket, resembling the *nampan perak* pattern (see Plate 2.24 in Chapter 2), and small figures, each of which is composed of four small diamonds arranged like a four-petal flower, are scattered on its *sarong*; this corresponds to the *bungo tabur* design.

It is, however, difficult to be certain about the proposition that there was a one-way influence from Indian cloths to Indonesian textiles. The VOC and EIC
traders tried to produce Indian textiles following the preferences of the people in the archipelago, to obtain advantage in the spice trade. Bühler has suggested that certain designs, which were often found on *patola*, including the lozenge patterns and the bamboo-shoot figure, are of 'Malayo-Polynesian' origin, since they appear frequently and widely in Southeast Asia and in ancient cultural motifs (1959: 12). Crill also points out that the *patola* design with large elephants was unusual for both domestic use in India and for export to the archipelago, and suggests that textiles of the archipelago influenced *patola* designs, rather than the reverse (1998: 57). On the other hand, it is also the case that the people of the Malay archipelago had already been influenced by Indian religions and had a cultural base for appreciating the symbolic systems of Hinduism and Buddhism, including *naga* motifs and the circular floral motif which, according to Maxwell, might be connected with the lotus, the *cakra* (the weapon of *Wishnu*) or the *mandala* motifs (Maxwell, 1990: 205). Maxwell also argues that the *mandala* has been transformed into a special motif in Sumatra, where “pokerwork, shimmering silk and mirrors, and thick layers of bead are divided into segmented multilevel squares or burst into compass roses” (2003: 28). Palembang songket is rarely adorned with mirrors and beads, but the multilevel squares appear on a design of *tanjak* (see Plate 2.12, *Tanjak B* in Chapter 2), although it is uncertain whether or not this composition really symbolises the *mandala*.

Local people themselves recognise some foreign influences. For example, the local *naga* motif allegedly shows a Chinese influence. In fact, the *naga* woven on Palembang songket does indeed look like a dragon, rather than a Hindu-derived serpent. According to local people, it is also a result of Chinese influence that the popular colour of Palembang songket is red. It is likely that Palembang songket carries this Chinese
influence, since the Palembang court had some Chinese connections; for example Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin married a Chinese woman.

Palembang songket has absorbed various elements from different cultures, but it probably evolved from a combination of local materials, techniques and designs with a range of external influences, as Kerlogue has argued was the case in Jambi (2005: 132). It is therefore also necessary to consider local elements embodied in Palembang songket. It cannot be discounted that some motif elements of Palembang songket are derived from an ancient Austronesian cultural base, although modified and embellished by later foreign influences from India, the Middle East and China, and more recently from Europe. Further comparative research might help reveal the nature and direction of these influences.

### 3.3.5 Last years of the sultanate

In 1803, Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin II (r. 1803-1812, 1813, 1818-1819) came to the throne. He was named after his great-grandfather, Mahmud Badaruddin, who had presided over Palembang at the zenith of its power and wealth in the eighteenth century. His naming gave expression to the wish of the people who were longing for such prosperity again. Contrary to the people’s hopes, this Sultan’s reign was to be full of vicissitudes.

According to local documents, Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin II had an imposing presence and was very courageous. He encouraged cultural and educational developments, and his library boasted many valuable collections (Akib, 1973: 21). The songket culture probably also flourished in the kraton during his reign. Noblewomen
may have engaged in weaving songket in the 'harem' in the *kraton* and performed traditional dances, dressed in songket costume. Alternatively, a group of professional songket weavers might have been formed as the demand for songket increased in the *kraton*. Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin II also planned to break off his relationship with the Dutch. When Thomas Stamford Raffles, who wanted to drive the Dutch away from Palembang, made contact with the Sultan, suggesting that Britain would promise Palembang's independence, he was drawn into this plan, though he was unaware of the consequences of this for his reign. In 1811, the Sultan's forces attacked the Dutch garrison and killed most of the Dutch people there\(^82\). In 1812, the British attacked Palembang, which had enacted the brutality. They then occupied the settlement and raised the Sultan's younger brother, Ahmad Najamuddin II (1812-1813, 1813-1818) to the throne, in place of Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin II, who had fled to the hinterland\(^83\).

In the London Convention of 1814, the Dutch and British agreed to restore various of their colonial possessions to the status quo in 1803. Following this agreement, the Dutch returned to Palembang in 1816\(^84\). After this Convention, relations between the British, who did not want to give up Palembang, and the Dutch became strained. The Palembang court was also split into two groups, under Mahmud Badaruddin II, who was restored to the throne again in 1818 by the Dutch, and Ahmad Najamuddin II, who was supported by the British. In reality, however, the Dutch wanted to control the pepper and tin trade themselves and, above all, they no longer trusted the Sultan after the massacre of the Dutch garrison in 1811 (Djohan Hanafiah,

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\(^82\) For details of the massacre, see J. C. Baud (1853); J. Bastin (1953) and (1954).

\(^83\) Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin II was then restored to the throne by a British officer in 1813, but was soon deposed again, since it was not the intention of the authorities that he should reign. This led to a conflict between the two sultans, Mahmud Badaruddin II and Ahmad Najamuddin II.

\(^84\) The Dutch had to give up their territory in India instead.
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2002b [1986]: 95-97). Renewed hostilities between the Dutch and Palembang surfaced in 1819\(^{85}\). The military forces of Palembang were more tenacious than the Dutch had expected. The former Sultan, Ahmad Najamuddin II and his son, Prabu Anom, took the Dutch side, on the understanding that the father would become the susuhunan (lit. the ruler) and the son would accede to the position of Sultan after the Dutch defeated Mahmud Badaruddin’s force. In July 1821, Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin II and all his family were finally arrested and sent to Batavia, then to Ternate, where he eventually died in 1852. Subsequently Prabu Anom succeeded him with the title Sultan Ahmad Najamuddin IV (see Chapter 4).

Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin II must have invested large sums of money in these conflicts. According to Djohan Hanafiah, the Sultan first strengthened his defences at the lower reaches of the River Musi; he built a fortress of about 1,000 metres long from one side of the river to the other, and some small fortifications on islands in the river, and put three chains of snags in the river (2002b [1986]: 101-103). It is probable that Palembang experienced some impoverishment due to the costs of defence and the conflicts with the Dutch. In fact, Van Sevenhoven wrote that most priaij lived in a degree of poverty, although it is unclear whether he was comparing their lives with European standards or whether they were poor in absolute terms (1823: 84). On the other hand, it seems that there were some local nobles who lived in good housing in large compounds and had hundreds of followers, even after the abolition of the sultanate (De Kock, 1846: 288). There was, therefore, clearly a disparity in wealth between the nobles who were favoured by the Sultan and those who were not. During

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\(^{85}\) In the same year, Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin II abdicated in favour of his son, Sultan Ahmad Najamuddin III (r. 1819-1821), although he continued as the power behind the throne.
the last years of the sultanate, those out of favour probably became poorer, and they had to find a way to support themselves.

In the early 1820s, songket started to be recorded in European records. Van Sevenhoven wrote that “the best silk cloth interwoven with gold thread was made in Palembang and was sent everywhere”\(^\text{86}\), and this is probably the earliest record which explicitly described Palembang songket. W. L. de Sturler, who stayed in Palembang from 1821 until 1824, wrote that “sarongs, head-cloths and handkerchiefs were interwoven with gold, and the durability, material, and colour of this cloth were supreme”\(^\text{87}\). According to a Dutch trade record, gold thread probably totalling about 4,000kg or more was brought to Palembang from Bangka, Malacca, Thailand, Singapore, Lingga and China in 1822\(^\text{88}\), and that suggests songket weaving and other handicrafts using gold thread prospered in the early nineteenth century.

It seems, however, songket was no longer a cloth exclusive to nobles of Palembang; it started to be commoditised. According to Van Sevenhoven, songket cost $44 in Palembang in 1823 (1823: 126). This price was high compared to the price of other goods; simple silk cloth cost $20; three gantang (about 9.4kg) of rice was $1; and a large buffalo was $26 (Van Sevenhoven, 1823: 117-122). Songket was also exported to other places; Van Sevenhoven reported that it was sent everywhere (1823: 79). In fact, John Anderson, in his mission report of 1823 for the EIC, remarked that rich gold

\(^{86}\) “De beste zijden en met goud draad doorweefde kleedjes worden alhier gemaakt en overal verzonden” (Van Sevenhoven, 1823: 79).

\(^{87}\) “[...] met goud doorwerkte sarongs [...] en de hoofd- of zakdoeken geweven worden, waarvan duurzaamheid en van stof en van kleur met elkander wedijveren” (De Sturler, 1843: 153).

\(^{88}\) ARA, Ministerie van Kolonien 3075. The original document counts one kist, 64 kistjes, 11 dostjes and 25 pakkis. A kist was equivalent to 1 pikul or about 61kg (Knaap, 1996: 191), and a kistje (small kist) was presumably at least a half kist. One pak of Bengal silk was about 1.2 pikul, while the same volume of opium was probably equal to 1 kist (Knaap, 1996: 192); therefore, it could be inferred that one pak of gold thread was more than 1.2 pikul (about 67kg). The weight of a dostje (small doos) is not certain; I assume it could have been the same as a kistje.
wrought cloths were imported from Palembang to the north-east coast of Sumatra (1971 [1826]: 206). De Kock later reported that impoverished low-ranking nobles started to become involved in traditional handicraft production to make their living (1846: 296); songket weaving probably started to change its nature from an accomplishment of noblewomen in the court to a means of livelihood for impoverished low-ranking noblewomen, possibly nyimas and nyayu, in the early nineteenth century. This is confirmed by the fact that 30 Ilir, the present centre of the songket industry, was the location of one of the concentrations of nobles after the abolition of the sultanate; there are still many women with the titles nyimas and nyayu, some of whom are weaving songket or managing a songket shop there.

3.4 Conclusion

Palembang, located at a strategic point on the major Asian maritime trade route, developed early as a port town. Exotic products were brought there, including cloth. After Palembang became prosperous from the pepper trade, large quantities of cloths were imported, mainly from India. The more exotic cloths attracted the local nobles of Palembang with their elaborate designs and beautiful colours. The Dutch studied the local people’s preference in order to provide cloths which the nobles would prefer. Cloths adorned with gold thread, in particular, must have influenced the local nobles’ clothing culture. Gold thread probably started to be regularly imported to Palembang in the late 1660s. When the quality of imported Indian cloths started to decline in the 1670s, noblewomen must have started to weave songket using the imported gold thread.
Chapter 3. The Historical Context of Palembang Songket

Songket weaving was developed, absorbing foreign cultural influences in the course of time, although it is difficult to state exactly how imported textiles influenced the designs of Palembang songket. Songket weaving finally became a central focus of handicrafts practised by noblewomen who lived inside the kraton. This richly adorned cloth must have embellished Palembang court culture during the sultanate period. The regulation of wearing songket seems to have been strict; the design and colour which a noblewoman could wear was regulated according to her social status.

After Palembang was defeated by the Dutch, songket weaving appears to have dispersed together with noblewomen who were driven out of the kraton. References to songket weaving started to appear in European accounts in the 1820s and subsequently it became one of the major handicraft industries in Palembang. Let us now consider its fortunes and vicissitudes during the Dutch colonial period.
Chapter 4

Songket during the Colonial Period

According to European records, songket weaving was an important industry in Palembang by the early nineteenth century, and it seems to have prospered. Songket was sought after not only in Palembang, but also in other places including Java, Singapore and north-east Sumatra. It was considered to be a characteristic cultural product of Palembang. How did it survive after the demise of the nobles, its patrons? What difficulties did the industry experience? In this chapter, I shall examine the history of songket during the Dutch colonial period (1823-1942), its prosperity and decline. I shall also consider the cultural context of songket in Palembang at that time by referring to some surviving songket cloths that were woven during the colonial period and old photographs depicting people wearing songket costume.

4.1 Prosperity of the songket industry

4.1.1 Fall of the nobles and rise of the songket industry

In 1821, Prabu Anom acceded to the sultanship with the title Sultan Ahmad Najamuddin IV (r.1821-1823), and his father, Ahmad Najamuddin II, became Susuhunan Husin Diaudin. The Dutch, however, soon became dissatisfied with the new
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Sultan, who was not obedient to them, so they persuaded him to abdicate in 1823. On 18 August 1823, Sultan Ahmad Najamuddin IV proclaimed that the Sultan and the Dutch Indies Government had come to an agreement that the Dutch should take over control of the Palembang sultanate in order to improve the people’s well being\(^1\). The Palembang sultanate thus lost its autonomy and the Dutch colonial period commenced. The two kratons, Kuto Lamo and Kuto Besak\(^2\), were now occupied by the Dutch. The Sultan, his family and other nobles were forced out of their houses in and around the kraton\(^3\). They formed small concentrations of nobility in four villages\(^4\) in Palembang (Peeters, 1994: 40). It was probably at this time that the songket industry spread outside the kraton.

The Sultan surrendered all his sources of income and received a pension of 1,000 Spanish reales (f 2,200) per month from the Dutch government instead\(^5\). His family also received assistance. The wealth and treasures held by the Sultan’s wives and brothers were confiscated, because Van Sevenhoven, the commissary and the first Resident of Palembang, who took over the National Treasury, found only f 10,759 in the coffers of the State\(^6\) (Peeters, 1994: 27). The feudal system also collapsed. In 1824, the nobles were deprived of their fiefs in the capital by the Dutch Indies Government. The Government reorganised Palembang into 51 villages and took a census of the

\(^{1}\) The agreement also declared that the Sultan would engage himself in civil affairs, the pangeran panghoeloe (religious leader) would be responsible for spiritual affairs, following the teachings of the Koran, and the Higher Court would have jurisdiction over Palembang. On the other hand, politics and finance would be administered by the representative of the Dutch Indies Government (KITLV, DH174; ANRI, 15D VI).

\(^{2}\) Kuto Lamo had been completely destroyed during the war of 1821, and a new building of two stories was constructed in European style at the same place. It became the office of the Resident. Kuto Besak, surrounded by strong thick walls, became a hospital, the police office and other offices.

\(^{3}\) ANRI, 60.7.

\(^{4}\) In 1, 19, 28, and 30 Ilir (see Map 4).

\(^{5}\) KITLV, 371a 1.

\(^{6}\) According to Vos, the wealth of Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin I (r. 1724-1758) was reported variously in the Dutch records from 60 million reales (f 162,000,000) to 2.4 million reales (f 6,480,000) or no more than 400,000 reales (f 1,080,000). Vos suggests that the last amount is the most plausible, due to the wasteful habits of the Sultan’s father, Ahmad Najamuddin I. However, compared to these amounts of money, the funds in the coffer were so little that Van Sevenhoven was astonished (Vos, 1993: 23-24).
population of each village; they were instrumental in introducing new taxation\(^7\) (see Map 4). The nobles also lost the productive areas outside Palembang, from which they used to obtain land tax and tribute; the leaders of these areas became powerful after the abolition of the sultanate, and they cut off their relationship with the capital (Mestika Zed, 1991: 39-40). In the same year, the Sultan and his family, who were dissatisfied with this situation, planned to poison the Dutch garrison. The plot, however, failed. Subsequently, the Sultan was captured and sent first to Batavia, then to Menado. The Palembang sultanate was thus abolished.

Although the Sultan was expelled, the nobles were allowed to keep their titles. The people were still divided into two broad social classes: the nobility and the populace. De Kock wrote in 1848 that the higher class or priaij (priyayi) consisted of the descendants of the former reigning sultans (1846: 293-294). He included ki-agus, ki-mas, mantri and even village chiefs, whom De Stuler considered as the populace in the 1820s, in the priaij. It seems that De Kock defined nobles more widely than De Stuler, who had defined priaij as those who were closely related to the Sultan through the paternal line (see Chapter 3). The reason for this change is not clear. It could be inferred that the difference among nobles between the upper rank and lower rank might have been less important than before. It is even possible that the value of noble status and titles might have been declining, since there was an ‘inflation’ of the number of nobles at that time. This was because inheritance of titles from both the maternal and paternal sides had been practised during the later years of the sultanate, against the

\(^7\) ANRI, 60.7. The Dutch named the north side of the River Musi ‘Ilir’ and the south side ‘Ulu’, and gave a number to each village for identification, such as 1 Ilir, 2 Ilir and so on, and 1 Ulu, 2 Ulu, and so on. There were 37 villages on the Ilir side and 14 villages on the Ulu side. The terms, ilir (or iliran) and ulu (or uluan), originally refer to ‘downstream’ and ‘upstream’ respectively. However, the Dutch, who assumed that the ilir was the centre and the ulu was peripheral, called the side where the kraton was located ilir, and the other ulu.
tradition of Palembang that titles were inherited only through the paternal side. It was also because the former Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin II had given titles to many people in order to gain supporters in the later years of his reign. De Kock wrote that there had been some hundred nobles at the end of the sultanate period (1846: 295). The number increased to more than 1,000 in the 1850s (Peeters, 1994: 33).

There were some noble people who remained wealthy. For example, the eldest brother of the former Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin II had a good house, a large compound, beautiful gardens and a hundred followers (De Kock, 1846: 288). In the 1850s, Budhing also noticed that princes of Palembang were always adorned with rich sarong woven with gold and with gold and silver accessories (1866: 88). Although noblemen might not have worn songket before 1821 as Akib argued (see Chapter 3), in the mid-nineteenth century princes certainly wore songket. De Kock wrote that the noble people were very keen on displaying their external splendour and greatness (1846: 304). They were still proud of their titles and such privileges as the right to use a payung (parasol). They were also conscious of their intellectual superiority to the mantri and other lower classes in literature, language and culture (ibid.: 296). De Kock also recorded that the people still respected the royal family (ibid.: 304); this was probably because Palembang had had a long tradition of the nobility, which enabled them to maintain a special position distinguished from other people. On the other hand, according to De Kock, the people also remembered the nobility’s former despotism, and they were afraid that a Sultan would rule Palembang again (ibid.).

In reality, however, the majority of the nobles were no longer well-off by the 1840s. De Kock wrote that many had given up rich cloth and their followers, the
numbers of which had formerly indicated their rank (ibid.: 288, 296, 300-301). He stated:

Proud, lazy and stupid; these are the characteristics that have always distinguished the nobility [...] Laziness made them unskilled at any craft or trade, but moreover they considered it to be below the dignity of their birth; it was the task of the populace to provide for the upkeep of all the members of the royal household.

As briefly argued in Chapter 3, there were some nobles who attempted to engage in some traditional craft industries for their living, such as ivory or fish teeth work, carpentry, joiner’s work, gold and iron working, copper casting, bamboo and rattan work and silk cloth weaving. According to De Kock, however, they were mainly from the lower ranks of people who were related to the former Sultan, probably the ki-agus and ki-mas, while the higher-ranking nobles, such as brothers and direct descendants of the last Sultan, did not change their life-styles (De Kock, 1846: 296).

Songket weaving, which was one of the craftworks engaged in by impoverished low-ranking noblewomen, seems to have prospered as an ‘industry’ in the first half of the nineteenth century. The Jaarlijksch Verslag Residentie Palembang of 1835 mentions that songket was “a fine material made of silk interwoven with gold thread”. It also says that silk cloths such as selendang were made here and exported to Java and Singapore. Apart from songket, other types of weaving and needlework were also popular as women’s tasks. According to Praetorius, almost all women, regardless of whether they were in the higher or in the lower class, were able to weave, to spin or do other tasks.

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8 “Trotsch, lui en dom, zijn de karakters trekken die de prijais ten allen tijde onderscheiden hebben [...] De luiheid maakten hen onbekwaam tot eenig ambacht of nering, bovendien achten zij dit beneden de waardigheid hunner geboorte; het was de taak der bevolking voor het onderhoud van alle leden van het vorstelijk huis te zorgen” (De Kock, 1846: 295).

9 “sonkets: fraaije stoffe van zijde, met gouddraad doorweven” (ANRI, 62.2: fol. 162).

similar jobs (1843 [1832]: 395). He listed working women (vrouwelijke kostwinningen) as follows: 1) songket weavers, 78; 2) cotton cloth weavers, 131; 3) silk and cotton cloth dyers, 40; 4) thread dyers, 99; 5) cotton thread spinners, 1035; 6) Arabian cap weavers, 12; 7) weavers of another kind of hat, 37; 8) tailors, 109; 9) tudung\textsuperscript{11} sewers, 44; 10) embroiderers (using festoon-decoration or openwork decoration, 45 and using gold and silver threads, silk and cotton thread, or another sort of material, 87); 11) European chintz decorators, 68; 12) printers on cloth, (no number listed); 13) decorators or repairers of batik cloth, (no number listed); 14) linen washers, 20; 15) kemiri\textsuperscript{12}-oil makers, (no number listed); 16) hairdressers, 27; and 17) dukun, 64 (ibid.: 395-398). 14 occupations out of 17 were related to the textile industry, and more than 1,800 women were considered to be engaged in the industry.

The ‘European chintz decorator’ seems to have executed a perada-decoration, drawing flowers with gilt. According to Praetorius, the gold leaf was imported from Siam or China (ibid.: 397). Yoshimoto, who examined forty-nine pieces of kain perada from Palembang stored in the Hirayama Collection, has suggested that three types of kain perada were worn in Palembang during the second half of the nineteenth century. One was gilded Javanese batik produced in Pekalongan, another was imported Indian sembagi gilded in Palembang, and the third was silk or cotton cloth, such as kain limar and kain pelangi, gilded in Palembang (1989: 15, 67, 81). In Praetorius’ record, however, European chintz was also used for kain perada, and this reflects the fact that European cloth was also becoming popular in Palembang.

\textsuperscript{11} Tudung is a square cloth to be used as a veil for women or a cover for food.

\textsuperscript{12} Kemiri (Aleurites moluccana) or ‘candle nut’ is an oil-containing plant (Tanaka, 2002: 5-6).
Chapter 4. Songket during the Colonial Period

According to Praetorius, in 1832 there were only 78 songket weavers, as against 131 cotton weavers. He also mentioned wages; the wage for a songket weaver was from £7 to £8 per month, while that for a cotton weaver was £5 per month (Praetorius, 1843 [1832]: 395). This account suggests that songket weaving was put on a commercial base in the 1830s. The high wage of songket weavers reflects the complexity and speciality of the songket weaving technique, but the relatively small number of weavers may also indicate either a lower demand for songket or the difficulty in becoming a songket weaver.

The question arises: 'who bought songket after the majority of the nobles became impoverished?' Some cloths were exported; therefore wealthy people outside Palembang must have worn them. Some indigenous nobles, in particular high-ranking ones, who remained wealthy were able to afford songket. However, there were other socio-economic groups in Palembang who were emerging to replace the increasingly down-at-heel nobility from the later years of the sultanate period: the Arabs and Chinese. Court had already indicated that before the abolition of the sultanate, wealthy Arabs and Chinese lived in the same kind of well appointed houses as the principal chiefs (1821: 104).

When the Dutch started to administer Palembang, they first tried to disperse the power which had previously been concentrated in the Sultan’s post. They decided to administer the people separately by ethnic group; i.e. the Europeans (mainly the Dutch), the Foreign Orientals (Chinese, Arabs and British-Indians) and the indigenous people of
Chapter 4. Songket during the Colonial Period

Palembang, and appointed a leader for each group\textsuperscript{13}. The Dutch created a new pecking order among these groups in society; Europeans, Foreign Orientals and a selected group of the local people, such as high-ranking nobles, became the upper class, and the rest of the indigenous people of Palembang, which was the majority of the population, formed the lower class (Kemperman, 2002: 11).

The Arabs were mainly Hadhrami (people from Hadhramaut, an area on the Arabian Sea in Yemen), who had already started to migrate to Palembang in the late eighteenth century. Having won the Sultan’s favour due to their sharing of the same faith, Islam, they had started to establish a dominant position in the trade of Palembang, which prior to the arrival of the Europeans the Chinese had previously monopolised. They achieved great success in this endeavour during the reign of Sultan Muhammad Bahauddin (1775-1804) (Peeters, 1994: 33). When Palembang fell to the British in 1812, the prince of the Arabs of Palembang, Seyd Scherriff (Sayid Syarit) Ali, talked to the British General, Gillespie, in the name of the Sultan, who had already fled to the hinterland (Raffles, 1835: 167; Gibson, 1855: 128). The richness of his clothing was described by Walter M. Gibson, an American traveller who visited Palembang in the early 1850s: “from his shoulders hung down to his ankles, a green silk robe; within this he wore a yellow silken vest, and rich embroidered sandals on his feet, made up his striking costume” (1855: 126).

\textsuperscript{13} In the \textit{Regerings-Almanak voor Nederlandsch-Indie} of 1827, Tjoa Kielen and Sjerief Pangeran Abdul Rachman bin Hassan Alhabaschij were listed respectively as the Capitan China and the Chief of the Arabs. In 1876, the position of the Chief of the British-Indians was established (\textit{Almanak}, 1877). For the administration of the local people of Palembang, the Dutch reorganised the indigenous government. In 1823, the Dutch appointed Pangeran Kramajaya, a son-in-law of the former Sultan, Mahmud Badaruddin II, as the \textit{perdana mantri} (the Prime Minister) (KII.V, DH175). This governmental system was beneficial for the Dutch, since they were able to administer the people, using the local elite’s authority. In that respect, the Dutch appointed an appropriate person as the \textit{perdana mantri}, since Pangeran Kramajaya was related to Mahmud Badaruddin II, the most powerful Sultan of late years.
The success of the Arabs was not only because they were Muslim and successful in trade, but also because they formed relationships with local nobles through marriage. According to Peeters (1994: 41-42), the Hadhrami Arabs thought much of the concept of kafaah for their marriage. Kafaah can be rendered as ‘balance’; the balance between families of the couple. They considered that the marriage should be contracted between people whose ancestors were of similar social standing. Since many more men than women had settled in Palembang from Hadhramaut in the first wave of migration, the sayid, who claimed to be descendants of the prophet Muhammad, had to find their wives from local noble families. In fact, De Sturler (1843: 68) wrote:

> It is remarkable that the royal family, a few members of which are still alive now, is distinguished by graceful facial features, and among some of the nobles, too, for example in the less depressed appearance of the nose and in the slightness of the upper lip, a visible deviation is evident. The only reason there can be for this, in my opinion, is to be found in a mixing [interbreeding] with the Arabs.

The most influential trade-ship owner in the 1840s was also a son of an Arab man and a Palembang noblewoman named Pangeran Syarif Ali bin Abubakar bin Saleh (Peeters, 1994: 35). Gramberg also mentioned, with regard to another Arab man, Sjarief (Syarif) Mohammad, that his mother was a member of the Palembang noble family (1878:

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14 For some time after the abolition of the sultanate, the sayid still married Palembang noblewomen, but as the authority of the nobles declined, they started to find their spouses from a small but wealthy sayid community of Singapore (Peeters, 1994: 42).

15 “Opmerkelijk is het, dat de vorstelijke familie, waarvan thans nog eenige leden in leven zijn, zich door sierlijke gelaatstrekken onderscheidt, en dat ook bij eenige rijksgrooten, onder anderen in het minder gedrukte van den neus en in de weinig zware bovenlip, zichtbare afwijking in het oog valt. De eenige reden, die hiervoor, mijns inziens, bestaan kan, is in eenige vermenging met de Arabieren te zoeken” (De Sturler, 1843: 68).
Chapter 4. Songket during the Colonial Period

It is very likely that the Palembang noblewomen who married wealthy Arabs were the main supporters of the songket industry. These women were originally from the high-ranking nobility who had supported the songket culture during the sultanate period. In spite of the fall of the nobility, they must have lived in affluence as a result of marriage with the rich Arabs, who achieved great success in trade. The Arabs themselves were interested in textiles, but as a business. They had the exclusive right to import textiles which were produced in Arab-owned workshops on the north coast of Java, especially in Pekalongan (Peeters, 1994: 37). Probably most of the kain perada produced in Java were also imported by the Arabs, and it might also have been they who exported songket to other places.

The other possible supporters were the Chinese. Some had important positions in the administration during the sultanate period, since the nobles had some Chinese blood. They were also engaged in trade, but this was apparently concentrated within the region. According to Peeters, they conducted trade mainly between Palembang and Bangka, or with junks which arrived at Palembang from China, Singapore or Malacca, carrying tea, earthenware, oil and linen products (1994: 35-37). Gibson recorded that one Chinese man “sent cargoes of rattans, also tiles which are well made near this town; also benzoin, dammar, pepper, and other merchandise to Singapore and Batavia” (1855: 159). Some of the Chinese seem to have made a fortune from trade, as Gibson noted that the Chinese man lived in a huge ark sixty feet long and thirty feet wide (ibid.: 198).

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16 According to Gramberg, Syarif Mohammad inherited the title raden through his mother (1878: 8-9). It can be inferred that his mother’s title was probably raden ayu. Titles were traditionally inherited from the father’s lineage, but people started to inherit the higher title of either the father’s or mother’s side from the late sultanate period (Bpk Djohan Hanafiah, 2002, interview).

17 According to Heidhues, Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin I married a Chinese woman from Canton. Her family, which continued to maintain close relationships with the Palembang sultanate, married women to successive sultans (1992: 7).
4.1.2 Stabilization or decline?

In 1854 a Dutch traveller, Ullmann, also left a record of Palembang. He did not mention ‘songket’ or ‘the songket industry’; he simply wrote that women wove cloth here and there, without specifying the kind of cloth. He mentioned that there was a labour service called tieban, which included an exchange of local products with foreign goods. He enumerated several kinds of local cloth which were exchanged, such as kain salong pandjang (long sarong), kain tadjoeng, sapoe tangan, slewar (men’s trousers) and badjoe pendek (short jackets for both men and women). It is uncertain what kind of materials were used for the long sarong, men’s trousers and short jacket, since he did not mention them. It is, however, unlikely that the production of songket, the best textile in Palembang, was included in the labour service duties, since ordinary people would not have known how to deal with it, and there was a danger that the valuable cloth might be lost or stolen while in their hands. It is more likely that songket was handled personally between a weaver and a customer, and it must have been woven to order so that weavers did not need to have such an expensive cloth in stock. Nevertheless, Budhing, who travelled in the Dutch East Indies from 1852 to 1857, noted a different fact concerning the selling of songket in Palembang.

18 KITLV, DH 117.
19 A square cloth, which is usually translated as ‘handkerchief’, but Ullmann noted that it was Javanese batik. He could have meant that it was a handkerchief made of Javanese batik.
Bordering this suburb is a native village, the wide main road of which is occupied by a number of native wood-built shops, in which one can see for sale great piles of sarong, selendang, cloths, headscarves, handkerchiefs and so on. Of these sarong, which are either printed or batiked, the Palembang silk sarong in particular are exceptional, and there are many, that are interwoven with the fibres of pineapple-leaves and gold thread and which have a maas-kapala (literally: head) or golden edging, [they] fetch up to f 20 to 25 each, however the sarong with a gold weave and a maas-kepala can sometimes fetch up to f 100. It is very likely that the silk sarong “interwoven with the fibres of pineapple-leaves and gold thread” referred to songket. The “maas-kapala” is probably the kepala interwoven with gold thread, and the “gold edging (gouden rand)” either the borders interwoven with gold thread or the edgings adorned with gold lace. The sarong with a “maas-kapala” or a “golden edging” would have referred to a design like jando, while the sarong with a gold weave and a maas-kapala was probably a sarong of songket lepus. Budhing’s record reveals that there were a number of textile shops on the main road and songket, even an expensive one which cost f 100, was handled at those textile shops in the 1850s. It can be inferred that there was a regular demand for songket at that time. Unfortunately, it is uncertain exactly which village and which main road Budhing was referring to, but the situation seems to have been similar to what one can see on the main road in Daerah Suro, one of the old villages, today (see Map 6). Songket must, of course, have been sold directly by weavers to customers, but people were apparently already able to buy them at shops as well.

20 “Doch aan die wijk paalt ook een groote inlandsche kampong, welker breede hoofdweg met een aantal inlandsche planken – winkelhuizen bezet is, waarin men groote stapels van sarong’s slindang’s, kleedjes, hoofddoeken, zakdoeken enz. te koop ziet. Onder deze sarong’s, die óf gedrukt óf gebatikted zijn, munten vooral de Palembangscs zieiden-sarong’s uit, en ontwaart men er velen, die met de vezelen van ananas-bladeren en goud doorweven zijn en een kapala-maas of gouden rand (eigenlijk: hoofd) hebben, wordt tot f 20 a 25 per stuk betaald, doch voor de met goud gewevede en met een kapala-maas bezette sarong’s soms tot f 100 toe” (Budhing, 1866: 88). The “eigenlijk: hoofd” supposedly referred to the “kapala (kepala)”.
In 1854 another traveller, Van Doren, mentioned handicrafts undertaken by women in Palembang. He noted that “she makes the widely famed silk songket cloths, that are interwoven with gold thread, and the so-called *limar* cloths made of flower-patterned silks, as well as the so-called *kopiah*-caps, worn by the Arabs, officials and other native leaders, consisting of an interweaving of Chinese and European gold thread”\(^{21}\). He also recorded that there were more than one hundred professional seamstresses who were occupied in making a rough type of cloth for the hinterland, and also women who were engaged in *perada*-making and embroidery (Van Doren, 1854: 84).

In the same year the resident of Palembang, De Brauw, also wrote about women’s jobs: “Most women weave cotton or silk cloth, or engage in the dyeing of cotton and silk threads and spinning […] They earn money by doing embroidery and lacework”\(^{22}\). His list of the workers in the textile industry included eight silk and thread-dyers, 203 weavers, 48 thread-makers and 21 sewers and embroiderers\(^ {23}\). Three points should be mentioned here. Firstly, the number of the sewers is different from Van Doren’s statement that there were more than one hundred seamstresses, but there is no clue to explain this discrepancy. Secondly, the general number of weavers was almost the same as in 1832, although De Brauw did not give any precise description of the weavers. Thirdly, the numbers of thread-dyers and cotton spinners had plunged compared to the record of 1832; 99 dyers decreased to 8, and 1,035 cotton spinners

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\(^{21}\) “Door haar worden de wijd en zij beroemde zijden *songket* kleedjes, die met gouddraad doorweven zijn en de zoogenaamde *Liemaar* kleedjes van zijde met bloemen gemaakt, alsmede de zoogenoemde *kopia*-mutsjes, die door de Arabieren, *mantries* en andere inlandsche hoofden worden gedragen, bestaande uit een weefsel van Chineesch en Europeesch gouddraad” (Van Doren, 1854: 83-84).

\(^{22}\) “De meesten derzelve weven katoenen of zijden kleedjes of houden zich bezig met het veren van katoenen en zyden garen, en met het spinnen van het zelve […] Ze munten uit in het maken van borduur en kantwerk” (KITLV, DH297b, fol. 37).

\(^{23}\) KITLV, DH297b, fol. 39.
Chapter 4. Songket during the Colonial Period

declined to 48 thread-makers. Two years later, Storm van’s Gravesande listed the same number of female workers in the textile industry (Storm van’s Gravesande, 1856: 465-466), but he did not specify the kind of silk cloth.

It is puzzling why songket weaving was left out of the list of women’s jobs in the Residents’ reports in the 1850s; it had been recorded in the first place among the women’s jobs in the Resident’s record in the 1830s. It could be simply because these Residents had no interest in the weaving industry. It could also be possible that songket weaving had lost its significance in Palembang. Did the songket industry really prosper at that time, or was it decaying? Was there a connection with the dramatic decrease in the numbers of thread dyers and cotton spinners? I shall examine the situation of the songket industry in the mid-nineteenth century from several perspectives.

(1) Gold and silk thread imports

Records of the import of gold thread provide an indication of the situation of the songket industry in the mid-nineteenth century, since gold thread was the significant component of songket. I shall rely mainly on the Dutch trade record, the Overzigt van den handel en de scheepvaart in de Nederlandsche bezittingen in Oost-Indie buiten Java en Madura. Unfortunately, the pre-1874 editions of this series of records do not clearly indicate the origins of imports; they are just categorised as those from Europe and America, from Western India and Bengal, from China, Cochinchina, Manila and Siam, and from the eastern archipelago (“oosterschen archipel”). According to this record, gold thread was still being imported during the late 1840s and the 1850s. Table 4.1 shows the gold thread imports of Palembang from 1846 to 1856. During this time, gold thread was imported from China, Manila and/or Siam. Since these reports were
Table 4.1: Palembang’s gold thread imports 1846-1856

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1846</th>
<th>1847</th>
<th>1848</th>
<th>1849</th>
<th>1850</th>
<th>1851</th>
<th>1852</th>
<th>1853</th>
<th>1854</th>
<th>1855</th>
<th>1856</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amount</td>
<td>3,342</td>
<td>2,585</td>
<td>4,296</td>
<td>2,886</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2,279</td>
<td>3,472</td>
<td>7,010</td>
<td>2,014</td>
<td>6,547</td>
<td>7,035</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: the amounts of 1848 and 1851 include silver thread.
(Sources: Overzigt van den handel, 1846-1848, pp. 11; 1849-1853, pp. 42-43, 49-50, 56, 63, 70; 1854-1856, pp.26, 34, 42, 50)

recorded with reference to value in guilders, we do not know the volumes in weight. There might have been a fluctuation in the price, but it seems that gold thread was constantly imported by Palembang except in 1850. Unfortunately, the import data for thread become unclear after 1857, since it was merged with that for other gold work.

However, we cannot infer from the import record of gold thread whether songket was still being woven, since it was also used for embroidery and lacework. As we have seen in De Brauw’s record, lacework seems to have started to become popular in Palembang, probably after the late 1830s, since Praetorius did not include this work in his detailed list of jobs for women in 1832. While cotton thread was mainly used for lacework to make tablecloths and as adornment for kebaya (Plate 4.1), gold and silver lace was also used to adorn the hem of selendang of
songket or pelangi (Plate 4.2). People also frequently used gold thread for embroideries to decorate beautiful selendang, tudung, men’s trousers (Plate 4.3), and so on.

What about the supply of silk, another significant material for songket? Raw silk (silk simply drawn from the cocoons by the process of reeling\(^{24}\)) was regularly imported to Palembang from China, Cochinchina, Manila and/or Siam until 1854 (Table 4.2), although silk thread was imported only in 1849, valued at f287. The data after 1855 become unclear, since the amount of raw silk imported was merged with other silk stuffs, but it presumably continued to be imported for a certain period after that. Palembang thus obtained the two main materials for songket, gold and silk threads, during the mid-nineteenth century.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1846</td>
<td>19,326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1847</td>
<td>14,350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1848</td>
<td>22,526</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1849</td>
<td>17,239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850</td>
<td>15,650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1851</td>
<td>2,075</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1852</td>
<td>10,331</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1853</td>
<td>16,482</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1854</td>
<td>32,271</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Overzigt van den handel, 1846-1848, pp. 11; 1849-1853, pp. 42-43, 49-50, 56, 63, 70; 1854-1856, pp. 27, 35)

Chapter 4. Songket during the Colonial Period

(2) The import of cotton thread and products

What does the decrease in the number of spinners and dyers in Palembang recorded by De Brauw in 1854 suggest, then? It is possible that the weavers might have spun and dyed thread by themselves, as people did before the Second World War (see Chapter 5). It is also possible that other threads, such as cotton, started to be imported. In fact, according to Dutch trade records, linen and cotton threads were imported to Palembang from the eastern isles in the mid-nineteenth century (Table 4.3).

### Table 4.3: Palembang's imports of linen and cotton threads from the eastern isles 1846-1859

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1846</th>
<th>1847</th>
<th>1848</th>
<th>1849</th>
<th>1850</th>
<th>1851</th>
<th>1852</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amount</td>
<td>141,380</td>
<td>202,291</td>
<td>143,912</td>
<td>116,897</td>
<td>70,071</td>
<td>104,500</td>
<td>112,574</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1853</th>
<th>1854</th>
<th>1855</th>
<th>1856</th>
<th>1857</th>
<th>1858</th>
<th>1859</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amount</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>106,168</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>224,145</td>
<td>98,457</td>
<td>122,246</td>
<td>165,730</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Sources: *Overzigt van den handel*, 1846-1848, pp. 12; 1849-1853, pp. 43, 50, 57, 64-65, 71; 1854-1856, pp. 27, 35, 43, 51; 1857-1859, pp. 20, 23-24, 27-28)

According to Bambang Purwanto (1993: 115) and Rini Andini Ambarwati Ekaputri (2001: 34), cotton cultivated in the hinterland of Palembang was traditionally used for the local textile industry. In the 1850s, however, raw cotton was exported from Palembang to the eastern isles: f 204,204 in 1854, f 150,051 in 1855 and f 162,197 in 1856 (*Overzigt van den handel*, 1854-1856, pp. 38, 46, 54). Probably, in the mid-nineteenth century, cotton exported from Palembang was spun in the eastern isles, and it was then re-imported to Palembang as cotton thread. That might have been the reason for the decrease of spinners in Palembang, but it does not imply a decline in songket weaving.

Another point to note is the import of linen and cotton products in the 1850s (Table 4.4). They were imported from several sources including Europe and America.
for linen and cotton products, western India and Bengal, China, Cochinchina, Manila and Siam for linen. We have a problem with these data again, in that imports are recorded in terms of price; there might have been fluctuations in the price, and the price must have been different in each country. However, considering that an account of the 1850s states that the most expensive type of songket cost \( f100 \) (Budhing, 1866: 88), these quantities were large, especially when European countries, which had already completed the industrial revolution by that time, established their new markets in Asian countries. The import of cotton thread indicates that cotton weaving was still carried out in Palembang in the mid-nineteenth century, but it was probably being undermined by imported cotton products.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1852</th>
<th>1853</th>
<th>1854</th>
<th>1855</th>
<th>1856</th>
<th>1857</th>
<th>1858</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Europe &amp; America</td>
<td>239,507</td>
<td>295,598</td>
<td>328,484</td>
<td>436,069</td>
<td>419,478</td>
<td>421,521</td>
<td>306,026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western India &amp; Bengal</td>
<td>4,792</td>
<td>6,091</td>
<td>7,240</td>
<td>16,925</td>
<td>11,915</td>
<td>6,941</td>
<td>6,038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China, Cochinchina</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manila &amp; Siam</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>950</td>
<td>-</td>
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<th>1864</th>
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<td>420,216</td>
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Note: data for 1860–1862, and 1867 are missing.

(3) Records in the late nineteenth century

In the late nineteenth century, some European records still refer to songket or a songket-like cloth of Palembang. For example, Van Diest wrote that people of Bangka wore silk *selendang* of songket with flower figures woven with gold thread, the finest of
which were woven in Palembang and stitched in Muntok (1865: 4-5). An English
naturalist, Henry O. Forbes, recorded that Palembang was famed for “the weaving of
rich sarongs of silk interwrought with gold into most elegant designs” (1885: 259). It is
clear that Palembang still manufactured songket in the late nineteenth century. In 1878 a
world exhibition was held in Paris, and in 1883 another in Amsterdam. The Dutch East
Indies contributed many local crafts to these exhibitions. According to the list of goods
for the ‘international exhibition of colonial export-trade’ in Amsterdam, twelve pieces
of local crafts were purchased in Palembang by the Dutch in 1882, among which eight
pieces were songket cloth or cloth decorated with songket work. The most expensive
one among them was a selendang of songket lepus which cost f 110\(^{25}\). The Dutch
certainly recognised that songket was the most prominent traditional craft of
Palembang. In fact, the annual reports of 1888 and 1889 recorded that “the weaving of
silk sarong using gold thread and lacework were executed with advantage by many
women at the capital\(^{26}\). Songket weaving and lacework were probably the two most
popular handicrafts for women until the end of the nineteenth century.

4.1.3 Songket culture in the nineteenth century

In the nineteenth century, several Europeans left records regarding local
people’s clothing, and some of them mention songket. It is very fortunate that examples
of songket woven at that time still remain in museums and in private houses, many of
them dated to the late nineteenth century. Photographs of people wearing songket cloth

\(^{25}\) RMV, series of 370 no.5 Palembang.

\(^{26}\) “het weven van zyden sarong bewerkt met gouddraad en het krawangar [kantwerken] worden door
vele vrouwen ter hoofdplaats met veel voordeel befoend” (ANRI, 65.8, fol.60; ANRI, 65.9, fol.73).
also started to appear in the late nineteenth century. Using these materials, it is possible to reconstruct a partial picture of songket culture in the nineteenth century.

Since real gold thread was used for songket before the Second World War, the amount of gold thread woven into the cloth directly affected the price. During the sultanate period, the amount of gold thread in songket cloth was a marker of rank in the nobility. After the abolition of the sultanate, however, it seems rather to have become an indicator of the wealth of the wearer, since wealthy Arabs and Chinese also started to wear songket, although some of them were indeed related to nobles through marriage and by birth.

According to Budhing, the Resident held a party some time in the mid-1850s and invited local nobles and leaders, including the heads of both the Arab and the Chinese communities (1866: 99-100). He was especially struck by their silk sarong interwoven with gold (“zijden met goud doorweven sarongs”; ibid: 99), and that undoubtedly signified sarong of songket. What kind of sarong was made in the mid-1850s? The Rijksmusem Voor Volkenkunde, Leiden, for example, stores a sarong of songket in the design of *tretes midar* made before 1883 (Plate 4.4). The centre-field is *limar*, which has a maroon background on which some figures like flowers, tendrils and clover-leaf figures are executed in red, yellow and green. This cloth has songket decorations in the *minggir* and the *kepala*. The *kepala* has sections of the *ombak*,

![Plate 4.4: A sarong (RMV, 370-2873). It was woven before 1883 (99 x 192cm).](image-url)
apit, umpak, puncak rebung and tawur just like present sarong of songket. The Museon, the Hague, also keeps a sarong probably woven at the end of the nineteenth century\textsuperscript{27}. The design is bungo tawur; one type of small flower-figure with eight petals and a cross in the centre (see Plate 2.16 Flower B in Chapter 2) is dotted in regular rows on a red background in the kembang-section. The kepala is composed of the conventional sections, and the tawur-section in the kepala is similar to that of the sarong shown in Plate 4.4; six types of flowers are arranged in orderly lines. Unlike other sarong, the kuku design is used for the ombak-section in the kepala of this sarong. Each of two selvages (the minggir) of this sarong has a strip of arabesque figures or tendrils, and it does not have the kuku in the edge.

One point should be mentioned here: the size. The first sarong measures 99cm (weft) by 192cm (warp) and the second is 103cm (weft) by 190cm (warp)\textsuperscript{28}. These sizes are larger than present ones, which measure about 85cm (weft) by 180cm (warp). When a sarong is worn today, a belt is fastened over the cotton lining which projects above the songket. In the nineteenth century, people seem to have fastened a belt directly over the wider sarong, and that must soon have damaged its upper part. That is probably why one sarong kept at the Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde has one selvage which is torn and attached with a maroon cloth\textsuperscript{29} (see Appendix H, Plate H.1).

Budhing gave a further description of how key individuals were dressed at the party, although there is no further description of songket. For instance, Pangeran Tumenggong Wiera Mengalla, the assistant of the hinterland administration, wore Javanese clothing; a gold-embroidered jerkin with long tails and white cotton waistcoat

\textsuperscript{27} Museon, collection no. 6862.
\textsuperscript{28} A nineteenth-century songket tajung rumpak stored at RMV(no. 300-321) measures 117 x 180cm. It is, however, composed of two panels sewn together, in the same way as the present version is produced.
\textsuperscript{29} RMV, collection no. 3750-1
with jewel buttons. He also wore a cap adorned with gold thread and a wonderfully
decorated *kris*. Pangeran Syarif Ali
Bin Aboe Bakar Bin Saleh, the head
of the Arab community, dressed in
Arabian style, which included a
gold-stitched waistcoat
(“goud-gestikte sideria”), a gold
*laken*[^30] jacket, and a white full-length undershirt. The head Muslim “priest”
(“Hoofdpriester”), Panghulu Natta Agama Pacharoedin, wore a long jacket with large
coloured flowers with gold edges on the white background. Regarding women’s
clothing, Budhing noticed only the gorgeous jewels worn in their hair, and on *dodot*
(“*borstkleedjes*”), jackets and fingers.

Cloths for high-ranking people were
richly decorated with gold-embroidery and
other gold adornments. Although they were
not mentioned in Budhing’s account, a
jacket and a waistcoat made of *songket* cloth
were also worn by such people in the
nineteenth century. The short jacket in Plate
4.5 was made before 1882. It has a standing
collar and long sleeves. On a red
background, flowers and stars are

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[^30]: According to Laarhoven, *laken* is a fabric made of wool mixed with cotton, silk or other fabric
interwoven with gold thread and small crosses are woven with white cotton thread over a red silk background. Furthermore, I found no examples of fold-stitched (or embroidered) waistcoats in museums in the Netherlands, but only ones with songket decoration (Plate 4.6). This example was made on a base of white cotton, but red silk cloth on which were songket decorations, such as the berantai bungo-pattern and naga-figure, was stitched on the front of the waistcoat. It fastens in front with eight gilt buttons (Fischer, 1918: 54).

In 1854 another traveller, Ullmann, also wrote about the local chiefs' clothing:

Generally chiefs were finely dressed with short trousers made of linen, silk or laken, over which a silk sarong was wrapped so that his body was covered to the knees. On the upper body, they wore a white waistcoat to cover the chest and a jacket made of laken or semi-laken with a short stand-up collar as well as the sleeves worked with gold thread.31

The jacket described by Ullman might have been similar to that shown in Plate 4.7. This jacket has gold adornment on the front and on the collar. The short sarong, which the man in the photograph wears over trousers, was probably made of kain tajung. Later, Van Rijn van Alkemade wrote: “Many indigenous people and chiefs wore a pair of trousers in the European style. Over the trousers, they put on a silk kain tajung, sometimes interwoven with gold thread”32 (Van Rijn van Alkemade, 1883: 57). Kain tajung interwoven with gold thread seems to have been popular, since all museums in

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31 “De hoofden zijn over het algemeen net gekleed, met eene korte, van linnen- zijde- of van lakengemaakte broek, overdekt met eene zijden sarong, zoodanig om het lijf geslagen, dat zij het ligchaam tot de knie dekt; een wit ondervest dekt de borst, terwijl een lakensche of half lakensche buis, met lagen staanden kraag, en even als, de kleeding voltooind” (KITLV, DH117: fols 213-214).

32 “Aanzienlijke inlanders en hoofden dragen een pantaloon van Europeesch model, waarover een kain tadjoeng van zijde, soms met gouddraad doorweven” (Van Rijn van Alkemade, 1883: 57).
which I conducted research have one or more pieces of this type of *sarong* possibly woven in the nineteenth century (Plate 4.8).

According to Rijn van Alkemade, women usually wore a *sarong* and a dark blue silk *baju kurung* (1883: 57). This style might have been similar to the one worn by the woman in Plate 4.7. He also wrote that a woman would wear a *selendang* over her head at ceremonies (ibid.). Special clothing for women was a songket costume, worn at traditional ceremonies and for performing traditional Palembang dances in public. A group of young dancers wearing traditional costume was photographed around 1875, but the details are unfortunately unclear due to the poor quality of the photograph (Plate 4.9). It is uncertain whether or not they are really wearing songket, and their young features make the uncertainty stronger. Regulations on wearing songket must have been strict in the nineteenth century, particularly in the city of Palembang, and according to one informant, one of these regulations was that unmarried women were not permitted to wear it.  

It is, however, possible that these women might have been married young.

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33 Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo, 2005, interview.
or they simply look younger than their real ages. The sarong worn by the woman standing second from the left is probably made of batik, but some of the other women are possibly wearing a sarong of songket, dodot of songket fastened with a belt, and a selendang of songket over the shoulder. They are also wearing head ornaments, a necklace with three crescents called kalong tapak jajo, and several kinds of golden bangles (see Chapter 6). Another group of dancers can be seen in Plate 4.10. Unlike the dancers in Plate 4.9, these wear a baju kurung for the top.

Selendang woven in the nineteenth century are generally wider and longer than present ones; this can clearly be seen, if one compares Plate 2.7 in Chapter 2 with Plate 4.9 or 4.10. Most of nineteenth-century selendang stored at museums are longer than 200cm and wider than 70cm. For example, one selendang kept at the Museon is 216cm long and 86cm wide. Large selendang were common until the Second World War;

34 Museon, collection no. 6819.
according to one descendant of the local nobility, a woman wore it over her head like a veil, kept in place with her hands, so that she was able to show off her wealth as well as her weaving technique. Selendang were otherwise folded in three or four and worn over the shoulder, hung straight down as the dancers in Plates 4.9 and 4.10 do, or crossed at the opposite side of the hip.
4.2 Decline of the songket industry

4.2.1 Changes in the songket industry

According to Jasper and Mas Pirngadie, songket weaving in Palembang was active in the early twentieth century, and it was even introduced to Surabaya (1912: 234). Lacework (renda) was another popular handicraft among Palembang women (Jasper and Mas Pirngadie, 1912: 306; Kort overzicht, 1920; Catalogus, 1923). According to Jasper and Mas Pirngadie, lace weaving was so popular in Palembang that it was uncertain whether this craft had been introduced from Europe or was an original craft of Palembang (1912: 306)\(^{35}\).

Although songket weaving was probably still active in Palembang at the beginning of the twentieth century, it is hard to trace the condition of the gold thread import trade at that time, since it was not shown in the import lists. It might have been imported and registered as ‘gold work’, but even so quantities were small. In Palembang, it is generally thought that factories manufacturing gold thread in China were burned down in conflicts there, but local people do not specify, in which war it

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\(^{35}\) Steinbuch, the Resident of Palembang from 1933 to 1936, mentioned in 1936 that lacework had been introduced by a few European ladies (KIT 322-329).
was. It is true that China became unstable from the mid-nineteenth century due to European and Japanese interventions. In 1911 the Chinese revolution overthrew the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), and the Republic of China was established (it became the People's Republic of China in 1949). It is likely that gold thread factories were destroyed in that period of turmoil. The use of brocade and other luxurious cloths using gold thread might also have been in decline at the time of the fall of the Dynasty, and the production of gold thread might then have been stopped. Whatever the reason was, the lack of gold thread was a serious problem for songket weaving. Songket weavers in Palembang probably started to rely on gold thread which was taken from old pieces.

On the other hand, silk thread still seems to have been supplied to Palembang. Dutch trade records state that raw silk was imported to Palembang from Singapore, to the value of £111,746 in 1901, although the amount gradually declined after that, to only £4,312 in 1909 (Statistiek van den handel, 1901; 1902; 1903 II; 1904 III; 1905 III; 1906 III; 1907 III; 1908 III; 1909 III). Various kinds of yarns were also brought to Palembang, mainly from Singapore but also from the Netherlands, England, Germany and Switzerland, before 1914. The import of yarns increased from 1900; 30,555kg in 1900, 58,672kg in 1904, 146,281kg in 1907 and 202,435kg in 1911. However, the record does not distinguish between silk thread, cotton, or other materials. It can be inferred that a quantity of silk thread might have been imported at the beginning of the century, but the amount decreased year by year. Finally, most of the imported yarns were probably cottons, since the record of 1915 shows that silk thread accounted for only 3% of all yarn imports (Statistiek van den handel, 1910 III; 1911 III; 1912 III; 1913 III; 1914 III; 1915 III).
Chapter 4. Songket during the Colonial Period

In 1936 the Resident, W. Steinbuch, wrote: "The cottage industry of weaving, especially the weaving of gold brocade cloth (songket) and silk sarong (plikat)\(^{36}\), once a prosperous home industry, fell into decline over the years\(^{37}\). What happened to the songket industry of Palembang in the 1920s and the 1930s? Steinbuch suggested some reasons for this:

A) The upper- and middle classes of the population increasingly bought less and less of the products.
B) The industry had to concentrate therefore on the manufacture of less expensive clothing for the masses, and in doing so had to compete with the - cheap - imported goods.
C) The profit to be made from this home industry was quickly shown to be smaller than that from coffee and rubber cultivation.
D) An inadequate supply of yarn\(^{38}\).

Two background factors to reason A can be considered. One is the Great World Depression which occurred in 1929. According to Boomgaard, the impact of the economic crisis first appeared in the early 1930s in the Dutch East Indies. The export earnings, which had already started to decrease in 1925, dropped dramatically in 1931 and reached rock-bottom in 1933. European enterprise suffered a severe blow. The Outer Islands whose economy depended on export crops suffered greater damage than Java (Boomgaard, 2000: 25-28). In Palembang the Europeans made investments in oil refining, coal mines and large plantations, such as coffee, rubber and pepper, and gained

\(^{36}\) It probably signified *kain tajung*.

\(^{37}\) "De huisweefnijverheid, met name het weven van goudbrocaatdoeken (songkets) en zijden sarong (plikats), eertijds een bloeiende huisindustrie, geraakte in den loop der jaren in verval (KIT 322-329)."

\(^{38}\) "A) de hoogere - en middenklasse van de bevolking nam in steeds mindere mate de producten af,
B) de nijverheid moest zich instellen op het vervaardigen van minder kostbare volkskleeding, en zulks in concurrentie met de - goedkoope- importartikelen,
C) de baten van de huisnijverheid bleken al spoedig in de minderheid in vergelijking met die uit koffie- en rubberrcultuur,
D) een gebrekkige garenvoorziening” (KIT 322-329).
profits from exporting their products in the early twentieth century (Mestika Zed, 1991: 59). Although Mestika Zed has argued that Palembang paid more income tax and import/export tax to the Government (pemerintah) in 1933 and 1934 than in 1930 (ibid.: 60), the profit from trade must have gone to the Europeans. After the great economic crisis, therefore, it is likely that even high-ranking people of Palembang had become poorer. Some of them were probably no longer able to afford expensive cloth like songket.

The other factor could be anti-colonial movements and an awakening of the consciousness of local identities, as well as of the importance of modernising local societies in order to compete with the Dutch, which started in the early twentieth century. In Java, students of noble families established a union called Budi Utomo in 1908. In 1909, Sarekat Dagang Islamiyah (Islamic Commercial Union) was also founded in Batavia to support indigenous traders (Mestika Zed, 1991: 106-117; Ricklefs, 2001: 208-211). In Palembang, people began to organise groups based on their urban villages, directed to improving education, providing mutual aid and exploring other ways of improving their lives. These activities were led by local intellectuals, such as teachers, lawyers, doctors and engineers, most of whom were of noble ancestry and who had been educated in Java. Although most of them had received their education in Dutch academies, they also embraced anti-colonial ideas. By 1912, around 27 mutual aid groups had been organised in Palembang (Mestika Zed, 1991: 103-104). Javanese intellectual migrants in Palembang also contributed to the development of social movements and ideas of democracy and liberalism there. In these circumstances, it became increasingly difficult for Palembang nobles to use songket as a status marker.
Some of them even stopped using their noble titles, considering them to be undemocratic\textsuperscript{39}.

Regarding reason B, it is unlikely that the development of a cheap cotton cloth industry was the major reason for the decline of songket weaving, since the cloths are totally different in nature. Cotton cloth is a practical, everyday cloth, while songket is a traditional ceremonial cloth, and its use was quite limited. It is true, however, that imported cotton cloths, mainly from Singapore, Japan and the Netherlands, started to flood the market in the Dutch East Indies. In 1918, $f\, 403,196$ of cloths were imported to Palembang, gradually increasing annually ($f\, 407,739$ in 1919 and $f\, 485,481$ in 1920) (\textit{Gewestelijke maandstatistiek}, 1918; 1919; 1920). Japan in particular, whose manufacturing capacity in the production of silk and cotton goods grew during the 1910s and the 1920s, made inroads into British India, Hong Kong, and maritime Southeast Asia (Abé and Saito, 1988: 143-145). During the 1930s depression, cheap Japanese cotton cloth was appreciated in the Dutch East Indies. According to the Japanese records, 20 kinds of cotton cloth such as printed cotton and cotton poplin, amounting to 261,432,607 square yards altogether, were imported by the Dutch East Indies in 1934 (Japan Cotton Weaving Industry Union Confederation, 1935). The cheap Japanese cotton cloth drove expensive European cloth out of the market. In these conditions, a restriction on the import of textiles (Crisis-textielinvoerverordening) was declared in 1933 (renewed in 1934). A Dutch record says: “By this protective measure, the import of coloured woven clothing materials, \textit{sarong}, \textit{kain} and so on decreased considerably”\textsuperscript{40}. Although called a restriction of ‘imports’, it was in reality a move to

\textsuperscript{39} Bpk Djohan Hanafiah, 2002, interview.
\textsuperscript{40} “Door deze beschermende maatregel werd de import van bontgeweven kleedingstoffen, sarongs, kains etc. belangrijk ingekrompen” (\textit{Jaarverslag van de handelsvereeniging}, 1934: 28).
replace cheap Japanese textiles with more expensive Dutch products (Clarence-Smith, 2000: 234). Clarence-Smith argues that the restriction caused damage to local batik producers, due to the rise in the costs of imported cloth and dyes. According to him, the Foreign Orientals faced a major problem, since the government started to think that ownership of workshops should ideally have been in the hands of indigenous people (ibid.: 230, 234). According to a Dutch document, however, the restriction proved advantageous to local textile factories, since the sales of locally made sarong increased (Jaarverslag van de handelsvereeniging, 1934: 28).

According to Steinbuch, the head of the Bandung textile establishment visited Palembang in 1934 to provide instruction to an Arab entrepreneur who wanted to use the surplus energy from his two wood sawmills and a soft drinks and ices factory to set up a mechanical dying and weaving works. Steinbuch himself asked the head of the Bandung textile establishment to investigate whether textile factories could be founded in the countryside. As a result of the investigation, a factory making silk sarong was established in a village in the countryside. Another report argued that the cottage textile industry would have to begin to concentrate on silk cloth to draw a clear distinction from Javanese weaving, which produced semi-silks and semi-synthetic silk sarong. As mentioned in reason B, these actions were aimed at developing local textile industries which could compete with imported products. Songket was, therefore, not a target for such support.

As the demand for songket fell, materials became in short supply, and as no support was obtained, the songket industry could do nothing but go into decline. It was also natural that weavers should leave an unprofitable job and move to a more viable
one. Some might have moved to work in the cotton industry or in the plantations. That was probably what Steinbuch observed in the mid-1930s.

The Japanese captured Palembang in February 1942, primarily to secure the oil supplies there, and their occupation was to continue until 1945. No records regarding the local weaving industry during the Japanese occupation have been found. Further interviews with elderly women are necessary to discover what happened to the songket industry at that time. However, it must have been a hard time for songket weaving due to the lack of materials and the conditions of the Japanese occupation. The Japanese army set up a post near 30 Ilir. Young women stayed at home to avoid meeting Japanese soldiers; when they were at home, they did not wish to attract the attention of the Japanese. Even if they had had sufficient materials, they were probably unable to weave, since the loom was very noisy and might invite Japanese attention. Under these circumstances, it is unsurprising that songket weaving was driven to the verge of extinction. Its revival had to wait until the 1960s.

4.2.2 Songket culture between 1900 and the 1940s

Although the songket industry declined in the early twentieth century, songket was still used for special occasions. A Dutch record of 1920 states:

At a wedding feast or engagement, one can see groups of Palembang women and girls wearing splendid silk and velvet jackets, sarongs woven with gold thread and selendangs

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42 Ibu Zuro, 2002, interview.
that are more beautiful still, walking along the roads. Nowadays, a nicely-made songket will cost at least f120 and as much as f200.

The silk and velvet jackets probably signified a *baju kurung*, and that was coordinated with *sarong* and *selendang* of songket. A *sarong* and *selendang* possibly had different designs, since matching *sarong* and *selendang* only started to be produced during the 1960s. The situation was probably the same in Indragiri, Riau; the Assistant Resident there, V. Obdeyn, reported that the people generally wore simple cloth made of cotton or silk, or sometimes silk cloth adorned with gold thread in the *kepala*, in ceremonies in the 1920s; the latter could barely be considered as songket. According to him, the cloth made of cotton cost from f7 to 10, that of silk from f15 to 20, and that adorned with a bit of gold thread cost from f35 to 40. Although cloth fully interwoven with gold thread was still worn, it cost from f200 to 300 at that time (Obdeyn, 1929: 93). It seems to have been too expensive for ordinary people to wear songket.

In the *Memorie van Overgave* of 1928, the then Resident Tijdeman (or Tideman) inserted a photograph of a bride and groom wearing a traditional costume of songket (Plate 4.13). This couple were possibly from wealthy families. They are sitting on a rectangular mat spread on the floor, the bride in front and the groom at the rear. In front of the bride there is a *sirih* box. The bride is wearing a *sarong* of songket, probably *songket lepus*, and a *baju kurung* probably made of velvet with gold adornments. The *baju kurung* of this type is still worn in traditional ceremonies at the present time. The bride is also wearing head ornaments, a pendant, several bracelets and rings. She has put

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powder on her face and wears nail polish. She is sitting on a cushion covered with lace. The details of the groom’s clothing are not clearly shown in the photograph. He is wearing a jacket made of lustrous cloth, and possibly a sarong of songket.

Plate 4.13: A bride and groom (ARA, Tijdeman, pp. 44)

Songket was also worn by local women attending official events. There is a photograph in which some women wearing local costumes attended an official event when the Dutch Governor-General and his wife visited Palembang on 3rd August 1920\textsuperscript{44}. The costumes cannot be seen clearly in the photograph, but two women were wearing a baju kurung, a sarong and a selendang, which was draped on the right shoulder and fastened by a belt on the left side of the waist. The sarong and selendang were possibly songket. In another photograph of an official event on the Dutch Queen’s

\textsuperscript{44} KITLV photo collection 32328.
birthday around 1935, two women wearing the same kind of costumes as those worn in the event in 1920 can be seen dancing at the Resident’s Office.\textsuperscript{45}

In the newspaper the \textit{Palembangsch Nieuwsblad voor Zuid Sumatra & Banka} dated 31st January 1941, there is an article about the solemn installation of members of the Palembang Council. In the photograph, the alderman of Palembang is posing with the Dutch community secretary. The alderman wears traditional Palembang clothing. His jacket with a stand-up collar has a whitish background on which some motifs are woven, possibly with songket work. It appears to be similar in style to that in Plate 4.5. Under the jacket he is wearing a waistcoat or a vest fastened with some small buttons in the front, which seems to be like that shown in Plate 4.6. A short \textit{sarong} made of \textit{kain tajung} worn over trousers is fastened with a belt and buckle. He is also wearing a \textit{tanjak}.

Some local people in Palembang, descendants of the local nobility in particular, still keep old pieces of songket, some of which date back a hundred years or more. One eighty-year-old woman keeps several pieces woven in the mid-twentieth century or earlier. Some of them were inherited from her grandmother, so they could have been woven in the early twentieth century. The \textit{sarong} shown in Plate 4.14, which is from

\begin{quote}
Plate 4.14: \textit{Sarong} of songket (Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo private collection). It could be one hundred years old.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{45} KITLV photo collection 12712.
her collection, measures 170cm (circumference) by 84cm, and it has a yellow lining by which the *sarong* is lengthened; *sarong* in the present size appeared in the early or mid-twentieth century at the latest. She also has a *baju kurung songket* with a purple background over which the *biji pare* pattern is woven (see Appendix H, Plate H.14).

Songket was indispensable for special occasions, such as wedding ceremonies, traditional dance performances and receptions for important foreign visitors. It seems that people still followed strict rules and regulations regarding the wearing of songket in the early twentieth century. One descendant of the Palembang nobility, who held the title of *raden ayu*, told me that noble people prepared a songket for a new-born baby. If the baby was a boy, the songket was given to his future wife. If the baby was a girl, she could wear it after she married, since unmarried women were not allowed to wear songket. This explains why she had to ask her father for permission to wear songket when she performed a traditional Palembang dance at a school event in Java at the end of the 1930s. Her father specially allowed her to wear songket, considering that the dance was performed in Java, not in Palembang. This story suggests that many people still knew such regulations regarding songket at that time.

**4.3 Conclusion**

The songket industry, which had been patronized by the Sultan and nobles during the sultanate period, was probably supported by wealthy Arabs and Chinese, as well as some nobles who remained rich after the abolition of the sultanate. The status

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46 Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo, 2002, interview.
marker for the nobility changed into a symbol of wealth. The songket industry of Palembang prospered in the nineteenth century, having the support of these wealthy people. Songket was also exported, gaining customers outside Palembang.

Steinbuch’s report reveals, however, that the industry declined in the mid-1930s. The number of people who wished to wear songket might have decreased, as Steinbuch suggested, because some wealthy people could no longer afford songket as the economic situation deteriorated in the 1930s. Some descendants of the nobility who were affected by the social movement for native welfare and democratisation which started in the early twentieth century might have felt some uneasiness at wearing songket. Local entrepreneurs and the Dutch colonial government supported the manufacturing of cheaper cloths to compete with imported cheap textiles, but songket was left out. Many weavers must have abandoned songket weaving. Under these circumstances, the industry could no longer prosper. The songket industry is indeed directly influenced by economic and social conditions.

Although songket weaving could no longer constitute an ‘industry’ in Palembang, songket weaving was continued by a small group of people using natural fibres such as pineapple and gold thread taken from old songket in place of silk thread and newly-imported gold thread, possibly supported by descendants of high-ranking nobles. These people, who probably had a strong awareness that songket was their traditional cloth, continuously used it for a number of special occasions, thereby maintaining their songket tradition.
Chapter 5

The Renaissance of the Songket Industry

The recent history of Palembang songket started with the struggle of the local people to revive songket weaving in the late 1960s. It is said that one indigenous noblewoman, in particular, played a significant role in this movement. Once this traditional handicraft was resumed, it increased in scale. In this chapter, the efforts to revive and develop songket weaving will be examined first. Then, I shall consider changes in the techniques of making songket, the organisation of the industry, and the characteristics of the workers. Finally, I shall suggest what the revival of the songket industry brought to the Palembang society.

5.1 Endeavours to revive the songket industry

After the Second World War ended, materials for songket, such as silk thread and real gold thread, were still unavailable. Women’s circumstances also changed; the conventional idea that women should stay at home collapsed, and they started to work in town. Education of girls was also recommended, and they started to go to school. (Kota Palembang, 1956, 141). They did not consider returning to the loom. In these

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1 Ibu Robima, 2002, interview. Some women had already worked in offices before Independence. For example, a descendant of the local nobility, Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo (2002, interview), worked at the Post Office during the time of the Japanese Occupation.
circumstances, the songket industry all but disappeared in the 1940s. In the 1950s, some people began to weave songket again, but on a small scale (RPM, 1977/1978). Natural fibres, such as pineapple, were used as substitutes for silk thread, and gold thread removed from old songket was recycled for use in new cloths².

Around 1965, one indigenous noblewoman of Palembang named Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo started a project for reviving the songket industry³. She was disappointed to see the decay of songket weaving there and resolved to do what she could to revive it. This is locally believed to have been the first major movement for the revival of Palembang songket. Why was her project initiated around 1965? Unfortunately, Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo did not shed light on this point. However, the change of regime from Sukarno to Suharto, accession to the IMF in 1966 and the movement to protect local people’s business around that time no doubt supported this project. According to Holtzappel, the first priority of Indonesian nationalist leaders after 1945 was to unify the new nation. Under Sukarno’s leadership, they established a new moral code so that the individual would make efforts for national development rather than mobilize their family ties to preserve local custom (1997: 70). In this climate, the revival of a local handicraft was possibly not a matter of concern during the Sukarno era. Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo might also have noticed that Palembang was losing its identity and culture, as the city itself was developing as the capital of the province and as an important industrial area which provided oil, rubber and other forest products.

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² Cek Rus, 2002, interview. Pineapple leaf fibre is soft, fine, white or cream, lustrous and flexible. It has been extensively used for textiles in the Philippines (Montinola, 1991: 50-51).
³ Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo was born in Palembang in 1925, as a daughter of a noble family (her father was titled raden). She married the Javanese Colonel, Bpk Bambang Utoyo. When they asked her father for permission to marry, he objected first, since he thought a woman of Palembang should marry a man of Palembang (Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo, 2002, interview). High-ranking people still followed the old custom of Palembang in the 1940s.
It seems, however, that it was a difficult task, since the main materials, gold and silk thread, were still difficult to obtain. Silk thread was brought to Palembang from Sulawesi, but was of lower quality than the Chinese thread used previously\(^4\). According to an Indonesian source, silk thread started to be imported from China and Taiwan in 1966, and a local silk industry was also founded (RPM, 1977/1978). However, it seems that silk was still not abundant at that time, due to the government policy that everyday cloth should be the first priority and due to the lack of foreign exchange (see Chapter 4). However, in the 1960s, the Indonesian Government itself set up a programme for securing textiles materials, establishing the industry, and providing the people with sufficient cloth (Asian Textile Survey, 1967/1968: 99, 102; 1969/1970: 122). The Government considered the supply of basic clothing as the most urgent matter; therefore, they focused on cotton and rayon, and the “import of raw silk is virtually prohibited owing to lack of foreign exchange” (Asian Textile Annual, 1962: 98; Asian Textile Bi-Annual, 1965/1966: 124; Asian Textile Survey, 1967/1968: 102). People eventually started to use other materials such as cotton and rayon for songket weaving. Gold-wrapped thread made of real gold was also still unavailable, but synthetically coloured gold thread started to be imported from Japan, India and Europe around the end of 1966\(^5\) (RPM, 1977/1978). The artificial gold thread was much cheaper than the real gold thread and reasonably attractive.

\(^4\) Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo, 2004, interview.

\(^5\) Artificial gold thread seems to have already existed in the early twentieth century and was used for embroidery, since Jasper and Mas Pirngadie recorded that: “there is a distinction between real and artificial gold thread […] Embroiderers also use the so-called giem, imitation gold or silver thread (Men onderscheidt echt en onecht gouddraad […] Borduursters bezigen ook het z.g. giem, imitatie goud- of zilverdraad)” (1912: 22).
Chapter 5. The Renaissance of the Songket Industry

In the first place, Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo realised that all the remaining songket weavers in Palembang were very old and no longer very creative or active. She felt the need to bring younger weavers into the industry who could carry the new songket industry forward. Initially, she recruited ten young people to train as songket weavers, and asked some experienced weavers to teach them the techniques\(^6\). In the 1970s, men also started to weave songket. Bapak Ali, who started songket weaving in 1976, claimed that he was one of the first male songket weavers in Palembang. According to him, there were three other male weavers when he started weaving\(^7\).

Certain of the traditional methods in making songket were changed on this occasion. Firstly, weavers began to insert three threads, for both silk weft thread and gold thread, at one time, while previously only one thread had been woven at a time\(^8\). This was necessary because the artificial gold thread was much thinner than real gold thread (see Plate 2.61 in Chapter 2), and so it was very difficult to see the thread if only one strand was inserted at a time. Fortunately, the price was not high, and the supply was sufficient to permit its lavish use. This three-thread-weft method also shortened the weaving time\(^9\). Renovation also started among \textit{tukang cekit} (motif-stick arrangers). They started to use a design plan as a guide (see Plate 2.68 in Chapter 2), whereas they had previously copied motifs directly from the original songket cloth. This new method made the job easier, and people could learn the techniques quickly\(^{10}\).

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\(^6\) A shop brochure, the \textit{Serengam Setia}.
\(^7\) Bpk Ali, 2005, interview.
\(^8\) According to Bapak Ali, however, old \textit{sarong} were often woven with a single real gold thread and a triple silk weft, probably to prevent the silk weft from wearing out by being rubbed against the real gold thread (2005, interview).
\(^9\) Cek Yeni, 2002, interview.
\(^10\) Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo, 2004, interview.
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Some people remember that not so many sets of motif-sticks were arranged on the warp before the 1960s as they are now. Weavers arranged the motif-sticks by themselves while they were weaving, only for the part which they were going to produce, and took them away after they finished the part\(^\text{11}\). It seems that this approach enabled weavers to make designs flexibly. According to Cek Amnah Nawawi, sometimes six rows of different types of figure were woven in the centre-field\(^\text{12}\), although I have not seen such songket in Palembang or museums.

Next, Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo set about developing a sales system. Before the 1960s, there was no songket shop in Palembang\(^\text{13}\). Many women used to weave songket for their own use or ask their acquaintances to weave. Buyers from other places, such as Medan, also directly visited a weaver’s house to order songket\(^\text{14}\). Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo, then, invested in a songket shop, ‘Serengam Setia’, in 32 Ilir. This was the first shop of its kind in Palembang after the Second World War. Although it was a small space, formed simply by converting the front part of a traditional house, *rumah limas*, it offered the weavers a place where they could bring in their cloths to sell. Around the same time, two other shops, ‘Cek Onah’ and ‘Cek Ipar’, were also founded in 30 Ilir by two different families who held a noble title\(^\text{15}\). The system in which manufacturers and distributors were directly connected was, thus, coordinated.

Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo recalls those days: ‘Even though songket was ready in shops, the industry might disappear again if people did not buy songket. So, I thought

\(^{11}\) Cek Amnah Nawawi, Bpk Ali, 2005, interview.
\(^{12}\) Cek Amnah Nawawi, 2005, interview.
\(^{13}\) Budhing reported in 1866 that there were textile shops which sold songket in Palembang (1866: 88). It seems, however, that these shops were probably closed down by 1945.
\(^{14}\) Cek Rus, 2002, interview.
\(^{15}\) Ibu Maimuna, 2002, interview.
that we needed to change songket itself, so that it suited the people's demands.' She departed from the conventional songket colours, which were generally strong, such as maroon, purple, red, sombre yellow and dark green. Instead, she suggested that weavers begin to use soft and bright colours, such as cream, pink, light blue and pastel grey. She also introduced new colour combinations for songket; for example, pink for the centre field and green for the borders along the selvages. She was able to experiment in this way using synthetic dyes. The synthetic dyes had been developed and commercialised in England, France and Germany after a way of synthesising a lilac dye (mauve) was discovered in England by William H. Perkin in 1856 (Horsfall and Lawrie, 1949: 4-7; Britannica vol.15, 2002: 896). Synthetic dyes were later used widely in Indonesia. In 1966, dyestuffs and chemicals and other materials for the textile industry worth about one million US dollars were imported under British grants (Asian Textile Survey, 1969/1970: 124). According to one local woman, synthetic dyes became popular in Palembang in the 1970s, while natural dyes, derived from some kind of tea and areca nut, were still used. The synthetic dyes broadened the availability of colours, and the new range of colours attracted new customers. Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo also reduced the size of the selendang (shoulder cloth), which had previously been as wide as a sarong and longer than two metres. The small selendang was well-received by the people, because it was cheaper and also easier to wear. It is probably at the same time that a set of selendang and sarong was invented, while people previously wove a

16 According to Ibu Maimuna, natural dyes were still used in the 1970s together with synthetic dyes in Palembang (Ibu Maimuna, 2002, interview).
17 Women used to wear a selendang over the head like a veil in order to show off the songket and possibly also hide their faces. Therefore, the large one was more suitable for these purposes (Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo, 2002, interview).
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*selendang* or a *sarong* individually\(^{18}\). The city started to promote the songket industry. In the Palembang guidebook of 1971, songket weaving is mentioned for the first time as one of the local cultural arts (*seni budaya*) with a photograph of a young woman weaving songket (*Guide Book, 1971: 83, 85, 121*).

The people’s efforts and new experiments started to bear fruit in the 1980s. The number of weavers increased, and the sales of songket also picked up\(^ {19}\). According to research undertaken by the Proyek Pengembangan Industri Kecil dan Menengah (Development Project for Small- and Medium-sized Industries, PIKM, 1997/1998: 5), there were only 31 people engaged in the songket industry in 1969, but the number had grown to 1,200 by 1985. In the 1980s, Ministries and BUMN (Badan Usaha Milik Negara: government-managed companies) also supported the songket industry of Palembang. In 1989, PT. Pupuk Sriwijaya (Pusri), a fertilizer company based in Palembang, became a sponsor of ‘Serengam Setia’ and gave advice on management and on dyeing techniques\(^ {20}\). A shop, ‘Pesona Bari’, also received support from the Council of Industry and PT. Pusri\(^ {21}\), and Cek Onah received management support from the Ministry of Industry\(^ {22}\). Also PT. Pusri, PT. PLN (an electric power company), PT. Telekomunikasi Indonesia (a telecommunication company) and other government-managed companies supported small and medium-sized enterprises by offering low-interest loans and sponsorship for attending expositions, and this support continues today\(^ {23}\).

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\(^{18}\) Cek Amnah Nawawi, Bpk Ali, 2005, interview.

\(^{19}\) A shop brochure, the *Serengam Setia*.

\(^{20}\) Cek Yeni, 2002, interview.

\(^{21}\) A shop brochure, ‘*Pesona Bari*’.

\(^{22}\) Bpk Jakfar Sidik, 2002, interview.

\(^{23}\) Cek Yeni, 2005, interview.
According to the PIKM (1997/1998: 5-6), 270 groups were engaged in the songket industry in Palembang in 1997. However, this number is believed to have decreased after the economic depression of 1997. There is one workshop which used to keep about fifteen songket weavers. A photograph taken by an American tourist in 1997 shows many women smilingly weaving songket in this workshop. Its owner explains that it was very lively at that time, so that researchers and tourists often visited them to see the weaving. When the economic depression occurred in 1997-8, however, the price of silk thread increased and the workshop ran into financial difficulties. As a result, the owner was no longer able to employ such a large number of weavers. Now, she hires only five weavers, who are from a village outside of Palembang. Another small workshop also stopped weaving songket in 1998, due to the increased cost of silk thread. This unit makes only pelangi now$^{24}$. One of the oldest songket shops also had fewer registered weavers after 1997.

By 2002, however, it seems that the songket industry of Palembang had stabilised. The people involved in the industry were still maintaining their efforts to expand the market and trying to find new potential. In the following sections, the present situation of the songket industry will be examined.

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$^{24}$ The leader of RT (Rukan Tetangga = a neighbourhood association), 2001, interview.
Chapter 5. The Renaissance of the Songket Industry

5.2 Present situation of the songket industry

5.2.1 The areas of songket weaving and related processes

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the procedure for making songket is divided into several specialisations such as reeling, dyeing, arranging equipment and then setting motifs on the warp, and weaving. Many people are, therefore, involved in the songket industry. Each specialisation is generally concentrated in one or more specific areas of the city (Map 5).

Songket materials are mainly sold at the Pasar Enambelas (Enambelas Market). In this huge market by the Ampera Bridge on the River Musi, there is a small area consisting of two alleys, on both sides of which small booths stand side-by-side, selling materials and equipment for weaving and also finished products. The majority of the people working there are Arabs. There are also some Chinese. They sell various kinds of thread, such as Chinese pre-dyed silk thread, dyed silk thread, limar thread (thread on which motifs are dyed) and artificial gold thread, and some equipment for the loom such as combs, sword-beaters and sticks (lidi). Thread-dyers and limar-thread-makers also come here to buy Chinese pre-dyed silk thread, and many weavers usually buy the materials for their work here.

Beyond the Ampera Bridge, on the south side of the River Musi is the Ulu area. Thread-dyers mainly work in this area, namely in 3, 4 and 5 Ulu, and the limar-thread makers are concentrated in 15 Ulu. 15 Ulu and the next block, Tuan Kentang, are concentrations of the domestic industry of pelangi and of kain tajung. In these two blocks, there are also several songket weavers.
However, the centre of the songket industry of Palembang is 30 Ilir, also known as Daerah Suro. Many songket weavers, artisans who arrange the warp and songket shops, are concentrated in this area.

This area is convenient for the industry, since it is close to the Pasar Enambelas (around 10 minutes by microbus), and also to the thread-dyers’ area in 3, 4, and 5 Ulu, crossing the river by boat. It is also located near the site of the kraton (court), and it was one of the concentrations of the nobles after the abolition of the sultanate (see Chapter 4). Several rumah limas still remain here, demonstrating that wealthy people, who were also supporters of traditional Palembang culture, used to live in this historical area. On the two main roads going through Daerah Suro, Jl. Kirangga Wirsentika (Jl.: Jalan = Street) and Jl. Ki Gede Ing Suro, there are 22 textile shops within a short distance of each other (as of September 2002; Map 6). The three oldest shops, ‘Serengam Setia’, ‘Cek Onah’ and ‘Cek Ipar’, have increased in size over the past 20 or so years to become large establishments. ‘Cek Ipar’ now has seven branches in Palembang, run by the children of the founder. One of the shops, ‘Zainal Songket’, has a branch store in Jakarta. Almost all the songket shops in Daerah Suro are kept by descendants of the

Plate 5.1: The gate standing at the entrance of 30 Ilir. The message says: “Selamat dating anda memasuki kawasan industri songket (Welcome: you enter the area of the songket industry)”.

25 Suro was an old village name for 30 Ilir, but the name was abolished in 1824 when the Dutch conducted the re-zoning. However, local people still use this old name.
local nobility. Ibu Rohani, the owner of a middle-sized shop, ‘Cik Una’, proudly claimed that no one could manage the business of this traditional craft but the indigenous people of Palembang\textsuperscript{26}.

The inner part of Jl. Ki Gede Ing Suro and Jl. Kirangga Wirsentika is the place where many songket artisans and weavers live. As soon as one steps into this area, especially going through the lanes (lorong), Lr. Sawah and Lr. Setia Budi, one hears the sound of the beating of the looms on all sides. According to a weaver, this is the area with the main concentration of songket weavers in Daerah Suro\textsuperscript{27}.

5.2.2 The organisation of the songket industry

The present songket industry founded in Daerah Suro is organised mainly by producers (such as weavers, tukang cekit and other artisans), shops and intermediaries between the first two positions. One way to understand their interrelationship is to study the channels through which songket weavers receive orders.

There are three types of songket weavers. One comprises those who have made a sub-contract with a songket shop; the second sells through a middleman; and the third embraces independent weavers who receive orders directly from customers. Weavers generally focus on one of these routes, but some also keep a reserve channel, depending on the circumstances.

Many songket weavers enter into a sub-contract with a fabric shop. For instance, the shop ‘Cik Una’ has twelve weavers\textsuperscript{28}, while another shop, ‘Serengam Setia’, has a

\textsuperscript{26} Ibu Rohani, 2002, interview.  
\textsuperscript{27} Mbak Farida, 2002, interview.  
\textsuperscript{28} Ibu Rohani, 2002, interview.
list of about 100 weavers, although some of them are not active. ‘Serengam Setia’ holds
the data of the weavers on small cards. On each card, personal information about a
weaver is recorded, i.e. her name, address, and the designs which she can weave. Shops generally supply everything necessary for weaving to sub-contracted weavers;
such as yarns and the warp arranged by tukang cekit and tukang guni, to whom the shop
gives a commission (for the necessary articles, see Table 5.1 below). When a weaver
runs out of weft thread or other materials in the middle of weaving, she can obtain
additional supplies from the shop. When a weaver finishes weaving, she brings the
songket to the shop, and obtains a fee in return. The fee from a shop is about Rp.
250,000 a set (a sarong and selendang) on average.

This business form, generally known as the ‘putting-out system’, is not peculiar
to the present songket industry of Palembang. It has also been found elsewhere, for
instance, in the present batik industry in Java, in the silk weaving industry of Japan from
the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, and in the cotton weaving
industry of England before the power loom became popular (Bythell, 1969: 33-35;
weaving’ based on the putting-out system was the previous stage before the shift to
weaving conducted in the ‘handloom weaving shed’, which was, in turn, a half-way
stage towards the modern power-driven weaving industry in a factory (1969: 33-34). In
Palembang, however, some sub-contracted weavers work at home, but some weave at a
workshop which belongs to the shop. It depends on the situation of the shop and the
weaver. Some shops are small, so they do not have workshops. Weavers who have
small children or who have to do housework need to work at home, while young

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29 Cek Yeni, 2002, interview.
weavers who are not tied down to housekeeping or child-rearing like to work at a workshop with other weavers, such as the large workshop of ‘Fikri Koleksi’, where 10 young weavers are usually weaving.

Bythell has argued that workers in the handloom-weaving-shed were less independent than the domestic weavers, since the former were always under supervision (1969: 33-34). In contrast, domestic weavers usually lived in remote places and were able to work freely, as in a case in Japan reported by Abé and Saito, where some domestic weavers made contracts with more than one clothier (1988: 152). This tendency can be found with songket weavers in Palembang as well; some subcontractors who weave at home also take orders privately, while weavers working at a shop’s workshop dedicate themselves to the shop. They come to the workshop around 9 o’clock in the morning and work until 5 o’clock in the evening, excluding the lunch break. They are paid piecework rates. However, some of them are apparently not strictly controlled by the shop. For example, one proprietor of a shop is not happy with her workers, who take long lunch breaks and often have a day off in order to get some money by helping with cooking at their acquaintance’s wedding party. She commented that weavers generally used to work harder when she was young.

Considerable numbers of weavers obtain orders from a middleman. It seems there are various reasons why they work for a middleman. These weavers may live far from any songket shops, or they may be helping a weaver who has already made a sub-contract with one. The middlemen mediate between weavers and songket shops or private customers. Their backgrounds are various. Some are professional agents who buy songket from weavers and sell to shops in and outside Palembang. Some are simply weavers who enter into a sub-contract with a shop as a representative of other weavers.
Chapter 5. The Renaissance of the Songket Industry

(possibly their family, relatives and/or friends). Some were originally weavers, who managed to save money for materials and equipment and started to hire some weavers to handle their orders. Middlemen generally supply materials to weavers in the same way that shops do. There are also some middlemen who do not supply anything to weavers; in this case the weavers have to buy materials at the market and visit the *tukang cekit* to order designs by themselves. When a middleman receives finished songket, he pays fees to the weaver, generally between Rp. 250,000 and Rp. 350,000 a set (as of 2002), and the expenses, if the weaver bought the materials herself.

Some weavers work independently. They take orders directly from customers. The inclusive fee is generally more than Rp.700,000 (as of 2002), depending on the quality of the materials and the designs which the customer requests. Needless to say, the independent weaver has to prepare everything for weaving herself. It is common, therefore, for the weaver to ask the customer for some money in advance, in order to buy materials. The customer pays the balance on receiving the finished songket. Skilled weavers can get orders easily, because their reputation spreads widely by word-of-mouth. When they succeed in saving enough money, they may start to hire other weavers to share their orders and become a kind of middleman. On the other hand, unskilled independent weavers need to come to small booths in *Pasar Enambelas* to sell their cloths at a low price. Especially in the countryside, there are many weavers who make cheap songket and do business with keepers of these booths in the market. They usually receive half their payment in cash and the other half in materials for the next weaving.  

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30 Mbak Mala, 2002, interview.
Independent weavers can obtain more money than hired weavers, but they have to find customers. For customers, there are some advantages and disadvantages in either case, buying songket at a shop or dealing directly with a weaver. For example, a customer can see various types of songket at a shop, and can choose one piece among them, checking the quality at the same time. The price is, however, generally more expensive at a shop. On the other hand, if a customer asks a weaver to weave, it will be cheaper and she can have whatever designs and colours she likes; but it may be difficult to control the quality. There are some risks, for example, the colour may not be exactly the same as the customer had visualised beforehand, or the weaver may make some mistakes in weaving. It is, therefore, important for a customer to choose a good weaver.

How much does an independent weaver need to pay for the preparation? The list below shows the expenses for one set (selendang and sarong) of songket.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Materials</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warp thread (1 bundle*)</td>
<td>250,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weft thread (3 rolls)</td>
<td>60,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gold thread (3 rolls)</td>
<td>81,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub total</td>
<td>391,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Equipment</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comb</td>
<td>45,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Arrangement for the warp</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nyoco suri (to set the comb on the warp)</td>
<td>60,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngelap (to wind the warp on the beam)</td>
<td>25,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guni (to make heddles)</td>
<td>24,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cekit (to arrange motif-sticks)</td>
<td>350,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub total</td>
<td>459,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>895,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Three sets of sarong and selendang of songket can be made from one bundle of warp thread.

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31 Mbak Farida, 2002, interview.
These are the average costs of materials as of 2002. Prices of threads vary depending on the quality. Fees for labour also depend on the workers, and especially the fee for cekit depends on the number and complexity of designs as well.

At first sight it seems that weavers have to cover considerable expenses in weaving songket. Not all of the expenses above, however, need be paid every time. For example, one bundle of the warp thread, as mentioned above, is enough for three sets of songket. The comb and arrangement of equipment also need not be prepared as long as the same designs are woven. If the weaver gets another order for the same type of songket, she will simply buy gold thread and weft thread. A weaver, therefore, tries to get many orders for the same type of songket, so that she can use the same warp. If, for example, she gets four orders for the same type of songket, she asks an artisan to add threads to the warp.

If the songket is woven with benang emas jantung (real gold thread), the fees of weavers and the costs become much higher than indicated above, because the weavers need a great deal of time. Since the benang emas jantung is no longer manufactured, weavers have to take it manually from old pieces of songket. Any damaged part has to be cut off; therefore, the pieces of benang emas jantung are usually too short to use the shuttle. Weavers, instead, have to introduce it piece by piece. Furthermore, the benang emas jantung is very expensive, so weavers need to be careful not to make any mistakes. For this demanding work, hired weavers are paid Rp. 900,000 or more per set by the middleman, depending on the designs. Independent weavers can ask at least Rp. 3,000,000 from the customer (these are fees as of 2002).

Who actually buys songket? Local women who have a certain level of wealth might sometimes buy songket in order to wear it for a ceremony. Surprisingly,
considerable numbers of local Palembang people do not yet know where the songket-weaving centre is in Palembang. Therefore, many people buy songket at one of the shops which have franchises in department stores in the town. People who are not well off may buy cheap songket in the market. People who know about Daerah Suro usually shop there. Since there are many shops in Daerah Suro, some go to their favourite ones and some visit several shops to find a good offer. People who live near a songket weaver’s house or know a songket weaver may ask her directly for weaving. A local woman, the mother of a twenty-two-year-old woman, directly ordered a sarong of songket from a familiar weaver for her daughter’s wedding costume. She specified the colour, designs, and type of gold thread, then obtained a sarong with the berantai bungo bintang design on a red background. Another woman, who was originally from Cirebon, Java, also ordered a sarong and selendang of songket from a weaver with whom she became acquainted by chance. She simply told the weaver roughly the colour which she wanted and left the design to the weaver’s discretion, since she did not have any firm idea herself. What she got two months later was a set in light green for the centre-field and in pink for the borders along the selvages, with the bungo tabor design. It was beautifully woven, but there was a mistake in a motif arrangement.

Besides the local demand, there is also another market. In Daerah Suro, one sometimes sees coaches, which bring customers from Malaysia, Singapore or Brunei, parked in front of songket shops. The Javanese and Medanese are also good customers.

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32 It is presumably because people usually do not want to go to other villages (kampung), unless they have important business there. They still have ‘village-consciousness’ and really believe other villages are dangerous, even those in their neighbourhood. It is also because neighbourhood associations are well developed, and strangers are immediately reported to the leader of the association.

33 Ibu Rusdiyati, 2002, interview.
of Palembang songket. How do shops find these customers? In the next section, the marketing activities of the Palembang songket industry will be examined.

5.2.3 Efforts to invigorate the songket industry

The songket shops, the three big ones in particular, are always trying to develop new markets. They often participate in exhibitions, such as those held in Palembang sponsored by the province of South Sumatra and those in Jakarta sponsored by the Industry and Commerce Service (Dinas Perindustrian dan Perdagangan). The cost is high, but it is important for the shops to participate in exhibitions for promotional purposes and to maintain a good relationship with the official organisation.\(^{34}\) The shops can also expect sponsorship for participation from BUMN, which aims to support local small and medium-sized enterprises.\(^{35}\) Furthermore, since customers in Java tend to buy songket at a high price, the shops can do better business there. Sometimes they have an opportunity to participate in expositions held in neighbouring countries, such as Malaysia and Brunei, and it is an ideal occasion to promote their products widely. One weaver who has been to Brunei to help an exposition was amazed by the people’s enthusiasm for Palembang songket there. He explained: “The people of Brunei were very serious about Palembang songket. They came to our exposition and did not go away without buying anything. We sold out all our products.”\(^{36}\)

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\(^{34}\) Cek Yeni, 2002, interview.
\(^{35}\) Mbak Mala, 2002, interview. Companies which actively support local small- and medium-sized industries sometimes receive an official commendation from the Government.
\(^{36}\) Bpk Ali, 2005, interview.
songket\textsuperscript{37}. These three countries are also part of the Malay world, and their enthusiasm for elaborate songket could be founded on their shared Malay culture. Everywhere in the Malay world courts had tradition of wearing songket in ceremonies and on other special occasions (see Muzium Brunei, 1978; Selvanayagam, 1990: xxii, 9; Lloyd, 1994).

Now textile shops are ushering in a new phase in the songket industry. ‘Fikri Koleksi’ has introduced original, exciting and unconventional colours and designs. ‘Zainal Songket’ offers two types of wedding packages for hire, which include songket costumes for the groom and bride, songket cloth for their mothers, special clothes for their fathers, a make-up service and dancers for the wedding party. Since the majority of local people hire wedding costumes including accessories, even though some couples might purchase new \textit{sarong} and \textit{dodot} of songket, wedding packages that include everything necessary for the ceremony are in much demand. This shop sometimes also holds a songket fashion show at a major hotel in Daerah Suro. They publicise the show on the radio and invite young Palembangese to model on the show, which includes dresses made of songket cloth, but in a Western style.

The most prominent enterprise in which the people are involved is the Co-operative for the Handicraft and Manufacture of Palembang Songket (Koperasi Kerajinan dan Industri Songket Palembang: KOPSOP). It was founded in 30 Ilir in the early 1990s, for the purpose of promoting Palembang songket and supporting workers in the industry (Plate 5.2).

\textsuperscript{37} The shop ‘Cek Ipar’, 2002, interview.
The KOPSOP has three main activities, i.e. to loan money to weavers at low interest, to participate in industrial exhibitions, and to sell songket and materials. The members, at least in theory, enjoy certain advantages. For example, they can obtain a loan from the co-operative at only 0.5% interest. They can also sell their cloths to the co-operative at a price fixed by negotiation, and can buy materials from the co-operative. Since the co-operative also functions as a liaison office for the songket industry, it often receives enquiries from potential customers outside Palembang and information about advertising opportunities. Therefore, the co-operative can introduce new customers and give information about exhibitions to the members. According to a member of the co-operative, many people still enquire about songket at the village office of 30 Ilir first, then the enquiry is simply forwarded to the co-operative. In fact, a few years ago when a high official from Brunei came to Palembang with his wife, who was interested in songket, the provincial office ordered the village office to send some weavers to the hotel where they stayed, to show them the songket weaving. The order was immediately forwarded to the co-operative, and two weavers were sent to the hotel, bringing looms and materials to give a demonstration of songket weaving. After the demonstration, the wife of the official bought several sets of songket.  

Plate 5.2: The office of Koperasi Kerajinan dan Industri Songket Palembang (Co-operative for the Handicraft and Manufacture of Palembang Songket) located in 30 Ilir.

38 Mbak Tinte, 2002, interview.
Chapter 5. The Renaissance of the Songket Industry

It seems that the advantages of membership are considerable. There are, however, problems. Firstly, new members cannot borrow money for the first five months. Even if a new member needs some money immediately, she must first pay the membership fee and then wait for five months. The fees charged for membership comprise:

- Admission fee (uang pangkal): Rp. 1,500,
- Fee for the accumulation of capital (uang simpanan bokok): Rp. 10,000,
- Monthly membership fee (uang simpanan wajib): Rp. 3,000 per month,
- Voluntary fee for saving (uang simpanan sukarela): optional.

The admission fee and membership fee are used for administration, such as making a booklet for the co-operative and a list of members. The rest of the money is saved for loans and other special occasions.

Secondly, participation in exhibitions often imposes a severe burden on the members, since they have to devote a lot of time to the preparations before the exhibition, and they are also forced to attend the exhibitions from the morning until the night for a week. During exhibitions they do not have time for their own work. Thirdly, the co-operative sells materials for songket weaving, but the prices are not low; therefore most of the weavers buy them at the market. Since the cooperative was founded by the people living in 30 Ilir, weavers living outside this area have to pay more to join it. Furthermore, according to some weavers, the co-operative is being appropriated by certain people, who loan money only to their relatives and close friends.

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40 Cek Rus and Mbak Tinte, 2002, interview.
but not to people who really need it. Some poor weavers were refused membership of the co-operative, and they reproachfully complained: ‘If I could borrow some money from the co-operative, I could expand my enterprise. I could buy some looms and materials and hire people’41. For reasons such as these, many people are losing interest in the co-operative, although it still takes an active part in exhibitions and helps with the promotion of songket.

Overall, songket is no longer a traditional cottage industry in Palembang. The people involved in the songket industry now enthusiastically advance the market to other cities and countries. Has the growth of the industry influenced the workers? In the following section, the characteristics of the workers, the weavers in particular, will be examined, focusing particularly on their background and standard of living. The following data are based on my survey conducted in Palembang from February to May, 2002.

5.3 Profiles of songket weavers

5.3.1 The background of weavers

The respondents to the questionnaire survey comprised 57 weavers, from 20 to 65 years old, 50 of whom were female and seven male (Table 5.2). Weavers usually stop weaving in their 60s, since it is demanding work which requires the weaver to sit in

41 Mbak Ati, 2002, interview.
Chapter 5. The Renaissance of the Songket Industry

an uncomfortable position for long periods of time. Most weavers were in their 30s and 40s (34 people).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>20s</th>
<th>30s</th>
<th>40s</th>
<th>50s</th>
<th>60s</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>female</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
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<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The weavers can be roughly categorised into three groups by their origin (Table 5.3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group1</th>
<th>Wong Palembang</th>
<th>(people)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group2</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>father is Wong Palembang</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mother is Wong Palembang</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group3</td>
<td>Non-Wong Palembang</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from OKI</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from OKU</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from MUBA</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first group comprises the indigenous people of Palembang (Wong Palembang), whose parents and ancestors were born and bred there (29 people). There were fifteen people who held noble titles (gelar); i.e. nyayu (13 people) and nyimas (2 people), but there was no one holding a higher title, such as raden ayu or mas-ayu. The second group comprises those of mixed origin, one of whose parents is Wong Palembang, but the other is from another region (7 people). There were two people who claimed to be nyayu among them. Both of their fathers were Wong Palembang; therefore, they apparently inherited their father’s title.
Chapter 5. The Renaissance of the Songket Industry

The third group comprises non-*Wong Palembang*, whose lineage is not from Palembang (21 people). Eighteen were from the District of Ogan and Komering Ilir (Kabupaten Ogan dan Komering Ilir: OKI), two were from the District of Ogan and Komering Ulu (Kabupaten Ogan dan Komering Ulu: OKU), and one was from the District of Musi Banyu Asin (Kabupaten Musi Banyu Asin: MUBA). Most of them, or their families, were previously engaged in agriculture in their villages. Their jobs were physically demanding and uncertain, and their income unstable or at least not substantial. Many people, therefore, came to Palembang from the countryside to find a new job, though this was not easy. One of these weavers said that she could find no other job except songket weaving.

Many weavers of *Wong Palembang* descent proudly said: 'I learned weaving from my mother. The songket industry has been passed on from our ancestors (*nenek moyang)*'. The survey also clearly shows this point. Most of the *Wong Palembang* learned songket weaving from their mother or grandmother (18 people), or from an aunt (3 people) or sister (2 people). The situation of weavers of mixed origin was the same as that of *Wong Palembang*. Most of them had a grandmother or aunt who knew how to weave songket from whom they learned the skill. On the other hand, weavers from other areas had to find someone who could teach them weaving among their friends or neighbours (9 people). Teaching songket weaving is also a useful sideline for weavers now. They can generally get one million Rupiah from the teaching (as of 2002), which usually takes two months. If the weaver is married to a *Wong Palembang*, she can learn weaving from her mother-in-law or sister-in-law (5 people). Recently we have seen the emergence of a second generation of non-*Wong Palembang* weavers, who have been able to learn weaving from their mother or aunt (Table 5.4).
Table 5.4: Teachers of weavers

(1) *Wong Palembang* (people)  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother or grandmother</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aunt</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sister</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother-in-law</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sister-in-law</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbour</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>29</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(2) Mixed origin (people)  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Mother or grandmother</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aunt</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sister</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother-in-law</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sister-in-law</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbour</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>7</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(3) non-*Wong Palembang* (people)  
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Mother or grandmother</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aunt</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sister</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother-in-law</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sister-in-law</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbour</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>21</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With regard to their experience in weaving, there was no significant difference between *Wong Palembang* and non-*Wong Palembang* (Table 5.5). Since the development of the songket industry started from the 1970s, it is very difficult to find weavers who have had more than 35 years experience; there was only one weaver with 40 years experience among the respondents. Most of the weavers in their 40s and 50s had more than 20 years experience, and they are the important labour-force in the industry.
Chapter 5. The Renaissance of the Songket Industry

Table 5.5: Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>20s</th>
<th>30s</th>
<th>40s</th>
<th>50s</th>
<th>60s</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-4 years</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>4</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>29</td>
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<table>
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<th>40s</th>
<th>50s</th>
<th>60s</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>0-4 years</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There were three weavers who were not sure about their careers, since they had started weaving a long time previously, but then stopped for a while, and started again.
The weavers’ educational background was generally basic. Nearly 60% of them had completed elementary school only, though this was closely correlated with their age. Weavers who were older than 40 years had rarely completed secondary school, while 50% of those in their 30s had completed secondary school or high school. Of the women in their twenties, only one had left school after graduating from elementary school (Table 5.6). Although education up to junior high school is now compulsory, there are still children who just stop studying, mainly due to poverty and the need to earn money.

Table 5.6: Educational background (people)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>20s</th>
<th>30s</th>
<th>40s</th>
<th>50s+</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior high</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no answer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, people have started to realise the importance of education, and weavers are also trying to put their children through higher education. One 21-year-old woman was studying at university, and carried out songket weaving as a part-time job to earn her tuition fees. One couple — they were not weavers, but tukang cekit — was also interested in their children’s education. They sent their children to an English course after school once a week. The husband thought that it was acceptable for his children to be tukang cekit, if they so wished, but it would be better for them to get an office job.

The profiles of present-day songket weavers are clearly different from those in the pre-Second World War period, since men and non-Wong Palembang have recently become weavers. This occupation is no longer popular among the indigenous young
people of Palembang. However, respondents from the countryside perceive songket weaving to offer better opportunities than farming; they can work inside; they are not affected by the vagaries of the weather; and they are paid directly for their work. Despite the demanding conditions, therefore, people from the countryside are more inclined to become weavers.

There were also some women who stayed at a workshop in Palembang only during the off-season for farming. When I visited the workshop, no weavers were working there, since they had gone home for the Lebaran (Muslim New Year) at that time. They considered songket weaving a supplementary job from which they earned considerable money. In 2001, however, they had not returned to Palembang, even a long time after the Lebaran had finished. According to their employer, they took the weaving kits with them to their homes, so that they could weave there. The employer was annoyed with them, since they had already exceeded the appointed date for an order.

During the past 30 years, men have also begun to become involved in weaving. One male weaver, who had been weaving songket for 30 years, started to weave because it was very hard to find a good job elsewhere. This is also true of tukang cekit, who are engaged in an occupation which was probably traditionally performed by women. A 55-year-old man, who used to be a mini-bus driver, became a tukang cekit when he was 28, since driving was a hard job. He learned the technique from his wife, who had already started to work as a tukang cekit, after she had learned it from her mother.

Not only the weavers’ profiles, but local people’s views of songket weaving have changed. Young native Palembang women generally do not want to be weavers.

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43 Mbak Mala, 2002, interview.
and hope to get clean and less arduous office jobs. According to a seventy-five-year-old native Palembang woman, it used to be the case that ‘if a woman cannot weave, she is not a Palembang woman’. When she was young, she learned to weave kain tajung from her mother. She also learned songket weaving from her neighbour when she was twenty-five years old, since her mother did not know the technique. It was, however, a difficult time for songket weaving, since the materials became increasingly hard to obtain. Not only she, but also many women, just stopped weaving after the war. She said sadly, ‘Many women do not have any interest in weaving now. My daughters also did not want to learn weaving.’ Another weaver, aged 43, said, ‘To be honest, I did not want to be a songket weaver, but my aunt forced me to learn weaving, saying “songket weaving should be passed from generation to generation among native Palembang women”’. Her four sisters also had to learn weaving. Unfortunately, this principle is no longer accepted by the younger generation. The woman’s first daughter, who considered songket weaving as an old-fashioned job, was then working for a company in Bintang Island. Her second daughter thought that the weaving technique was too difficult to understand. She was annoyed by the fact that a weaver needs concentration and also that the fee would decrease if she made any mistake in her weaving. Therefore, she worked as a tukang guni and worked with her mother.

Is the occupation of weaving so unattractive to local young people? How much do weavers earn? Do weavers live well or not? In the next section, I shall consider the standard of living of weavers.
5.3.2 Standard of living

In the inner part of Daerah Suro, many small lanes run through rows of dilapidated wooden houses. People who do not know this area would find it difficult to believe that expensive cloth is woven here. There are also some weavers, mostly holders of a noble title, who live in a rumah limas, sharing the house with their large families. Some poor-looking houses are still nicely decorated inside, with a mat spread on the floor and sofas in the sitting room; but many houses are in poor condition, with a lot of gaps in the wooden walls. Since this area is swampy, houses are raised from the ground on stilts, and so are paths, like a girder bridge. In some places on the alleys, there are warung, or small stands, selling daily necessities and snacks. Groups of children often loiter with bare feet in front of the stand, holding small plastic bags full of vividly coloured drinks, drinking them through a straw. These stands are also essential for local housewives to purchase small everyday items. For their main foodstuffs, they usually go to a small open market near the junction of the two main roads.

Walking an alley towards 32 Ilir, the land becomes marshier. During the rainy season, the muddy water full of rubbish rises to just below the floors of the houses and paths. Sometimes it smells of sewage. Entering a weaver’s house, one can find a loom situated on the floor with small gaps here and there. Mosquitoes and other insects come into the room through the gaps. It is very common that the houses do not have a bathroom or a toilet. The inhabitants keep water in a big oil drum behind the house; there they pour the water over themselves for bathing. This space is also used as a toilet. Meanwhile, weavers who live near the River Musi in Daerah Suro use the river for washing, bathing and toilet.
Tuan Kentang, where two of the weavers lived, has similar conditions. Since the houses of both of these weavers were located on the bank of the River Ogan\(^{44}\), they washed in the river. During the rainy season, small lanes between the main road and these houses are often flooded, and some children paddle in the murky water. One weaver’s house was not built high enough above the surface of the river to avoid the flood. When the river was swollen, the house flooded. Then, the weaver stopped weaving, took the loom to pieces, and put them over a cupboard, so that her weaving and equipment would not be spoiled. The weaver muttered that this was the life of the poor.

According to the survey, the majority of weavers (33 out of 57 weavers) produced one set of songket (sarong and selendang) per month, and 10 weavers finished two sets. Among weavers who made either sarong or selendang only, one weaver finished three sarongs, two weavers finished one sarong, and six weavers finished only one selendang. 34 out of 43 weavers who worked for a shop or a middleman reported their monthly incomes (Table 5.7), and the table shows the low incomes from their hard work. The fourteen independent weavers received more from customers, Rp.600,000 to 800,000 per set in general, but the fee included the cost of materials. Weavers and customers negotiated the fee each time, since the cost depended on designs and materials; therefore, it was difficult to calculate an average price.

\(^{44}\) The River Ogan is one of the tributaries of the River Musi.
Table 5.7: Monthly incomes from songket weaving (people)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income</th>
<th>shop</th>
<th>middleman</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than Rp.200 k</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rp. 200 – 299 k</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rp. 300 – 399 k</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rp. 400 – 499 k</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rp. 500 – 749 k</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rp. 750 – 999 k</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Income depended on the skills and application of the weaver and the number of orders which she received, and also the time which she could dedicate to weaving. A weaver who uses *benang emas jantung* needs more time. The returns depend on the weaver’s skill and the complexity of the designs, but weavers generally get Rp.250,000 from a shop and Rp.330,000 from a middleman for weaving one set of ordinary songket; this is equivalent to the monthly income of the majority of weavers, since they finish one set in a month. The weaver who finishes two sets can earn double. If a weaver is skilful enough to use *benang emas jantung*, he or she can earn more. Weavers who weave only *sarong* or *selendang* obtain less money.

The fees from songket contributed to family finances in various ways. They were generally important supplementary income for some families, for instance, for children’s education, but there were also families which earned money only from the fees. The following data are three typical examples which give an impression of the weavers’ standard of living.
Weaver 1 lived in a small, poor house with her husband who worked as a becak (a pedicab) driver; they had no children. Her parents in their 70s and sister, who worked as a needlewoman, lived in the house next door. According to Weaver 1, her family budget is separate from that of her parents, but they helped each other, shopping and cooking together. The income of a becak driver is unstable; from Rp.10,000 a day to nothing, especially on rainy days when it is difficult to find passengers. If her husband did not work due to illness, he earned no money. No matter how much he earned, he had to pay his boss Rp. 2,000 per day for the rent of the becak. By comparison, songket weaving is a stable job. The weaver could usually finish one set or more in a month. When she found a customer by herself, she also wove songket and sold it directly. It was, however, advantageous to be hired by a shop, since she could receive steady orders. Furthermore, when she needed a large sum of money, she could receive a part of her fee in advance from the shop. Fortunately, the couple owned their house, therefore they did not have heavy expenses. However, what Weaver 1 wanted was to repair the house, since the roof was only a temporary one. But she did not have enough money to do so.
Weaver 2: 24 years old: independent weaver
Monthly income from weaving: Rp. 800,000
Family: husband (company employee)
Daily budget: Rp. 7,000
Side job: nothing

Weaver 2 lived with her husband in a small wooden terrace house on the bank of the river. Her husband worked for a car-selling company at a salary of Rp. 200,000. They paid a rent of Rp. 180,000 per month; most of the husband’s salary was spent on the rent. She was not hired. Fortunately she received orders constantly. She earned Rp. 800,000 monthly, but this had to cover the cost of materials as well. She was expecting a baby in six months time. She would have extra expenses for the delivery, and the family budget would increase after the baby’s arrival. Furthermore, the couple were planning to move to another place, since their house was often flooded in the rainy season. For these reasons, she was afraid that she would be unable to weave for several weeks before and after the delivery.

Weaver 3: 35 years old: Independent weaver
Monthly income from weaving: Rp. 1,500,000
Family: husband (a lorry driver) and 5 children
Daily budget: Rp. 35,000
Side job: nothing

Weaver 3 had five children, three of whom were students, so she also needed to pay school expenses besides daily expenses. It seems, however, that her husband received a regular income, so her family budget was not as tight as that of many other weavers. Her house was neat; there were sofas and a cupboard with some pretty glasses
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in the sitting room. The two youngest children were still small, and songket weaving, which can be done at home, was convenient for her so that she could take care of them. She usually finished two sets of songket in a month. She earned about Rp. 1,500,000, including the cost of materials. She often hired some weavers for her work and paid them Rp. 100,000 or 150,000 for a sarong and Rp. 45,000 for a selendang.

As in the case of Weaver 3, some weavers whose husbands have a stable job live relatively well, but the life of songket weavers is generally hard. Many weavers reported that their husbands were ‘buruh harian (a worker paid by the day)’ such as a becak driver or a car-park keeper (tukang parker), or ‘wiraswasta (a self-employed man)’ such as a coconut-seller in a market. Their incomes were unstable and they would not earn any money if they did not work due to illness or other pressures on their time. Songket weaving is, therefore, a good job for a housewife to supplement the family income, but it is probably not enough to meet all family expenditure. Some of the weavers who had lost their husbands had to work hard as breadwinners in the family, but they complained of the hardships of life. Eighteen weavers had a side job, such as cooking for parties, sewing mattresses and giving massages. The payments for these side jobs were also small; for example, a mattress sewer earns only Rp. 90,000 a month. There were also six hired weavers who received orders directly from customers, but they wove for a shop or a middleman during the daytime and for their own orders at night.

Poverty is a general problem in Palembang, and songket weavers are no exception; most of them were not well-off. The job itself is not easy; the fees are not high, and many weavers suffer from back pain. Therefore, they wanted to give their children a good education so that they could get better-paid office jobs. Songket weaving is no longer a graceful accomplishment executed by noblewomen in the court.
Although songket weaving could be considered a praiseworthy job in that it preserves a traditional handicraft of Palembang, in reality it has become a job for less wealthy people.

5.4 Innovation or abandonment of tradition?

In the previous sections, I have examined how songket weaving was revived in the late 1960s and how the songket industry has developed since then. This traditional weaving of Palembang, which had once prospered as a cottage industry, resumed on a small scale and is now flourishing, generating exports to other countries. Although it is satisfying to see an active songket industry in Palembang today, there are several elements of this handicraft that have changed or been abandoned.

It is not only in Palembang, but also in other places, that people have struggled to preserve their weaving industry. The east coast of Peninsular Malaysia, another centre of songket weaving, for example, also experienced a renaissance in the industry in the early twentieth century. According to Maznah Mohamad, however, several changes have resulted in a decline in the standard and quality of textiles (1996: 166-176). She criticises the current Malaysian songket weavers, who use cotton thread, reduce the width of the cloth, and simplify motifs to save materials (1996: 170). She refers to Selvanayagam’s comment that reducing the width of cloth leads to disharmony in the designs (Selvanayagam, 1981: 313, cited in Maznah Mohamad, 1996: 170-173). Maznah Mohamad also argues that the use of synthetic dyes is detrimental. She brings up the question of why Malaysian weavers changed from the colours of natural dyes to
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those of synthetic ones in the 1930s, since, according to her, the early chemical dyes were extremely bright and could not replicate the deep colours of natural dyes, although natural dyes did indeed require a great deal of time to prepare and had become increasingly expensive (1996: 168).

Regarding Palembang songket, changes are also found in terms of some of the above points: the products themselves, techniques of producing songket, marketing routes and the weavers’ profile. Some changes had, however, already been made in the early twentieth century. For example, it seems that cotton thread was being used in the 1910s, as Jasper and Mas Pirngadie recorded (see Chapter 4). Present weavers sometimes mix one or two cotton threads in the triple-weft-thread when they want to produce cheap songket. It is also probable that the width of sarong was reduced in the early twentieth century (see Chapter 4). The narrower version of sarong is now conventional.

Major changes were made after the revival of songket weaving in the 1960s. For example, weavers started to reduce the width and length of selendang. It is true that elaborate designs do not fit the smaller size, as Selvanayagam has pointed out, but the limited size of selendang enables songket producers to reduce their costs and to expand the market to people who are not well off. People’s preferences have also changed and diversified; many do not like elaborate designs such as songket lepus, which used to be a symbol of nobility and wealth. On the other hand, large silk selendang with an elaborate design are still available in Palembang, and they continue to attract wealthy elderly women.

Synthetic dyes also became popular in Palembang in the 1960s. According to one local woman, natural dyes, such as from tea and areca nuts, were still used in the
Chapter 5. The Renaissance of the Songket Industry

1970s, but no one uses them now. Some people say that synthetic dyes cannot create the same elegance in colours which natural dyes could\(^{45}\). Colours dyed using them also quickly fade out of the fabric\(^{46}\), while nineteenth-century songket dyed with natural dyes, which are stored in museums, still keep their original colours. Nevertheless, people appreciate synthetic dyes, since they can produce colours easily and quickly and always reproduce exactly the same colour. They can also create new colours such as sky blue, yellowish green, light grey, pink and cream, which are favoured by many people who are not originally from Palembang\(^{47}\).

Although it might be true that, as one artisan claimed, almost all woven figures of Palembang songket are traditional, and have been woven for a long time, some figures seem to be modified by reducing or enlarging their sizes. Some compositions of figures are also newly created to meet the demands of the market. One example of the modification can be recognised by a careful comparison between two pieces of songket with the *pulir* design kept by Ibu Sity Bambang Utoy. One was probably woven one hundred years ago, and the other only 30 years ago. On both cloths, slanted lines 1.5cm wide are woven at intervals, and in the spaces are depicted tiny flowers. The width of the intervals on the old piece is 1.5 cm, while that on the new one is 2cm. One effect of the difference is that the old one looks more sophisticated and elaborate, while the newer one looks slightly unsophisticated and blunt. Another example is a figure of *ayam* (chicken). *Ayam* and other bird-figures are usually woven in the *tumpal* or

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\(^{45}\) Ibu Sity Bambang Utoy, 2002, interview.

\(^{46}\) One day the present writer saw a *sarong* of songket in soft purple and pink with tendril motifs. Since the colours and design were very feminine and beautiful, I asked an artisan to make the same one for me. However, the colours of the finished *sarong* were very different from those I had anticipated: they were a strong purple and brownish red. The artisan explained that ‘the *sarong* which you saw the other day originally had these colours. They have just faded out in around ten years.’

\(^{47}\) Cek Yeni, interview in 2002.
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*minggir*, as can be seen in the *umpak* of a *sarong* which was produced about one hundred years ago (Plate 5.3, B). Nowadays the *ayam*-figures, woven slightly bigger than those for the *tumpal* or *minggir*, are arranged within a trellis in the centre-field. The shop assistants said that this design was newly created (Plate 5.3, A).

Meanwhile, it seems that the composition of the field of a cloth is unchanged. Present-day songket preserves the conventional composition seen in older songket. However, weavers sometimes obtain orders for songket with an irregular design. For example, Bapak Ali accepted an order to make a songket woven with a plain weave, on one end of which a row of *puncak rebung* should be woven. He had no idea how this songket would be used, but he wove it that way because the customer wanted it.

In sum, changes in design, sizes and colours of songket were made to extend the potential market. Inexpensive versions attract less wealthy people, and designs with new colours are favoured by people outside Palembang. People who are involved in the

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industry continue to make efforts to meet the demands of the market, since they realise that it is necessary for the industry to attract as many customers as possible. Shops and communities participate in exhibitions in big cities outside Palembang to promote Palembang songket. Fortunately, in Palembang and neighbouring places, there is still considerable demand for songket, supported by local ceremonies which have their roots in traditional beliefs and practices; these will be examined in the next chapter.

On the one hand, people bring in new designs for songket; on the other, they preserve traditional designs as well. Therefore, they do not think that the quality of Palembang songket has declined. As to the quality of the cloth produced, it seems that Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo is also satisfied with the current situation. She showed me two similar pieces of songket, explaining: ‘These two pieces have the same motifs, but one was woven more than fifty years ago with real gold thread, while the other was newly woven with artificial gold thread. The old one is indeed more beautiful than the other, but the new one is also quite good, isn’t it?’ In fact, I found it very hard to spot any difference between the two at a distance.

Whilst rating the technique of present-day weavers as acceptable, Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo realises that their work tends to be rather more crude when compared to that of former times. In her view the reason is that, since present-day weavers are doing the job for money, they want to finish quickly in order to earn more. She added: ‘In the old times, songket weavers had professional pride and wove songket with great care and skill. They also felt affection toward their job.’ Bapak Sidik, a tukang cekit, also explains that it took almost one year to make a kain songket in his grandparents’ time, because weavers did everything — dyeing, winding the warp, making motifs and

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49 Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo, 2002, interview.
weaving — and also because they inserted only one weft thread each time when they wove\textsuperscript{50}. The weavers’ profile is indeed one of the biggest changes in the songket industry. In former times, techniques of making songket were passed down from a mother to her daughters in Palembang. While they were weaving together, a mother would have told stories and myths regarding songket or its designs to her daughters, in the same way that local people did to me during interviews. Nowadays, a considerable number of the weavers are originally from the countryside. They only learned weaving from their friends or neighbours over a period of two months or so by paying them money, and then started to weave cloths. In one sense, it is fortunate for the songket industry that Palembang is a large city where many people come from the countryside to find jobs. Even though young indigenous Palembang women are losing interest in songket weaving, there are always other groups of people who are eager to have their jobs. Many present-day weavers, however, lack the traditional knowledge of songket, including the customs regarding songket and the names of figures and designs. It is true, though, that there was no other way of increasing the number of weavers than by training them quickly and, after all, the industry has survived.

In general, as Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo mentioned, the main concern for the songket producers of Palembang was — and still is — to maintain the industry, to make songket attractive to a wide range of people, and to ensure that the industry can be run effectively and efficiently. Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo argues: ‘I love songket, so it would be a pity if the industry became extinct. It is much better to make an effort to preserve

\textsuperscript{50} Bpk Sidik, 2002, interview.
the songket industry, rather than to let it decay, even though it results in changing some traditions\textsuperscript{51}.

5.5 Conclusion

People in Palembang resumed songket weaving in the late 1960s. This traditional industry has been successfully revived and now forms one of Palembang's most important handicraft industries. People from neighbouring places, including Java, Medan, Singapore, Malaysia and Brunei, favour beautiful Palembang songket. However, materials, colours and sizes of songket have been modified in order to meet modern market demands. Some old techniques and procedures also needed to be changed and sometimes abandoned. As a result, it has become easier for new artisans to learn the technique, which in turn has helped to increase their numbers.

After the revival of songket weaving, it did not remain a handicraft activity solely of indigenous Palembang women. Local men and people who came originally from other areas have also become involved. Nowadays, many young indigenous Palembang women do not want to be weavers, since they consider songket weaving an old-fashioned job. In reality, the life of weavers is not easy. Even though they work all day, they cannot earn very much. Many of them suffer poverty, living in dilapidated houses. The status of songket weaving has declined from being an accomplishment of noblewomen to a job for the less well-off. Indigenous Palembang weavers who have daughters have mixed feelings; they want their daughters to get better-paid office work,

\textsuperscript{51} Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo, 2002, interview.
but they also want to perpetuate this indigenous handicraft which is associated with local identity and history. Some indigenous Palembang weavers still have a pride in being songket weavers, but once they have succeeded in saving money, many of them stop weaving and become middlemen. On the other hand, people from outside Palembang are more willing to take up weaving. Most of them come to Palembang to find a better job than farming, but they do not know the history and traditions of songket. They simply learn the weaving technique, and weave for money.

The number of weavers from outside Palembang is now considerable, and will probably surpass the number of indigenous Palembang weavers in the near future. It is, in my view, disappointing to see a long-established local culture taken over by non-local people. However, this is probably an unavoidable price to be paid for the preservation of songket weaving in modern Palembang society.
Chapter 6

Uses of Songket

The prosperity of the Palembang songket industry obviously depends on market demand. There is substantial demand for Palembang songket inside and outside Sumatra, particularly from wealthy women who like to wear it for special occasions. However, the firmer and more faithful supporters of the industry are the local Palembang people themselves, who continue to use songket for ceremonial purposes. They say that the use of songket in traditional ceremonies is prescribed by adat. The first theme of this chapter is to address the issue of adat. I shall discuss what it is and what kinds of requirements it imposes on people, and how much it still orders the people’s lives in a general sense.

Secondly, I shall describe the current uses of songket in ceremonies which I observed during fieldwork, and examine to what extent people still follow Palembang adat as it is described in local books and by elderly people. I shall also explain other uses for non-ceremonial purposes, mentioning the efforts of people who are involved in the songket industry to extend the market. Finally, I shall consider how significant songket is in cultural terms for Palembang people.
6.1 *Adat* and *songket*

As I have briefly mentioned in Chapter 1, *adat* is defined as customary law or customary principles and requirements which regulate people’s lives in a society. It is based on precedents; *adat* is associated with long-established traditions but it can also vary from one community to another. According to Hooker, rulers in Java, Aceh, Palembang and Jambi, in the Malay lands of Sumatra and Borneo, and in the Celebes (Sulawesi), Ternate, Tidore, the Timors, Bali and Lombok governed their lands by their own special sets of rules (1978: 9).

*Adat* in general was not based on democratic principles, but rather on a clearly defined hierarchy. Many regulations were issued by a ruler to exercise and maintain his authority in the realm; as Hooker has argued, *adat*-systems were intimately interconnected with the institutions of princely power before the Dutch period (1978: 9). *Adat* reinforced the distinction between the nobility and ordinary people, and the nobility’s privileges. Ter Haar also indicated that the class system and its associated status ranking was an important matter for the ruler, in order to maintain discipline and order in the community. In traditional ceremonies, for example, respect had always to be shown to the ruler, or other people of high social status, in seating arrangements, the quality of the dishes and the portion of the slaughtered animals provided for them (Ter Haar, 1962: 62). Royalty had its own customs and law, a special court language, the cultivation of literature, drama, dance and music, and specialised arts of metal-working, wood- and leather-carving (Ter Haar, 1962: 82). There was also a special manner of dress for royalty, which had to be different from that of commoners (Ter Haar, 1962: 61-62). The ruler often set down privileges for the nobility, including the use of special
cloth. The tradition that yellow and white were generally reserved for the nobility in the Malay world has already been mentioned in previous chapters.

*Adat* was originally a set of unwritten laws and practices, therefore, Europeans did not give much attention to it. It was only in the second half of the nineteenth century that Dutch officers seriously began to study and codify *adat* to use it as the basis for a legal system. Many sets of laws were collected throughout the Dutch East Indies and compiled in the series of *Adatrechtbundels*, or reported in Dutch official reports. As for the Residency of Palembang, various sets of *adat* practised in villages remote from the city of Palembang were recorded in Dutch documents but not *adat* of the city itself. Why? The Dutch officers might have selected areas. The hinterland of Palembang produced various cash crops, so they wanted to administer the area efficiently, using local *adat* for the legal code for the area. Meanwhile, according to Djohan Hanafiah, it was because each *marga*, a social unit in the rural areas, had its own *adat*, which attracted Dutch officers’ interest, while regulations practised in Palembang were generally based on Islamic law, which the Dutch had probably already studied. Nevertheless, Palembang also had customs or *aturan adat* (customary regulations), which were drawn from Malay and Javanese cultures before the conversion to Islam (Djohan Hanafiah, n.d.: 1). A good example can be seen in the local costume worn at ceremonies, *aesan gedeh*; it is sleeveless, which does not accord with the Islamic faith. The use of songket and the institution of marriage were also regulated by Palembang customary regulations. These regulations, however, did not have punishments, even though one acted against them; a person simply ruined his or her reputation.

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1 Bpk Djohan Hanafiah, 2005, interview.
2 Bpk Djohan Hanafiah, 2005, interview.
Chapter 6. Uses of Songket

*Adat* is usually presented as prescribed customs and traditions which have been practised from generation to generation and passed on unchanged. But it is clear that it evolved and changed from previous regulations and practices, and these changes have also had consequences for the uses and meaning of songket. Firstly, during the colonial period, the Dutch used *adat* and other local regulations to administer Residencies by modifying them to their advantage. For instance, *undang-undang simbor cahaya*, the customary law practised in remote areas of Palembang, had originally prescribed a very expensive betrothal money called *jujur* (= bride-price), according to which the man’s family needed to give 100 reales (about f 270) to that of the woman; the Dutch, who thought that many men could not marry because of this law, resulting ultimately in a lack of labour in the hinterlands, changed *jujur* to a much less onerous system called *mas kawin* (KITLV, DH171, Van den Berg, 1894: 7)

Secondly, since *adat* was originally a set of unwritten prescriptions and practices, it is likely that parts of it have not been continuously handed down, or some aspects might have simply been forgotten or modified in the course of time. The nobles who worked for the Dutch colonial government cooperated with the Dutch in codifying *adat* practised in the Residency of Palembang in the nineteenth century. It is likely that they mentioned only what they usually practised or intentionally modified *adat* so that the authority of the nobles would be expressed. Similar things might have happened to the documentation of customs on the use of songket, in marriage ceremonies in particular, practised in the city of Palembang when accounts appeared in the guidebook

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3 *Mas kawin* (gold for marriage) is still in use. It is a wedding gift given from the groom to the bride. It is not necessary for it to be gold, unless the groom is wealthy. Some grooms give cloth or a copy of the Koran. According to Bpk Sulistiyo, the important thing is for the groom to use his own money, not his parents’ (2002, interview). In the engagement ceremony, coins are sometimes also presented as a symbol of wealth. Money for a wedding party is also given from the man’s family to the woman’s, and cooking and other preparations for the party are usually the responsibility of the bride’s family.
of Palembang in 1971 together with a description of songket weaving (Guide Book, 1971). In 1975, Akib, a descendant of the nobility, also published a book on the same topic, but in more detail (1975b), and he might also have added his own interpretations of customs.

It is also possible that adat has changed in the context of more general social changes through time. For example, the use of songket was regulated by the nobles in the court during the sultanate period. After the abolition of the sultanate, the regulation disappeared, and high-ranking people in remote areas began to wear songket. The use of songket has changed much more obviously since Indonesia gained its political independence. The concept of nobility was undermined, and the majority of people no longer knew about gelar (noble titles) or the customs associated with them, such as the ceremonial seating arrangements at rumah limas (see Chapter 3). According to a local man, this started to be noticeable in Daerah Suro (30 Ilir) when many people were moving to the area from the countryside or other islands after the Second World War. Local nobles, who were offended by the coarse behaviour of newcomers, no longer wanted to use their gelar. In fact, the status of the nobles had already been undermined both in name and reality; they had once been relatively wealthy, but many of them became poorer during the later colonial period and after independence. The contrast between their glorious past and their newly reduced condition made them embarrassed to use the gelar (Siregar and Abu, 1985: 14), and sometimes they even denied their family origins. Some nobles also thought that it was better not to use the gelar because it was a legacy of the nobility of Palembang, and was considered to be

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1 Bpk Djohan Hanafiah, 2005, interview.
2 Bpk Taufik, 2002, interview.
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‘anti-democratic’. In this climate, the ordinary people were no longer reluctant to wear songket out of respect for the nobles. Since inexpensive varieties of songket had begun to be produced with cheap materials, it was no longer a status symbol for the rich either. Less well-off people also started to wear and use songket in ceremonies.

In 1977, the Indonesian Government issued the adat nasional (national adat) to unify the country. Twenty years later, this unified adat was reconsidered, and regional autonomy based on traditional regional adat was codified in 1999 (Antlöv, 2003: 194, 197, 199). Many regions have experienced, however, some difficulties in recovering their former juridical system, since many people who knew traditional adat had already passed away in the 1980s and 1990s. With regard to Palembang, an account of adat on marriage is still found in the latest edition of the city guidebook. Djohan Hanafiah has also described adat on marriage in an unpublished document. Some elderly people are often asked for their advice on ceremonial protocols. In any case, ritual sequences and ceremonial articles described in the books and documents and told by elderly people show slight variations one from another, indicating the uncertain transmission of the ‘traditions’ down to the present day.

6.2 Songket in traditional ceremonies and its adaptations

According to Van Gennep, the life of an individual is a series of passages, such as those from one age to another, from one occupation to another and from one social

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6 These days a few people of noble origin use their gelar only in certain circumstances. For instance, it might be seen on the envelope of a formal letter or on a nameplate by the house door (Bpk Djohan Hanafiah, 2002, interview).

7 Bpk Djohan Hanafiah, 2005, interview.
status to the next, and these transitions or progressions are usually accompanied by special acts (1960: 2-3). He has asserted that in the ‘traditional’ society, these processes are expressed through ceremonies or rituals, which enable the individual to pass from one defined position to another that is also ritually well defined. Van Gennep has also argued that ceremonies are necessary because every change in an individual’s life involves actions and reactions between ‘sacred’ and ‘profane’, which should be regulated and guarded so that society as a whole will not suffer discomfort or injury. According to him, and on the basis of comparative analysis, there are considerable similarities across cultures in rites associated with birth, childhood, social puberty, betrothal, marriage, pregnancy, fatherhood, initiation into religious societies, and funerals (1960: 3).

Malay people generally believe that there are potential dangers at each transition period, and it is therefore necessary to perform and observe rites to protect themselves (DPN, 2001: 17; Suhardini Chalid, 1999: 4). According to the Dinas Pendidikan Nasional (DPN), there are four important rites of passage in the province of South Sumatra, including modern Palembang: *cukuran* or *marhaban* (*cukuran* = shaving; *marhaban* = welcome; the first hair-cutting ceremony after the birth of a baby), *khitanan* (= feast celebrating a circumcision), *pernikahan* (= marriage) and *kematian* (= death) (2001: 17). Although the DPN does not mention it, there is another ceremony called *nujuh bulan*, which is conducted when a woman is in the seventh month of pregnancy. These ceremonies are conducted according to Islamic precepts and *adat*. The DPN states that, according to Palembang *adat*, each ceremony requires ritual action and the use and/or display of ritual paraphernalia, each of which has sacred and/or

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8 Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo, 2005, interview.
secular significance (2001: 42-45)\(^9\). According to the DPN, songket is one of the ceremonial articles which carry secular and not sacred significance (ibid.)\(^10\). Local people usually consult the *adat* head (*kepala adat*) to fix details of the conduct of these ceremonies. In the following sections, I shall examine to what extent local people follow *adat*. I shall start with the engagement and wedding ceremony, in which songket is most conspicuously evident.

### 6.2.1 Engagement and wedding ceremonies

According to Suhardini Chalid, marriage is considered to be important, since a son or a daughter changes their status from the relative freedom of adolescence to that of an independent adult responsible to the community; the two families are also united by this event (1999: 15). The DPN states that marriage should be sacred and pure to provide blessed descendants who will be useful to society (DPN, 2001: 23). Wedding ceremonies do exhibit differences from one region to another, even in the province of South Sumatra. According to the DPN, their primary purpose is to ask that the marriage be safe, happy and successful (DPN, 2001: 24).

Palembang people use songket most frequently in a wedding ceremony. The bride and groom dress in songket costumes, and their relatives also wear a formal cloth which contains songket. Not only is it evident in clothing, but it is also used as a wedding gift, a decoration for the ceremonial room and the room for the couple.

\(^9\) For example, among the articles for a cukuran, yellow rice (*nasi kunyit*) and seven kinds of flowers have a sacred significance, while a pair of scissors has a secular significance (DPN, 2001: 42). According to Skeat, however, iron, which scissors are made of, is used as a charm against evil spirits among the Malays (1965: 273-274), which suggests it might have a sacred significance.

\(^10\) I shall examine the reasons for the secular significance of songket later.
(1) Engagement and betrothal gifts

According to Palembang adat, many steps should be observed before a couple get married. Firstly, a young man’s parents ask a female acquaintance to look for their future daughter-in-law. The woman marks a woman out and visits her house several times, bringing presents, to conduct investigations about her personality and character. The result is reported to the parents later. The man’s parents then propose marriage to the woman’s parents through the mediator. If the woman’s parents accept, both families will begin to discuss the schedule of marriage, contents of betrothal gifts and the budget for a wedding party which will be given by the man’s family to the woman’s (DPN, 2001: 23-28; RPM, 1978/1979: 1-2; Akib, 1975b: 16-22; Djohan Hanafiah, n.d.: 4-12). Following the agreed schedule, the man’s family will send some women to the woman’s family, to take the betrothal gifts and money for the wedding party (DPN, 2001: 26; Djohan Hanafiah, n.d.: 12-13). From this stage, the man and woman are officially considered to be engaged (Akib, 1975b: 23).

The betrothal gifts given by the man’s family to the woman’s are called enjukan, and usually include textiles. According to Palembang adat, there are five ranks of enjukan, probably based on the wealth of the bridegroom’s side, and also possibly on the bride’s social rank (Ter Haar, 1962: 62). The highest rank is adat berangkat tigo turun (berangkat = to set out, tigo or tiga = three, turun = lit. to descend\(^\text{11}\) ). It contains three sets of songket cloths as well as two pieces of dodot and money (Akib, 1975b: 24; Djohan Hanafiah, n.d.: 7-8). According to Akib, the first set is cloths for attending

\(^{11}\) ‘Turun’ or ‘turunan’ signifies descendants, but in this case, it could be interpreted that this gift contains cloth in three grades.
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traditional ceremonies, the second is those for less important business, and the third is everyday cloth (1975b: 24). Meanwhile, Djohan Hanafiah explains in detail that the first set consists of a selendang of songket lepus, a baju kurung songket tabur and a sarong of songket pulir; the second set contains a selendang tretes midar, a baju kurung made of velvet embroidered with gold thread and a sarong of songket with an orchid motif; and the third set is a selendang jando penganten, another type of baju kurung made of velvet and a sarong of songket bungo inten. Akib and Djohan Hanafiah agree that the cloth falls in rank from the first to the third set, but disagree on one point; Akib asserts that the third set is everyday cloth, while Djohan Hanafiah states that the third set contains songket, which is certainly not everyday cloth. According to Djohan Hanafiah, all three sets should contain songket, but it is difficult for the bridegroom’s family to prepare expensive songket lepus for all three; therefore, designs with less gold thread such as tretes midar, jando penganten and bungo inten are used as the second and the third sets of this gift12 (for the descriptions of motifs, see Chapter 2).

The second-ranking gift is called ‘two betrothal gifts’ or adat berangkat duo penyeneng (duo or dua = two, penyeneng = special outfit given from the bridegroom to the bride13), which includes two sets of songket clothes; and the third-ranking gift is ‘new betrothal gift’ or adat berangkat adat mudo (mudo or muda = young), which includes one set of songket clothes. The fourth- and fifth-ranking gifts do not contain songket (Djohan Hanafiah, n.d.: 9).

The current practice is different from the adat described above. In reality, people do not follow this complicated procedure. In most cases, a man finds his wife by

12 Bpk Djohan Hanafiah, 2005, interview.
13 Ibu Mala, 2004, interview.
himself. Neither do the man’s family bring presents for proposing. The betrothal gifts do not follow the *adat* precisely as it is set out in the regulations above, but rather follow the budget of the man and the preference of the woman. In many cases, the man’s family send people to the woman’s house, bringing gifts such as eggs, butter, coconuts, cooking oil, cloth, cosmetics and shoes, which are nicely decorated with colourful papers on trays. The intermediary from the man’s family also gives money for a wedding party to the woman’s family. This event is called *antar-antaran*.

In September 2002, Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo organised an engagement ceremony for her relative, following what she believed to be the ‘traditional procedure’, with some modification, according to the couple’s situation\(^\text{14}\) (Plate 6.1). Since the man’s family was originally Betawi, and knew nothing about Palembang *adat*, they often needed to take a look at a crib sheet during the ceremony. The man’s family gave his fiancée several articles, such as a bag, shoes, cakes, cosmetics and some pieces of songket. These articles were carried into the room by some women and displayed in front of the

\[^{14}\text{It did not follow Palembang } adat \text{ exactly. As shown in the photograph, the man wears a Javanese- or Betawi-styled cloth. This kind of situation must have been rare before the Second World War, since the tradition that } \text{Wong Palembang had to marry } \text{Wong Palembang still remained.}\]
woman's family and guests. After checking the gifts, the parents of the woman went with a mediator to another room to discuss whether they should agree to the gifts.

(2) Wedding: ceremonial dresses and articles

Songket is mainly worn and used in ceremonies of upacara akad nikah (ceremony for marriage agreement), arak-arakan (procession; the bridegroom's parade) and upacara munggah (wedding rituals). In many cases, upacara akad nikah is conducted from 8.30 to 9.30 a.m., followed by arak-arakan around 10.30, and the upacara munggah starts at 11.00.

i) Upacara akad nikah and arak-arakan

The upacara akad nikah is the ritual at which the marriage agreement is made between the bridegroom and the father of the bride. The akad nikah follows Islamic principles; therefore, people wear clothes which ensure that the body is covered. Some

Plate 6.2: Upacara akad nikah. A: the groom wearing a tanjak or songko (a head cloth) and setengah tiang (a short sarong) of songket is shaking hands with his father-in-law. B: the groom wearing a white tunic and a chequered turban is joining his thumb with that of a Muslim preacher's as an agreement to the marriage.
bridegrooms are dressed in an Islamic style with a long white tunic, white trousers and white or sometimes chequered turban, and some wear Palembang formal clothes with a shirt, a jacket, *tanjak* or *songko* (a head cloth) and *setengah tiang* (a short *sarong*) of *songket rumpak* (Plate 6.2). According to adat, the *upacara akad nikah* should be conducted at the bridegroom’s house, while the bride stays at her house. The *upacara akad nikah* is followed by the procession of the bridegroom and his family from their house to the bride’s house where the next ritual, the *upacara munggah*, will be conducted. In the procession, the bridegroom is given shade by a yellow parasol, which was previously the privilege of the sultan. During the procession, the bride is waiting for the bridegroom’s arrival, reading aloud the Koran.

In reality, however, the style of these rituals is quite variable nowadays. For example, many couples conduct the *upacara akad nikah* and the *upacara munggah* at the same place, since the houses of the couple are usually not close by. In this case, the bride joins the latter part of the *upacara akad nikah*. She wears a *kebaya* or a *baju kurung* made of velvet adorned with embroideries and a *sarong* of songket, and covers her head with a thin veil. Then, after the *upacara akad nikah*, the bridegroom and his family go out from the house and start the *arak-arakan* from about 100m away. For some couples, both bride and groom perform the procession together.

Plate 6.3: *Arak-arakan.*
ii) Costumes

Some songket costumes can be seen in the procession. After the upacara akad nikah, the bride and groom change their clothes to local traditional costume. In Palembang, there are two types of wedding costume: aesan gedeh and pak sangkong. Aesan gedeh (aesan = decoration, gedeh = great or big; Plate 6.4) is the most highly-regarded traditional dress. The bride’s costume consists of a dodot of songket on the chest, a sarong of songket and sandals made of songket. Kain pelangi is draped around the waist, a collar adorned with gold discs or sequins, called baju terateh (terateh = a lotus leaf) on the shoulders and chest over the dodot, and other gold accessories on the head, chest and arms. The bridegroom wears a shorter sarong over trousers and a kris at his side (DPK, 1997/1998: 9-11). The trousers are traditionally yellow and decorated with embroidery. Trousers made of songket, probably antique, are also worn, but not always.

Red songket lepus is generally preferred for aesan gedeh, but sometimes other colours, such as pink, green, and blue, are also used\(^\text{15}\), depending on the preference of the couple. According to Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo, dodot of prada can also be worn on the chest\(^\text{16}\), but it is rare today. Bpk Djohan Hanafiah explains that the bridegroom should not wear the baju terateh, so his shoulders are naked, and he should wear the sarong so that the kepala (tumpal) is shown on his back\(^\text{17}\). Today, however, most bridegrooms wear the baju terateh, and some wear the sarong in a wrong way, since there are only a few people who still know correct fashion.

\(^\text{15}\) Cek Amnah Nawawi, 2005, interview.
\(^\text{16}\) Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo, 2005, interview.
\(^\text{17}\) Bpk Djohan Hanafiah, 2002, interview.
karusuhun laki-laki: a crown for the groom
karusuhun perempuan: a crown for the bride

kalong tapak jajo or kalong kebo munggah: a three-layered pendant

baju terateh: a lotus-leaf-shaped jacket

selempang: shoulder belt

badong: a belt buckle

dodot of songket

selempang of pelangi: a sash made of kain pelangi

saputangan: a handkerchief

sarong of songket

celana: a pair of trousers

sandal of songket

Plate 6.4 a : Aesan gedeh (front).
(Names of articles as explained by Cek Amnah Nawawi)

Notes
1. Traditionally, a groom did not wear the baju terateh.
2. The groom wears a sarong in such a manner that the kepala shows on his back. The groom should have worn the sarong adjusting the length so that the hem comes just under the knees.
**kembang goyang**: a hair-accessory which has thin metal wires with flower-figures on the tip of them.

**kembang ure**: hair ornament made of pandanus leaves and flowers

**Note 1**: *Kembang ure* was made of paper, but now people prefer that made of real flowers because of the fragrance.

**selempang**

**selempang of pelangi**

**pelat bahu**: a bangle

**gelang kano, gelang sempulu, gelang gepeng and gelang bemato**: four types of bracelets from that near the elbow.

**gelang kaki**: anklet

**Note 2**: A bangle with a bird-shaped ornament called *gelang burung* used to be worn.

Plate 6.4 b: *Aesan gede* (back and accessories). (Names of articles as explained by Cek Amnah Nawawi)
There are some interesting observations which can be made on the *aesan gedeh*.

First of all, a sleeveless costume is unusual for Muslims; rather it seems to reflect strong Buddhist and Hindu influences. For instance, the lotus-leaf figure of the *baju terateh* is an important natural symbol in Buddhism. The multiple bangles and pendants, and the cloth decoration\(^\text{18}\) worn as a sash draped around the waist are Hindu-Buddhist influences, as seen on Hindu statues and sculptures found in Palembang (Plate 6.5) and on the walls of the Candi Borobudur\(^\text{19}\). The style of the Palembang pendant, *kalong tapak jajo*, is of Javanese origin. It is, in fact, almost the same as that of the Javanese pendant of gold crescent plaques called *sari bulan* (essence of the moon) depicted in Raffles’ *The History of Java* (Raffles, 1965 [1817]: 318, 320). It is reasonable to suggest that *aesan gedeh* is a long-standing element of Palembang culture, as Palembang was once an important part of the Buddhist kingdom Sriwijaya, that formed an alliance through marriage with the Javanese dynasty, the Sailendras, in the mid-ninth century. The city was then brought into the orbit of the Hindu-Buddhist empires of Singhasari and Majapahit in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. According to Akib,

\(^\text{18}\) Bpk Djohan Hanafiah, 2002, interview.

\(^\text{19}\) See Miksic and Tranchini (1990).
during the sultanate period, *aesan gedeh*, also called *pakaian ksatria* (*pakaian* = cloth, *ksatria* or *kesatria* = noble in the Hindu caste system), was considered the most important dress for the nobility when they attended traditional ceremonies or received high-ranking guests in the court (1975a: 72).

Another wedding costume worn in Palembang is *pak sangkong* (Plate 6.6), which Akib refers as *pakaian pesangko* (1975a: 74). For the bride, it consists of a *baju kurung* made of velvet, a *sarong* of songket, a *baju terateh*, sandals made of songket, and golden accessories; she wears a headdress called *kepala pak sangkong*, and other hair ornaments. The costume for the bridegroom includes a vest or waistcoat called *kutang*, a long velvet jacket called *jubah*, a *sarong* of songket, trousers, a shoulder cloth called *selempang*, and sandals. He also wears a cap called *ketu*, which has an accessory called *tebeng*, and a *kris* and accessories\(^{20}\) (DPK, 1997/1998: 11). According to Cek Amnah Nawawi, who rents wedding costumes, there are two kinds of *baju kurung* and *jubah*: *angkinan* and *tabur*. The former are those decorated with embroidery using coloured and gold threads and sequins (see Plate 2.2 in Chapter 2), and the latter are those over which gold ornaments such as medallions are scattered (Plate 6.6). The bridegroom’s trousers should match the *jubah*. Before the Second World War, *baju kurung* and *jubah* made of songket were also used for this costume, but they are no longer produced.

Akib has mentioned a traditional costume called *pakaian pesangko*\(^{21}\), which was worn by wives of high-ranking officials during the sultanate period (1975a: 74).

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\(^{20}\) Cek Amnah Nawawi, 2005, interview.

\(^{21}\) Akib states, however, that *pakaian pesangko* did not have a *baju terateh* (1975a: 74).
Plate 6.6: *Pak sangkong.*
(Names of articles as explained by Cek Amnah Nawawi)
According to Bpk Usman Agus, the word *pak sangkong* was derived from the Chinese language, meaning eight gods\(^{22}\). His explanation concurs with that of Maxwell, who mentions that *pak sian*, a Palembang headdress of the same type as the *kepala pak sangkong*, has Chinese influence, and that *pak sian* means the eight immortals, the legendary figures of Taoism (1990: 255).

In the procession, other costumes also can be seen. Drummers and singers marching in front of the bridegroom wear a *tanjak* of songket and a short *sarong* of *kain tajung* (that of songket is also often worn) coordinated with a black jacket with a short stand-up collar. A group of three or five female dancers or sometimes one dancer also joins the *arak-arakan*. It seems that there has been a long tradition since the sultanate period that women dress in songket for dancing (see Chapter 3). In the nineteenth century, dancers wearing a songket costume were sometimes photographed. Nowadays, they wear *aesan gedeh* or another traditional costume, and perform at a wedding.

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\(^{22}\) Pak Usman Agus, 2005, interview.
reception after the *upacara munggah* (Plate 6.7).

The bridegroom's family and relatives walking after him also wear songket costumes; men wear a *tanjak* and a short *sarong* of songket, coordinated with a jacket, a shirt and trousers. This is clearly a fusion of Palembang traditional elements with European dress. *Tanjak* is a square cloth, and it needs to be folded in a triangle and tied at the back. Nowadays, however, many men wear a ready-made *tanjak*. The tying of the head cloth is different from region to region, for example, that of OKI is flat with a knot in the front as shown in Plate 6.8. For women, a *selendang* and a *sarong* of songket coordinated with a *kebaya* is considered to be the best dress for attending ceremonies (see Plate 2.7). In West Sumatra, women wear a characteristic buffalo-horn-shaped songket head cloth called *tengkuluk* in ceremonies. According to Suwati Kartiwa, there are five variations according to region (1996: 25). Meanwhile, in Palembang, women do not wear a special head cloth. Nowadays, people are no longer restricted by customs and regulations regarding songket. Commoners, men and unmarried women can wear it, and many women now have their own songket. People can choose whatever motifs and colours they like from various types of colours and designs. A non-Chinese descendant can wear the *bungo cino* design, and a widow does not need to wear *kain jando*. According to a songket-shop assistant, Palembang people generally prefer the traditional colours of red, maroon, purple, indigo and dark green, while people from outside Palembang prefer pastels, such as pink, light grey, cream and white.

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23 According to Gittinger, *kebaya* was popularised by Dutch and Dutch-Indonesian women in the nineteenth century (1979: 61). Akib has also argued that Dutch women created *kebaya* by opening the front of a *baju kurung* (1975a: 71).

24 Cek Yeni, 2002, interview.
iii) Upacara munggah

When the bridegroom’s procession has arrived at the bride’s house, the parents of the bride greet him at the door, holding a songket cloth between them. They pass this behind the bridegroom and use it to steer him into the kamar pengantin, the couple’s room where the bride is waiting (Plate 6.9). This songket is called nyambut mantu (lit. to receive a son- or daughter-in-law), indicating that the bridegroom has been accepted as a member of the family.\(^{25}\) Usually several pieces of batik are spread on the floor like a road from the entrance to the door of the couple’s room, and the bridegroom walks on the batik towards the room. This ‘road’ is called jerambah (bridge). According to Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo, this batik should be kain bari (antique cloth), and it represents a bridge to the new life.\(^{26}\)

Then, the bride and groom come out from the room to the large room to perform the next ceremony, munggah. Munggah means ‘to go up (naik)’. This is a vestige of the ceremony performed at the rumah limas, a traditional stilt house; the bridegroom goes

\(^{25}\) Ibu Mala, 2004, interview. According to the DPN, Palembang society is bilateral (DPN, 2001: 14). In Palembang, a husband going to live with his wife’s family is also a common practice.

\(^{26}\) Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo, 2005, interview.
up the stairs of the bride’s house to enter. The aim of this ceremony is to encourage the bridegroom into adulthood so that he takes responsibility for his family and toward society. In a room, the couple sit on a papan pasang (lit. the couple’s board), a rectangular mat covered with songket, or sometimes just a batik cloth, spread on the floor, the bride in front and the bridegroom at the rear. According to Ibu Sity Bambang Utsoyo, this formation represents a boat, in which the couple are rowing out into the sea of new life.

The upacara munggah usually includes two rituals. The first is called suap-suapan (to feed), in which the newly-married couple are fed yellow rice and roasted chicken by their mothers, grandmothers and aunts as the last meal provided from their family (Plate 6.11), and the second is cacap-cacapan (to inundate), in which the couple are blessed with holy water by their fathers, grandfathers and uncles. Finally, the couple and attendants pray, and the upacara munggah finishes. The bride and groom, their parents, relatives and special guests who attended the upacara munggah go out to the space where a stage is arranged under a big tent for a wedding reception.

Many guests are invited for the reception. If the couple are from wealthy families, one can see many female guests wearing a selendang and sarong of songket.

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27 Ibu Sity Bambang Utsoyo, 2005, interview.
28 Ibu Sity Bambang Utsoyo, 2005, interview.
The couple and their parents sit on a chair on the stage, while guests enjoy lunch, watching dances and listening to songs. The wedding reception finishes in an hour. Later, about 3 o’clock, there is another party, *perayaan*, to which women and children of the community are invited. The bride and groom change their costume, not a songket costume this time, and sit on the chair on the stage again. At night, there is one more party, *nyanjoi*, to which men in the community come.

iv) **Marriage institutions regulated by adat**

Wedding ceremonies and parties are usually completed in a day, as seen above, though some couples may spend two days. If they follow *adat* strictly, however, people would need more than a week to finish all the procedures. Since many people are very busy working, the timing of some rituals and parties is frequently changed. Although the bride and groom need to endure wearing uncomfortably tight costumes from morning until night, changing from one to another following the schedule, they prefer to finish their wedding in a day or two, so that they can go back to their normal life on the following day.

Palembang *adat* on marriage, which is described in local books and by elderly people, prescribes a series of rituals and celebrations (Figure 6.1). Compared to these procedures, it is obvious that the present-day protocol skips some rituals and shortens the overall duration. Firstly, according to *adat*, the *upacara akad nikah* should be conducted several days before the *upacara munggah*. Secondly, before the *upacara munggah*, the bride and groom need to have a *betangas* (or *bertangas* = steam bath). The bride sits on a chair in front of a bowl of water on a fire, and she and the boiling water are covered by a large blanket. The bridgroom does the same. This supposedly
## Figure 6.1: The procedure of wedding ceremonies according to adat.
(Source: Akib, 1975b; DPN, 2001; Djohan Hanafiah, n.d.; Bpk Usman Agus, Cek Amnah Nawawi, Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo, 2005, interview)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The groom’s house</th>
<th>The bride’s house</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The wedding day</strong></td>
<td><strong>1. upacara akad nikah</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(the marriage agreement)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>A few days later</strong></td>
<td><strong>2. garap pacar</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(to paint nails, hands and feet)</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>3. arak-arakan</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(the groom’s procession)</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>4. munggah</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(wedding rituals)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>5. nganterke banking</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(to send the groom’s everyday clothes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A few days later</strong></td>
<td><strong>6. perayaan</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(party inviting women and children)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>7. nyanjoi</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(party inviting men)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A few days later</strong></td>
<td><strong>8. ngalie-turon</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(the couple moves to the groom’s house)</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>9. nganterke banking</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(to send the bride’s everyday clothes)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>A few days later</strong></td>
<td><strong>10. perayaan</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>11. nyanjoi</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A few days later</strong></td>
<td><strong>12. pengantin balik</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(the couple’s return)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>12. mandi simburan</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(the couple’s bathing)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

achieves the purification of their bodies before the marriage, symbolically and practically. A woman who had the *betangas* for her marriage believes that she did not feel heavy or tired because of this steam bath, although she needed to wear heavy accessories and head ornaments made of gold for several hours\(^{29}\). After the *betangas*, there is one more ceremony called *garap pacar*, the henna-staining ceremony, in which female relatives dye the fingernails (and sometimes the fingertips around the nails as well) of the bride orange and draw some patterns on the edges of the soles of her feet.

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\(^{29}\) Cek Amnah Nawawi, 2005, interview.
Using leaves of the *bunga pacar* (see Chapter 2). According to Djohan Hanafiah, orange henna exorcises evil spirits and the *bunga pacar* has a magical power to bring fertility to the bride (n.d.: 15). A local woman explained that the *garap pacar* is a rite of passage for the woman who is starting a new life as a wife.  

Thirdly, the bridegroom, who is guided towards the couple’s room (*kamar penganting*) after the arak-arakan, needs to wait in front of the room to receive permission to enter. An intermediary, usually an elderly woman, throws coins into a bowl in front of the room, and an attendant of the bride checks it. Then the intermediary gives flowers to the attendant, and if the attendant accepts them, the bridegroom is allowed to enter the room.

The room should be elaborately decorated. Nowadays, the couple’s room is generally decorated with satin curtains, bed covers, cushions and other ornaments. A reconstruction of the room made in a Palembang traditional house, *rumah limas*, which can be seen at the local museum, is decorated with songket (Plate 6.12). The bed is covered with songket cloth, including a long cloth called *hiasan pinggir pangkeng* (a valance hung below the bed; *hiasan* = decoration, *pinggir* = edge,

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30 Cek Amnah Nawawi, 2005, interview.
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*pangkeng* = raised area in room for sleeping; (Plate 6.13). Many bolsters covered with silk cloth and decorated gold end-panels are piled on the bed, and songket is draped over the pile. A cupboard decorated with carving and gold leaf would also have been full of songket and other textiles. According to Gittinger, it is common along the eastern, northern and western coasts of Sumatra to decorate a bed at a wedding. She presents an old photograph of a couple’s room in Aceh, in which bolsters and textiles are piled high on the bed (1979: 30).

After the bridegroom enters the *kamar pengantin*, the *sirih penyapo* should be conducted in the room. This is a ritual involving the giving of *sirih* (a quid usually minimally consisting of betel leaf, areca nut, and lime), which is the traditional manner of greeting when one meets someone for the first time. Since it was usual that the bride and groom did not know each other before the wedding in the pre-Second World War period, they exchanged greetings by chewing *sirih*. In this ritual, the bridegroom simply takes some *sirih* from a case and gives it to the bride. Nowadays, the *sirih penyapo* is usually omitted, and I had only one opportunity to see this ritual.

Furthermore, according to *adat*, a ritual called *menimbang* (= to weigh), should be conducted at the end of the *munggah* ceremony. A balance decorated with *kain pelangi* is used. Songket is put on both dishes of the balance. The Koran is put on one side over the songket, and then the hands of the bride and groom on the other as a solemn promise (DPN, 2001: 29). This ritual is also rarely performed today.

Djohan Hanafiah has explained that a few days after the *upacara munggah*, two ceremonies, *ngalie-turon* (*ngalie* = move, *turon* = sleep) and *pengantin balik* (lit. the couple returns), are conducted with an interval of a few days (n.d. 22). They are also called *antar pengantin* (lit. escorting the couple [to somewhere]) and *jumputin*
pengantin (go to meet the couple) respectively. The couple move to the bridegroom’s home and stay there for a few days, and then they come back to the bride’s home. When the couple go to the bridegroom’s home, the bride’s family also accompany them, bringing some gifts. Female attendants wear a selendang and sarong of songket on that occasion. In the same way, when the couple come back to the bride’s house, the bridegroom’s family accompany them, and the female attendants wear songket, bringing some gifts. After the couple arrives at the bride’s house, the mandi simburan is conducted. The couple sits outside on the ground, and parents and relatives sprinkle water over them. This symbolises the washing away of the couple’s sins. Nowadays, people conduct ngalie-turon and pengantin balik in a less formal way\textsuperscript{31}. Some people just visit the husband’s house later when they have time. The mandi simburan is also rarely conducted. According to Djohan Hanafiah, the cacap-cacapan should be conducted in the upacara munggah if the couple does not want to conduct the mandi simburan (n.d. 20). It seems that most couples shift the mandi simburan to the cacap-cacapan. Some people claim that the mandi simburan is the last ritual of the wedding, while some argue there are some more rituals after that, such as praying. In either case, it takes more than one week to complete all the procedures, if one follows adat strictly.

\textsuperscript{31} Bpk Usman Agus, 2005, interview.
6.2.2 Nujuh bulan

When a woman is in the seventh month of pregnancy, she has a ceremony called *nujuh bulan* (seven month), and some Palembang people use songket in this ceremony. A pregnant woman is dressed in a costume called *pakaian selendang mantri*, which consists of a *sarong*, *dodot* and *selendang* of songket, and a head-dress called a *gandik*. Under the songket costume she wears a *dodot* and *sarong* of batik. The *gandik* is a headband made of velvet decorated with gems and gold. According to Akib, this costume was worn by daughters of ministers and other high-ranking officials (1975a: 74).

Firstly, the pregnant woman has a meal which contains *nasi kunyit*, eggs, and chicken; eggs symbolize fertility and chicken is to strengthen her body. After the meal, she takes off the songket costume, wearing now only a *dodot* and *sarong* of batik, and sits on a dais. A bowl of water with seven sorts of flowers is ready. Her husband and female relatives trickle some water from the bowl onto her one by one. Then she stands up and inserts a *beliro*, the sword-beater for songket weaving, under the *dodot* at her breast, passing it through under the batik, and removes it from the lower edge, praying for an easy delivery.

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32 The information on this ritual was kindly provided by Ibu Sity Bambang Utoy and her daughter, Ibu Tinny.

33 Akib refers to this costume as *sandan manteri* (1975a: 74).
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According to Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo, the sword-beater, whose surface is smooth and slippery, is the right article for a wish for a smooth delivery. In my opinion, however, this use of the sword-beater might suggest the strong connection between songket weaving and Palembang women. After that, she receives a traditional medicine (jumu) for her health. A coconut on which a man’s face is drawn on one side and a woman’s face on the other is brought to her husband, and he breaks it in half. If the bigger half has a woman’s face, the baby will be a girl, and vice versa. Finally they finish the ritual with prayer.

6.2.3 Cukuran: the first hair-cutting ceremony

Cukuran or marhaban, the first hair-cutting ceremony for babies, is also called nyookoor (or mencukur = to shave) or ngoonteeng (or menggunting = to cut) in the Palembang language (DPK, 1988/1989: 15). The purposes of this ceremony are to express gratitude to the One God, Allah, for the safe birth of the child, to pray to the spirits of the ancestors for a secure and promising future for the baby, and to wish that a baby boy is respected in the society or that the baby girl should bring wealth and honour to her parents and relatives (DPN, 2001: 18). The underlying principle seems to be that a boy will be regarded as a member of the society in the public domain, while a girl will find her position within the domestic sphere.

According to Palembang adat, all adult male kinfolk, neighbours and Muslim religious teachers in the community should be invited to this ceremony, since it is the formal presentation of the new member to the relatives and the society, while women and children should stay at home (DPK, 1988/1989: 15). This is presumably because the
ceremony was considered as a gathering of the community, and men attended as representatives of their families, although the division of the sexes in Muslim society was also a factor. Nowadays, female adult neighbours and relatives also come to this ceremony, but they assemble in another room, watching the procedure from afar.

What kind of ritual is conducted, and how is songket used in the cukuran ceremony today? In a large room of the baby’s house, male participants sit on the floor and read the chapter of the Koran concerning the birth of the Prophet Muhammad; each participant reads a section. After they have finished, they stand up and start to sing a song for the marhaban. A man enters the room, holding the baby. He is usually a male relative from the baby’s mother’s side. He wears a selendang of songket on his right shoulder to cover the baby held on his left arm (or vice versa). He also puts kain songket under the baby. He walks around the room to show the baby to the male participants, and they pat the child on the head one by one (Plate 6.15). Another man follows him, carrying small flags with candy or a bank note, and distributes them to the participants.

When the man has finished showing the baby to all the male participants, they stop singing. He then sits down in front of a tray, on which there are a small bowl filled with water and seven kinds of flowers, a pair of scissors and a paper on which the baby’s name is written. First, the baby’s name is announced. Then some male relatives of the baby (usually grandfathers and uncles) come close to the baby one by one. The

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Plate 6.15: Cukuran (1). A man holding the baby is going around the room to show the baby to the participants.

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34 Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo, 2005, interview.
scissors are dipped in the small bowl for purification, then, each relative in turn takes them and snips off a small lock of the baby’s hair (Plate 6.16).

According to adat, a cukuran ceremony should be conducted when a baby is between seven and forty days old, and it is in this ceremony that a baby was officially given a name (DPK, 1988/1989: 14). In reality, the age of the baby varies, since people often want to hold the ceremony jointly with a wedding ceremony, if one of the relatives plans marriage in the same period, and a name is given to a baby when it is born. These combined celebrations save the host family money and time, and also help the attendants, who are not required to attend again for each ceremony.

According to the Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan (Department of Education and Culture, DPK), a small songket cloth should be placed on the baby’s forehead. This cloth is called singep (Plate 6.17). Gittinger explains that the singep as well as selendang are given from the baby’s paternal family (1979: 107-108), although nowadays they are not necessarily so. The singep functions as a shade to protect the baby from excessive sunshine (DPK, 1988/1989: 16), although this ceremony is usually conducted inside the house now.

Apart from its practical purpose, it could

Plate 6.16: Cukuran (2). The baby’s grandfather is cutting her hair.

Plate 6.17: Singep songket (approx. 32 x 14cm, Museum Balaputra Dewa).

35 Bpk Usman Agus, 2002, interview.
possibly have further importance as a talisman, which Guy has mentioned as one of the important roles of cloths in Islamic communities in Southeast Asia (1998: 10). Since the head of the baby is the focus of the hair-cutting ceremony, there was probably the need to protect the baby's head. I never saw the singep used in a cukuran ceremony, but I found some shops which sell sets of two small songket cloths (Plate 6.18), and some descendants of the local nobility told me that they used them. Heringa also mentions the pair of cloths, explaining the smaller one to protect the baby's forehead is called singep, and the larger one to put on the baby's body to protect the heart is bedong (1994: 35). Apart from songket, kain prada and kain angkinan was also used to make the pair of cloths in the early twentieth century (Yoshimoto, 1989: 96; Tsuzuki, 1999: 139). Whether songket, kain prada, or kain angkinan, on all of which gold are used, it was sufficient to show the family's wealth.

6.2.4 Khitanan: circumcision

Khitanan or circumcision is a Muslim practice, by means of which a boy is acknowledged as a mature person who can take responsibility for himself and his conduct. There is no strict regulation about the age; it depends on each family.

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36 According to Skeat, the head is considered to possess some modified degree of sanctity in Malay societies. It is necessary, therefore, to cut the hair with the greatest care (1965: 43-44).

37 Cek Anmah Nawawi, Cek Yeni, 2005, interview.
Technically, the boy should finish *mengaji* (recitation of Koranic verses) before his circumcision\(^{38}\). According to the DPN, in the province of South Sumatra, circumcision is usually held when a boy is between 10 and 12 years old (DPN, 2001: 21), but many boys apparently undergo an operation before that age.

During my stay in Palembang, unfortunately I had no opportunity to see a circumcision. I simply had two occasions to attend a celebration after a circumcision. At the celebration for a nine-year-old boy, who had been operated on ten days before, he was dressed in a *pak sangkong*. The costume consisted of a long robe and a *selendang* made of velvet decorated with embroidery and sequins (*angkinan*) and a yellow silk waistcoat and trousers of *angkinan*. He also wore a red short *sarong* of songket with *naga* and star motifs, which was fastened with a belt with a gold buckle, sandals of songket and a cap made of velvet decorated with ornaments of gold and *intan* (Plate 6.19).

In a room, nine men and eight boys sat on the floor, facing each other, in front of the boy sitting on a chair. The men wore *kain tajung* coloured in red and green, a white shirt, a green jacket and a *peci* (a Muslim black hat). Meanwhile, boys wore a *tanjak* of songket, a yellow satin shirt with a standing collar and matching trousers, and a short *sarong* with red and white checks over the trousers.

\(^{38}\) Bpk Usman Agus, 2005, interview.
First, they conducted *puji-pujian* (a ritual to show appreciation to God). One man sang a section from the Koran and eight other men played tambourines. While the man was singing, the boys danced, moving their right arms in the rhythm. When the man finished a phrase, boys started to sing, rising to their feet and moving their arms more vigorously. When boys finished a phrase, then the man started to sing again. They repeated this several times to finish the *kitab*.

The boy came outside and got on a palanquin. Both sides of the palanquin were decorated with a green cloth, and the roof had *tirai*, red velvet hangings, decorated with golden medals. The nine men and eight boys also came outside and made two lines in front of the palanquin. At the head of the procession were the eight boys, followed by the nine men. Then came the boy on the palanquin carried by four men, and at the back were two men carrying another small palanquin into which small flags with a 1,000 Rupiah-note were
stuck. They started to march in a procession along the road in front of the boy’s house (arak-arakan). The boys turned to face the nine men, and walked backwards stepping rhythmically. The men started to sing, beating tambourines. After the men finished a phrase, boys started to sing moving their arms, just as they had done in the room. While in the procession, they sang, danced and played the tambourines. Finally, the flags with banknotes were taken by children who followed the procession. After the procession, lunch was served to guests.

This is probably an example of how a wealthy family celebrated the circumcision of their boy. At another party for a circumcision, a boy, who had been circumcised a few days before, was running around with nothing on, since he still felt pain if he wore clothing. There was no procession; guests had lunch and did karaoke. According to a local woman, a boy wears aesan gedeh or pak sangkong at the celebration, if his parents can afford it. Nowadays, people often hold a celebration jointly with another relative’s wedding. They decide the day for the circumcision by counting sufficient days back from the day of the celebration to allow for healing. Sometimes, however, the wound has not healed by the time of the celebration; in this case, the boy cannot wear anything due to the pain\textsuperscript{39}.

Palembang adat prescribes, however, that the celebration mentioned above should be done on the day previous to the circumcision (DPN, 2001: 22). Around noon on a Sunday, the procession starts. After the procession, the boy’s family and guests read sections of the Koran and offer prayers. Then, lunch is served to the guests\textsuperscript{40}. At night, people repeatedly chant part of the confession of faith, synchronised with the

\textsuperscript{39} Ibu Mumi, 2002, interview.
\textsuperscript{40} Bpk Usman Agus, 2005, interview.
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rhythm of tambourines, or with a *gambus* accompaniment (a six-stringed instrument of Middle Eastern origin). The following day, after the boy has taken a bath in the morning, the circumcision is performed (DPN, 2001: 22-23). On the boy’s mattress, a tent is made using *kain* batik or *tajung*, and he sleeps under the tent for several days.\footnote{Bpk Usman Agus, 2005, interview.}

**6.2.5 Funeral ceremony**

In South Sumatra, death rituals are conducted to show people’s respect for the deceased person, and the solidarity of the religious community, without necessarily considering the rank and social status of individuals (DPN, 2001: 32). This is the last ceremony of a person’s lifetime.

There is disagreement among Palembang people on the use of songket in funerals. A deceased person is usually covered with *kain semagi*. Later, the deceased is laid in a coffin, over which a cloth is placed; this cloth is the point of disagreement. Some people state that songket should be used to cover the coffin, saying, “Songket is interwoven in a person’s life from the cradle to the grave”\footnote{Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo, 2005, interview.}. I have seen people who were close to the deceased walking in procession through the town towards a graveyard, carrying the coffin covered with the *selendang* of songket. The *selendang* indicated that the deceased was female (in the case of males, a prayer mat is used instead), and people can tell the age or status of the deceased woman from the colour or motifs of the songket\footnote{Cek Ona, 2001, interview.}. According to Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo, however, songket is also used when
the deceased is a man. Meanwhile, some people argue that songket is never used for funerals, explaining, “Songket is a cloth for happy occasions”. Instead, a green tudung (cover) is put over the coffin, on which, if the deceased is a man, a sorban for a Muslim, and if a woman, flower ornaments are placed. Other people say a nice piece of kain semagi is used to cover the coffin as well (Plate 6.22).

In sum, a coffin is customarily covered with some cloth, but there are different opinions about what kind of cloth should be used. The disagreement comes from people’s feeling toward songket as to whether it should be used only on happy occasions or can be used in every important ceremony.

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44 Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo, 2005, interview. She also barely remembered that she had seen a lengthy selendang of songket, probably around three metres long, when she was a child. According to her mother, the Chinese in Palembang used to cover a coffin with it.
45 Bpk Usman Agus, 2005, interview.
6.3 Other functions

6.3.1 Heirlooms

Traditionally, *kain songket* was handed down from generation to generation in noble families. According to a person who is from a noble lineage, there is no fixed rule for the succession of heirlooms in general in Palembang society; some are passed to sons, and some go to daughters\(^47\). For instance, among the matrilineal Minangkabau, heirlooms are passed down from mothers to daughters. The inhabitants of a traditional house, *rumah gadang*, are clearly organised by links through women, showing that the house itself is passed from mothers to daughters (Suwati Kartiwa, 1979: 57-58). Regarding the inheritance of songket in Palembang, however, it seems that certain cloths are inherited by a daughter, because they are considered to be women’s cloths; whilst songket for men, such as *songket rumpak*, is inherited by a son. Bapak Sidik, a *tukang cekit*, inherited an old *sarong* of *songket rumpak* from his grandmother. According to him, the cloth is about one hundred years old; there is no wonder that this *sarong* is already in tatters.

Since old songket was woven with real gold thread, the cloth was very valuable. If the songket is in tatters, *benang mas jantung*, the real gold thread of the best quality,  

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\(^{47}\) Bpk Djohan Hanafiah, 2002, interview.
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can be taken out and reused for weaving another songket\textsuperscript{48}. Generally, we might think that one should have a sentimental attachment to old songket inherited from one’s ancestors, and in fact, Bapak Sidik wants to keep the songket forever, since it is very precious to him\textsuperscript{49}.

Nowadays, however, it seems that people like Bapak Sidik are in the minority. If one goes to the shop, ‘Serengam Setia’, and explains that one is looking for songket interwoven with \textit{benang emas jantung}, the shop-owner will take out many good pieces from a locked shelf and show them, naming the prices. Although these pieces were inherited from her grandmother, she would not hesitate to sell them. A one-hundred-year old beautiful \textit{songket lepus} cost Rp.40,000,000, and an old \textit{songket berantai bintang} was Rp.20,000,000 in 2002. Another songket shop, ‘Cek Ipar’, also owns several old songket. They are, however, not their heirlooms; they were collected from other families nearby, who wanted to exchange them for money. In another shop, I have seen a woman visit the shop to sell a \textit{sarong} and \textit{selendang} of songket woven with \textit{benang emas jantung}, since she needed cash immediately. She received Rp.15,000,000 for the set of songket with a \textit{bunga tawur} design. Since \textit{benang emas jantung} stopped being imported in the early twentieth century, the thread and the cloth interwoven with it became very precious and expensive. The owner of ‘Cek Ipar’ shop told me that antique collectors from Australia and Japan had sometimes visited this shop to buy old songket. Heirlooms are also commoditized today.

Ibu Eko, a wife of a Palembang nobleman (his title is \textit{raden}), who herself is from OKI, has also collected several old \textit{sarong} and \textit{selendang} of songket to take out

\textsuperscript{48} Unfortunately, plastic gold thread, which is generally used nowadays, cannot be recycled, since it is not durable.

\textsuperscript{49} Bpk Sidik, 2002, interview.
the *benang emas jantung* to make her new songket. When I met her, she was returning from a weaver's workshop to collect a finished *sarong* of songket which she had ordered. The *kain* was woven with *benang emas jantung* which she had supplied to the weaver. She was also expecting a *selendang* to be finished in order to wear them together at the wedding party of a relative in the following month. According to her, the fee for weaving was Rp.2,000,000. Ibu Eko said, 'Songket woven with artificial gold thread is nothing unusual, even though it is nicely woven, because everybody has already got it. But, if I wore songket woven with *benang emas jantung* at a party, everybody would pay attention to me.' She showed me another old *dodot* and said, 'Next time, I will take *benang emas jantung* from this piece to make a new songket'.

### 6.3.2 Tourist goods

Palembang is not a tourist resort. There are neither beaches nor beautiful views. Even though many scholars suggest that the capital of Sriwijaya was located in Palembang, this city has no historical buildings from that period to visit, in the way people go to see Borobudur from Yogyakarta. Most of the visitors have other reasons for going there, such as doing business in the oil or rubber trade, or visiting relatives or friends living in Palembang. There may be a few people visiting the museum built in the area where the capital of Sriwijaya might have been located; also a few former Dutch colonial officers and their families who used to live in Palembang sometimes pay a return visit. The Tourist Office of the province of South Sumatra tries to attract people, offering guided tours to see elephants and megaliths in the surrounding areas,

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51 Bpk Abi Sofian, 2002, interview.
and to visit a workshop for songket weaving in Palembang. It also advertises finished songket cloths and other traditional textiles as souvenirs from Palembang.

Despite all these efforts to attract people, it does not seem that they are producing significant results. However, there is a very steady flow of people from other cities in Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei who visit Palembang specifically to buy songket, since they want to wear it for special occasions. However, non-Malay people both within and outside Southeast Asia may well not appreciate sarong and selendang of songket, since they have no cultural context in which to wear them. Songket can be used as wall-hangings, but it is unlikely that a set of the two large cloths for sarong and selendang of songket would be used for this purpose. During my stay in Palembang, I took Japanese visitors to songket shops several times, but most of them were not interested in buying songket. It was partially because they were mainly men who visited Palembang on business; they bought some scarves made of pelangi for souvenirs. In only one case, a young woman, who visited her friend there, bought a set of songket in royal-blue, her favourite colour. She had interest in songket, because she was reading art at university in Japan. After the purchase, however, she wondered how she could use it in Japan.

Shops also sell smaller-sized songket pieces, and these are supposed to be used as wall-hangings or table-centres. Shop assistants recognise that they are more attractive for tourists, so they suggest tourists use a tanjak of songket as a tablecloth. Small articles made of songket, such as cushion-covers, wallets, key rings with a miniature of tanjak, and tapestries in a frame in the shape of an elephant, cherries and a fan as well as the usual rectangle, are now available in all songket shops in Palembang. The framed songket in particular are often seen in Palembang, in hotels, libraries, and some private
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houses. Meanwhile, songket-wallets and the miniature tanjak of the key rings are often covered with dust in a corner of a showcase in many shops. It seems that the tourist market does not have a significant potential, although there is some interest in certain of the small articles and in tapestries and cushion covers. The main demand continues to come from people who appreciate and wear songket from the main areas of Malay settlement and culture in Southeast Asia.

6.3.3 Contemporary dresses

Large songket shops have tried to create a new fashion of songket cloths, discarding the conventional styles. One of the shops, Zainal Songket, has a songket fashion show every year. In the show, the shop displays new styles of tops. One is a purple bustier made of lace with shoulder strings. It is coordinated with a sarong of songket in the same colour as the top, and a matching selendang adorned with golden lace on the edges. Another one is a satin red blouse with a wide open neck and see-through sleeves. It has purple lacework on the chest, and a purple see-through cloth is attached to the bottom edge of the blouse, so that a sarong can be seen through the cloth. It is coordinated with a brick-red sarong with a large tawur section woven with tiny figures, probably bungo pacar. These new styles look very fashionable and novel. The modification of traditional brocade has also been attempted in Nanking, where modern dresses are designed. The brocade, which once was used for costumes for royalty, is now arranged to make a woman’s dress in modern style in which the midriff is left uncovered.52

52 http://www.mainichi.co.jp/asia/news/photo.html
Despite these efforts in both Palembang and Nanking, the main issue is whether people will accept the new uses of traditional textiles or not. According to one weaver, younger single women are fond of new styles suggested by the Zainal Songket, since they are bored of wearing songket in the traditional way. Meanwhile married women prefer traditional styles. Demands for new styles and conventional designs are thus balanced.  

6.4 The significance and functions of songket

I have explained the ceremonial and non-ceremonial uses of songket in Palembang. The ceremonial uses which are theoretically prescribed by Palembang adat have sometimes not been carried out in accord with those prescriptions. Some uses have been changed or have disappeared over time. Some people deliberately omitted various uses to shorten the ceremonies and reduce the costs. Some prescriptions are understood or interpreted differently according to the individual carrying them out. Nevertheless, songket continues to be an indispensable ceremonial article for the local people, and clearly is still of significance. Meanwhile, the industry tries to attract new customers, and an increase in its non-ceremonial uses has widened the potential sales of the material. These new uses may have brought about a change in local attitudes towards songket, as some people indicated. In this section I shall examine how the functions of Palembang songket have changed, and how the changes should be evaluated.

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6.4.1 Loss or evolution?

During the sultanate period, songket was restricted to the nobility. *Aesan gedeh* was a costume worn only by high-ranking noblewomen when attending ceremonies and performing dances for important guests. The wearing of songket was extended more widely to wealthy people during the Dutch colonial period, and then to ordinary people after the revival of songket weaving in the 1960s. As the uses of songket have diversified, some ‘misuses’ of songket have become noticeable. For example, a bridegroom today usually wears the *baju terateh*, and also wears a *sarong* in such a way that the *kepala* shows at the front of the body. According to Bapak Djohan Hanafiah, this is simply wrong. He explained that today there are few people left who know the correct Palembang *adat* 54. Some descendants of the nobility consider that the people’s ignorance causes a loss of culture and tradition in Palembang, as Kimas H. A. Halim pointed out in an interview for a local newspaper, the *Sriwijaya Post* 55. It might be an exaggeration, however, to depict it as simply a loss of culture or tradition, and it also seems unreasonable to place the blame only on the people’s ignorance; there are clearly other reasons for these changes.

First of all, it is clear that changes in the manner of wearing songket had already started in the colonial period. Akib has argued that men started to wear songket after the powerful sultan, Mahmud Badaruddin II, was captured and exiled in 1821 (1975a: 66). Gold lace edging, which was often used to adorn *selendang* of songket in the nineteenth century, probably indicates European influence. Man’s *baju* and trousers coordinated

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54 Bpk Djohan Hanafiah, 2002, interview.
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with a short *sarong*, as shown in the nineteenth-century photograph (Plate 4.7 in Chapter 4), are also a European-influenced fashion, and they are now often coordinated with a short *sarong* of songket.

Some other traditions have also been changed or have disappeared through time. The practice of men wearing a *baju terateh* seems to have been established as a new tradition, although some people claim that it is incorrect. In the *cukuran* ceremony, *singep*, two small pieces of songket cloth, used to cover a baby's forehead and body, are rarely used today. The reason why people stopped using it is uncertain. On some occasions when I observed this ceremony, the baby became fretful, crying loudly. When people had arranged a *cukuran* together with a wedding, the baby was already old enough to realise something unusual was happening. In this situation, it is simply not possible to put the *singep* on the baby's forehead. Furthermore, the man who carried the baby in one ceremony did not wear a *selendang* of songket, perhaps for financial reasons. 'Culture' and 'tradition' are, as some post-modernists have argued, constantly being reformulated, reinvented and developed (see Hobsbawm, 1983: 1; Marcus and Fischer, 1986: 24; Clifford, 1988: 235). Hobsbawm has argued that tradition is more frequently 'invented' when there are major and rapid changes on the demand or the supply side. To be more precise, new traditions are produced when a rapid transformation leads to the decay of the social patterns for which the old traditions were designed, or when old traditions and their institutional carriers and promulgators are no longer appropriate for the society (1983: 4-5). Such interaction between tradition and the social context can also be seen in the history of Palembang songket. The decay of the stratified social organisation which fostered the songket tradition drove Palembang songket to the verge of extinction in the early twentieth century. However, after the
Second World War, processes of democratisation and commercialisation, together with the availability of cheaper versions of songket, enabled ordinary people to wear and use the cloth for ceremonies.

Secondly, the protocols of ceremonies as described by descendants of the nobility show some variations. Regarding the use of songket at funerals in particular, people are divided in their opinions; those who think that songket should be used only on happy occasions do not use it at funerals, while others who think songket is indispensable in every ceremony see no objection to its use at funerals. When it comes to weddings, some people believe that all Palembang people should make every effort to wear a songket costume for their wedding ceremony, and they held this view even before the 1960s when songket was still produced using real gold thread. It would have been no problem for wealthy people to prepare the expensive songket; Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo wore songket lepus woven with *benang emas jantung*, real gold thread of the best quality, when she married in 1950, and Bapak Djohan Hanafiah wore a *pak sangkong*, also woven with *benang emas jantung*, in 1960. Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo explained that less wealthy people could also wear songket woven with real gold thread, but it would be of poorer quality. Meanwhile, some people think that a songket costume would not have been worn in a wedding ceremony if the person could not afford it. This was verified by the story of one man holding the title of *ki-agus*; he wore just a *sarong* of batik and several bracelets, and not a songket costume, for his wedding in 1952, since there were no materials for songket at that time. In general, as

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56 Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo, 2005, interview.
57 Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo, Bpk Djohan Hanafiah, 2005, interview.
58 Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo, 2005, interview.
59 Bpk Djohan Hanafiah, Pak Usman Agus, 2005, interview.
60 Bpk Taufik, 2005, interview.
Koesnoe has explained, any difficulties in meeting the traditional requirements had to be fully taken into account before any decision was made based on adat (1971: B16); some people did not wear songket, and the idea that ‘everyone should wear songket’ was an ideal to be aimed at, if not always achieved.

The situation changed after the revival of songket weaving in the 1960s. The availability of cheap versions of songket should certainly have enabled more people to wear a traditional costume. Nevertheless, I found some examples who contradicted this, caused by three principal reasons. One reason was financial. A man, whose title is ki-mas, and his wife wore a western style costume in 1980, since they were in straitened circumstances; he wore a jacket, trousers, a shirt and a tie, and his wife wore a white wedding dress and a white veil. Another reason was intermarriage, which has become common nowadays. If both the bride and groom are Wong Palembang, they ask the kepala adat (adat head) of their local community for advice about ceremonial protocols. On the other hand, in the case of intermarriage, the bride and groom and their families need to discuss which adat they should follow in the ceremony, asking the heads of their adat for advice. The head of Palembang adat usually thinks that the couple should follow Palembang adat, since they live in Palembang, but the head of the other partner’s adat does not want to give up their particular adat either. Consequently, they have to compromise at some point, combining elements of the two cultures. There are also some Wong Palembang, especially bridegrooms, who give up Palembang adat to follow that of their new partner. Bapak Djohan Hanafiah gave two examples from his own children; his daughter wore a Komering (one of districts of South Sumatra) headdress coordinated with Palembang songket, since her husband is originally from that district.

61 Bpk Ali, 2005, interview.
while his son wore a Javanese costume for his wedding, following his wife’s custom\textsuperscript{62}. The third reason is the complexity of Palembang adat. Some people said that Palembang adat is ‘rumit’ (complex, intricate). One of my friends therefore conducted a simple wedding ceremony following national adat, wearing a kebaya and kain panjang of batik, in 1997. Some other factors influenced her choice of a simple ceremony. She is, strictly speaking, not pure Wong Palembang; her father is Wong Palembang titled mas-agus, but her mother is originally from Lampung. In addition, she was marrying a Javanese man. Lastly, she did not hold the wedding ceremony in Palembang, but in Lampung for the sake of her grandmother and her husband’s relatives in Java. All these circumstances persuaded her not to adhere to Palembang adat at her wedding\textsuperscript{63}.

Finally, the recent commoditisation and commercialisation of songket, which extends the range of users to people who do not know the traditional manner of wearing the textile, should be considered as one of the factors bringing about changes of culture and tradition. According to Wood (1993: 51) and King (1999: 189), ‘commoditization of culture’ is one of the reasons for changes in local traditions, and it has often been linked to the demands of tourism, generally being evaluated in a negative sense. Greenwood (1989) argues that commoditization changes the meaning of cultural products and eventually may make them meaningless, destroying their authenticity.

Commoditization is, however, not only or necessarily caused by tourism, as in the case of Minangkabau songket reported by Sanday and Suwati Kartiwa (1991). According to their research, the worth of songket could not traditionally be evaluated in monetary terms when it was produced and used according to adat. Designs of

\textsuperscript{62} Bpk Djohan Hanafiah, 2005, interview.
\textsuperscript{63} Mbak Novi, 2005, interview.
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Minangkabau songket had been copied from old pieces, each design designating the status of the wearer. The weaving of songket was also guided by *adat*. Old Minangkabau women usually thought that they should not ask a fee for lending their songket to others who wanted to wear it in ceremonies, or for teaching weaving skills, since both these acts were very important in carrying out their *adat* (ibid.: 88). However, Sanday and Suwati Kartiwa found in the 1980s that Minangkabau songket was being sold in markets in West Sumatra, even in ‘conservative’ villages. It seems that songket weaving had declined by the 1980s, so people had to buy songket in the market or rent cloths from local shops. The Minangkabau suggested two possible reasons for the decline of weaving; independent weavers had decreased because many of them were no longer able to buy materials after yams came to be in short supply due to the economic crises in the 1930s; and most looms were destroyed during the Indonesian revolution. Weavers also started to charge for teaching weaving skills (ibid.: 89-90). In the light of these changing circumstances, Sanday and Suwati Kartiwa analysed the general value of Minangkabau songket, and found that it had become increasingly commercialised (ibid.: 88).

The commoditization of Palembang songket seems already to have started in the early nineteenth century, and this had nothing to do with tourism. It was probably because the high quality and beauty of Palembang songket were widely recognised and became marketable. In fact, Van Sevenhoven (1823: 79) wrote that “the best silk cloth interwoven with gold thread was made in Palembang”64, and De Sturler (1843: 153) reported of Palembang songket that the “durability, material, and colour of this cloth

64 “De beste zijden en met gouddraad doorweefde kleedjes worden alhier gemaakt en overal verzonden” (Van Sevenhoven, 1823: 79).
were supreme. Anderson (1971 [1826]: 191) observed that North Sumatra was also importing Palembang songket in 1823.

After local people succeeded in reviving the songket weaving of Palembang in the 1960s, the commoditization process was promoted by local songket shops. These retailers are still trying to expand their market by creating new designs and costume styles which meet people’s demands. They also sell everyday products, such as cushion covers, tapestries and wallets, all made from songket. Saragih (1995: 35) criticises the everyday products, which lead to people’s ignorance of the symbolic meanings of motifs.

Cohen (1988) casts a critical eye on the view that commoditization destroys the authenticity of local culture and traditions. He cites two scholars’ statements about ‘authenticity’ which emphasize “the absence of commoditization as a crucial consideration in judgements of authenticity”, and argues that this emphasis “reflects the alienation of modern man from artificial and machine-made products” (1988: 375). Palembang songket needed to be changed and developed to meet the demand and to adjust itself to the condition of modern society. Modern songket is woven with artificial gold thread, and threads are now dyed with synthetic dyes. Many songket weavers today are non-Wong Palembang. Designs and colours of songket are modified, and some small articles made of songket are sold in shops to extend the market. In my view, commoditization is not in the least harmful to Palembang songket; rather, it is absolutely necessary for the prosperity of the industry, which is itself indispensable for the continuation of songket culture. It is also doubtful whether Saragih’s statement, that

65 "[...] en de hoofd- of zakdoeken geweven worden, waarvan duurzaamheid en van stof en van kleur met elkander wedijveren" (De Sturier, 1843: 153).
the production of everyday products leads to people's ignorance of the symbolic meanings of motifs, is verifiable. Their ignorance probably comes from changes in society, such as the loss of the idea of nobility, and in the manner of using the cloth. Indeed, some motifs might even have had no meanings at all, as a local artisan speculated.

6.4.2 The significance of songket

What kind of significance do Palembang people attach to songket, then? Is it really a secular one as the DPN states? What kind of function does songket perform? Are the functions attributed to it changing?

For example, singep, the two small songket cloths for the cukuran ceremony, are used to protect a baby's forehead and heart (Heringa, 1994: 35), and this function of songket as a talisman clearly carries a sacred significance. However, few local people of Palembang now use the singep, so they might just dismiss this idea. Why then does a man wear a selendang of songket, which men normally never wear in Palembang, in the cukuran ceremony? Heringa (1994: 34-35) explains that it is a selendang gendong songket, a cloth for carrying a baby. She also provides a photograph in which a selendang over a man's shoulder wraps in loops around the baby's body, functioning as a baby carrier. Yet in ceremonies I attended, men did not use the selendang as a baby carrier. According to the DPK, songket is used to display the wealth of the baby's parents (DPK, 1988/1989: 15). Wealth is traditionally crucial to obtain people's respect in Palembang; members of the elite shared their wealth with their followers to maintain a patron-client relationship in the pre-colonial period. In a cukuran ceremony the
parents display songket, which represents their wealth, to foster people’s respect towards them and their baby, and to show their hope for the prosperity of the family. Songket functions here as a symbol of wealth; this is probably why the DPN states that songket carries a secular significance.

Why do they not use other expensive articles in place of songket, then? In particular, this ceremony is conducted by men; it would surely be more suitable if they presented male objects, such as metalwork or a kris. According to Gittinger, however, the selendang is “a token carrier for the child” (1979: 107-108). Meanwhile, one local man speculated that songket is used as a symbol of Wong Palembang.

Although nowadays some stages of the wedding rituals are modified or omitted in practice, and nobody cares much about the symbolic meanings of colours, motifs and designs of songket, people still use songket in ceremonial costumes and articles. Most brides and grooms proudly wear a songket costume on their special day. In Palembang, people think that a wedding ceremony should be magnificent, since the practices are long-established and said to be derived from those of the historic kingdom of Sriwijaya. The bride and groom correspond to the ruler and his consort; therefore, they should be beautiful, splendid and dignified (DPK, 1997/1998: 1). The aesan gedeh and pak sangkong are certainly a striking costume which befits a king and queen. Songket, the cloth produced with gold and silk thread, along with gold accessories, can display the wearer’s wealth and power to great effect. When the bridegroom marches towards the bride’s house, in particular, he looks every inch a king, dazzling in costume and shaded by a yellow parasol, which was also a royal privilege.

66 Bpk Sulistyo, 2005, interview.
Chapter 6. Uses of Songket

The depth of feeling towards songket probably varies according to status. It seems that many wealthy descendants of the local nobility feel that they have a mission to preserve the traditional protocols of ceremonies, including the manner of wearing and using songket. They tend to use luxurious songket, such as songket lepus woven with benang emas jantung inherited from their ancestors, and conduct rituals following Palembang adat. They probably feel a deep satisfaction in adhering to adat and in fulfilling its strict requirements, as Suhardini Chalid has argued (1999: 3-4). They can also display their wealth and power by conducting elaborate ceremonies. For example, Cek Amnah Nawawi, holding the title of nyimas, was married to a Wong Palembang, whose title was ki-mas. They conducted their wedding ceremony following Palembang adat, spending a whole week on the celebrations. She explained, ‘It might be a wonderful thing to preserve our tradition. I sometimes think, however, it is very difficult to do so since the present situation is different from the past. I have heard that in older times people could live for several days after one-day working, so they might have been able to spend many days for a ceremony. Nowadays, however, people need to work every day to earn their daily bread. Therefore, I felt sorry for the guests who needed to come over several times to attend a series of rituals at my wedding’.67 According to another descendant of the nobility, it is sometimes very ‘troublesome’ to conduct a wedding ceremony when the bride and groom are both Wong Palembang, since they try to follow Palembang adat as much as they can, and they tend to escalate their necessities and expenditure.68

67 Cek Amnah Nawawi, 2005, interview.
68 Ibu Tinny, 2005, interview.
The majority of people, however, apparently do not have such a strong feeling towards songket as the descendants of the nobility. They wear and use songket simply because they think that it is prescribed by Palembang *adat*. Wealthy people who are not related to the nobility wear and use expensive songket to show off their wealth. Less wealthy people have financial restrictions, so they generally spend only one or two days for a wedding, missing out and changing some *adat* requirements. They can usually only afford to wear and use songket woven with artificial gold thread. Some people buy songket from a shop, or place an order with a weaver. One woman chose a *berantai bunga* motif with a red background simply because she thought that it was a traditional design, while another woman wore the *bunga tabur* design, quite simply because she thought it was very pretty. There are also many couples who choose songket with a pink, blue or green background, since they feel red songket is common. Even though songket is now cheaper than it used to be, it is still relatively expensive for many people. People who cannot afford to buy their own songket borrow some from their friends or rent it from rental shops. In these cases, they do not have the opportunity to show their preferences of colour, motif and quality in the cloths that they wear. For example, a woman who rented a *sarong* and *dodot* of songket from a shop was offered only one choice to suit her budget, a *berantai* design on a red background. The cheap songket, sadly, does not look impressive. Compared with expensive ones, the colours are dull, the gold thread is not obvious, and the designs are not elaborate. It seems, however, that the quality and designs of songket are not very important for many ordinary people. The most important consideration for the couple is to dress as richly as their financial situation allows on their important day, and express their identity as

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69 Cek Amnah Nawawi, 2005, interview.
Palembang people, even though these expressive forms have been modified and reformulated. Songket culture has been transformed and re-designated, but songket itself remains as an important ethnic symbol of *Wong Palembang*.

Nevertheless, there are Palembang people who do not wear a songket costume in their wedding ceremonies for a variety of reasons. Since Palembang songket maintains its character as a symbol of local identity, someone from another region may sometimes want to avoid wearing this cloth for their wedding ceremony even though his or her partner is *Wong Palembang*. My *Wong Palembang* friend was very disappointed to see her brother, who married a Javanese woman, wearing a Javanese costume in his wedding ceremony, and grumbled “*Wong Palembang* should wear *aesan gedeh*...”. There is also a contrary example: when my friend, who was born in Palembang, got married to a Javanese man, they wore *aesan gedeh*. To be precise, she was not *Wong Palembang*, since her father was Javanese, and her mother was of mixed origin. However, she had a strong sense of belonging to Palembang because she had been born and bred there, and it was natural for her to wear the Palembang costume. *Aesan gedeh* also probably confers and expresses an identity of what I might rather clumsily term neo-*Wong Palembang*; it welcomes new members into *Wong Palembang* society by marriage.

Not only the principal actors in the ceremonies, but also their parents, siblings, other relatives and acquaintances, are keen to wear songket. This is because they want to display and affirm their identity as *Wong Palembang* in any ceremony which is seen as embodying ‘traditional culture’, and also because they wish to demonstrate the importance which they attach to their family. Female members of the host family of a ceremony in particular try to procure songket, by renting it from a shop or borrowing it.
from a friend. My *Wong Palembang* friend asked her Sundanese friend if she could borrow her songket for her sister, who wanted to wear it for her son's circumcision party.

Uses of Palembang songket have also extended to areas outside Palembang. The bride and groom in some other *kabupaten* (districts) in South Sumatra prefer to wear the Palembang costume, *aesan gedeh*, although each *kabupaten* has its own local costume and design of songket. Couples in Medan, North Sumatra, also often wear Palembang songket\(^{70}\). Palembang songket cloths are appreciated not only for wedding costumes but also as a luxurious cloth for special occasions; the *sarong* and *selendang* of songket are worn by many women outside Palembang. According to Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo, former President Suharto sometimes asked her to find some exquisite pieces of songket in Palembang, since he wanted to present them to foreign guests\(^{71}\). Ex-President Megawati also purchased some pieces to wear in ceremonies\(^{72}\). It seems that Palembang songket is gaining a new national status as a special luxurious Indonesian cloth, which is appropriate to show the dignity and wealth of its wearers.

\(^{70}\) Bpk Ali, 2005, interview.
\(^{71}\) Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo, 2005, interview.
\(^{72}\) Bpk Ali, 2005, interview.
6.5 Conclusion

Local people say that uses of Palembang songket are prescribed by Palembang *adat*, but the protocols are apparently often interpreted in different ways. Some people modify and omit various uses of songket according to their finances and other conditions. Descendants of the local nobility have claimed that people’s ignorance of *adat* would lead to a loss of local culture and tradition, but modifications in the uses of songket were already observed during the colonial period. In modern Palembang in particular, people are unable to maintain practices exactly as they were inherited from ancestors, due to a range of social changes. Cultures and traditions are constantly being modified or changed in order to adapt them to the developing needs of society.

Nevertheless, the people of Palembang continue to use songket to show their wealth, dignity, and identity as *Wong Palembang*. These symbolic values of the cloth probably derive from the widespread acknowledgement that the best songket is produced in Palembang, and that historical antecedents of songket stretch back as far as the Sriwijayan period.
Chapter 7

Conclusion: The significance of songket

In this thesis I have examined several aspects of the songket of Palembang, such as its figures, patterns and designs, historical background, manufacture and uses, to discern its real and symbolic values, from which the significance of this cloth must be derived. This study is significant particularly in the importance it accords to understanding how local people have attached feelings and emotional responses to a traditional textile, and how the textile has functioned in society.

It proved difficult to reconstruct the history of Palembang songket, in particular during the sultanate period, by consulting manuscripts and other historical sources which needed to be identified among a massive amount of documents. Although some scholars have argued that there are similarities in design between Indian textiles, mainly with reference to patola, and certain Indonesian cloths, it is difficult to state with any certainty which designs of Palembang songket were indeed influenced by Indian textiles. Nevertheless, it was essential for me to understand the circumstances in which songket weaving emerged in Palembang to clarify the earliest functions and significance of this cloth, and how it developed subsequently. By considering the import of gold thread and Indian textiles, and the circumstances of the sultanate itself, I have concluded that songket probably started to be woven in Palembang around 1670, when local noblewomen were dissatisfied with Indian textiles of poor quality, at the same time that the sultanate had become wealthy and powerful enough to continue the gold thread
import trade. Songket prospered in the court as a part of an elite culture throughout the sultanate period.

When the Dutch established a colonial administration in Palembang, some European officials and travellers, particularly the Dutch, started to mention Palembang songket. Examples of the actual cloths woven during that period can still be found in museums, in shops and with families in Palembang. Photographs of local people wearing songket were also taken in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. I have assembled these materials to examine the condition of the songket culture and industry at that time, and have clarified the transformation of songket in the nineteenth century from a cloth for the nobility to one for wealthy people. Songket weaving also changed from being an accomplishment of noblewomen in the court to an occupation for impoverished low-ranking noblewomen. The songket industry flourished in Palembang in the nineteenth century, but declined for social and economic reasons in the early twentieth century, although the cloth was still worn at special events and ceremonies.

In the 1950s songket weaving became almost extinct, but around 1965 a movement to revive the industry started: this was the turning point in the songket culture of Palembang. I conducted an interview survey with some old people to find out what efforts were made to bring about the revival. This survey revealed what needed to be changed in order to revive and re-invigorate the songket industry, and how the changes affected the significance attached to this cloth. The changes in materials, colours and designs of songket, along with social changes in Palembang, have democratised and popularised the cloth.
Chapter 7. Conclusion: The significance of songket

Features of the songket industry have also changed. I visited weavers’ houses and workshops to understand the condition of the industry at the present time, and discovered that songket weaving has become an activity for less wealthy people. It is no longer a handicraft conducted just by the indigenous women either, as it now involves men, as well as people from outside Palembang, as new weavers and motif-stick arrangers. Some simplification in the process of manufacturing songket has also encouraged these new people to become artisans. It is, however, interesting that songket is still produced on the traditional back-strap loom, and that people do not want to change this method. This attitude might originate in the Palembang weaver’s pride in producing a special cloth which requires painstaking workmanship.

Books on Minangkabau and Malaysian songket have been published, showing their motifs and designs illustrated with colour photographs, but the designs of Palembang songket were not widely known. I examined modern and dated Palembang songket and collected its characteristic figures and designs. I have illustrated them in this thesis to show the richness of its varieties. I have also analysed the definitive features of this cloth, by comparing it with Minangkabau and Malaysian songket, and established that the design of the tumpal (kepala) and of the borders especially characterise Palembang songket. Contrary to my expectations, and also contrary to some studies undertaken by local scholars, local people are now largely ignorant of the symbolic meanings of figures. They are now permitted to wear whatever patterns and colours they like; therefore, they do not need to have this kind of knowledge about them. An artisan said that ‘names’ were no more than that, simply designations for particular figures. He added that some figures might have had a particular meaning before, but some might have had no symbolic significance at all. This view concurs
Chapter 7. Conclusion: The significance of songket

with Gavin's arguments about the meaning of names used by Iban weavers to designate patterns on ritual cloths (1995).

The real value of songket must have declined with the introduction of artificial gold thread. The labour invested in a cloth has also been reduced by the use of synthetic dyes and some other technical modifications. If, as I found, the symbolic meanings of the figures are also not recognised by local people, what then is the significance of songket today?

In my view, the people of Palembang still appreciate songket as a special cloth which symbolizes the wealth and power of the wearer. This symbolic value is probably derived from the historical context of songket, when this cloth and its forerunners such as imported cloths adorned with gold thread were the preserves of the ruler and the nobility during the Sriwijayan and sultanate periods. The cheap version of songket, the eclipse of the concept of 'nobility' and adat protocols which stipulated that people should use songket in rites of passage encouraged the ordinary, less wealthy people of Palembang to wear and use songket in ceremonies. Songket has indeed been democratised and popularised, and its use has become a 'new' tradition for ordinary people. This also seems to be a result, as Storey has argued, of the decreasing importance of the distinction between high and popular cultures (2003: 73). Nevertheless, it is also true that differences in the quality of songket still tend to differentiate the wearers in terms of wealth and status. Descendants of the local nobility continue to wear and use songket of high quality, strictly following adat. They can display their 'legitimacy' to be songket wearers by their very adherence to adat. This attitude seems to be an attempt, however problematical, to re-differentiate high songket culture from that which is styled popular or everyday. On the other hand, ordinary
people try to use as good a quality songket as their budget allows, and to follow adat as closely as they can. That moderation greatly lightens the burden imposed on the people by the complexity of Palembang adat, which is troublesome even for wealthy descendants of the Palembang nobility; this is probably the secret of maintaining the use of songket. The ordinary people still refer to what they do and wear as ‘traditional’, as part of a culture which has been inherited from the past and which remains an important ethnic marker. This is ‘invented tradition’, which thrives on the omission as much as commission of songket protocols, and which can be practised in the context of modern society. No matter whether the people of Palembang use songket following adat strictly or by modifying some protocols, songket has become an identity marker of Wong Palembang and has been redesignated as an expression of an ‘imagined’ traditional culture, a vital link to Palembang’s illustrious Sriwijayan past. This is the modern significance of Palembang songket.

Palembang songket culture is facing a new phase. New styles of songket fashion are produced to attract younger female customers. New designs and colour combinations are created and introduced at fashion shows held in Palembang. Exhibitions and sales of Palembang songket are held outside Palembang, mainly in the major cities of Sumatra and Java in Indonesia, and in neighbouring countries such as Malaysia, Brunei and Singapore. People outside Palembang are keen on Palembang songket because people in Sumatra and Java would recognise this cloth to be one of the most luxurious Indonesian traditional textiles, and people in Malaysia, Brunei and Singapore share Malay songket culture. Unfortunately, I could not include details of how Palembang songket is accepted and regarded by people outside Palembang in this study; it would be interesting and valuable to research and establish the full extent of the
Chapter 7. Conclusion: The significance of songket market for Palembang songket. These activities, designed to attract new customers in and outside Palembang, might be considered as threatening to destroy the traditional uses within Palembang in the eyes of people who are against the commoditization of cultures. At the present time Palembang songket culture, however, seems to maintain an appropriate balance between the export-oriented, commercial-based culture and the local, relatively conservative one. Its broadening has had rather an opposite effect to the one feared; the reputation that the best songket is produced in Palembang has spread in Indonesia and other places in the Malay world, and it has become a very important element in establishing songket as an identity marker of Wong Palembang. Everyday cloth made of songket, framed songket-tapestries in the shape of a fan or an elephant, for example, hanging on the walls of local hotels and in the Provincial Library in Palembang, also adds 'local colour' to these public spaces.

Since people consider Palembang songket as the identity marker of Wong Palembang, there are some non-Palembang people who are not happy to wear songket costumes even when they get married to Wong Palembang. Intermarriage of this kind is very common in Indonesia, so some Wong Palembang have to give up wearing Palembang songket for their wedding ceremony. There are also opposite cases in which non-Wong Palembang wear songket costumes when they marry Wong Palembang. In the latter case, Palembang songket functions as a kind of reminder for the non-Wong Palembang that their spouses are Wong Palembang. Outside Palembang where there is no conflict between Wong Palembang and non-Wong Palembang, there are also people who are happy to wear songket as their wedding costumes. They consider songket as a luxurious cloth for Indonesian people, entirely appropriate for a day of such social and ceremonial importance.
Chapter 7. Conclusion: The significance of songket

Woven patterns, colours and designs of Palembang songket do not have any symbolic significance today, although, according to local scholars, they used to have significant meanings and functions in the past. The majority of people in Palembang no longer know the symbolic meanings of each ceremonial article and protocol; they simply use them and conduct themselves following the teachings of elderly people. Nevertheless, although the people do not fully understand them, the culture and traditions of Palembang songket continue to be passed on, with modifications over time, fitting them to the changing needs of society.
Appendix A: Abbreviations

ANRI (Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia): the National Archives of the Republic of Indonesia.

ARA (Algemeen Rijksarchief): the National Archives in The Hague.

ATBM (alat tenun bukan mesin): frame loom.

BUMN (Badan Usaha Milik Negara): government-managed companies.

DPK (Departmen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan): the Department of Education and Culture.

DPN (Dinas Pendidikan Nasional): the National Education Service.

DPP (Departemen Perindustrian dan Pengembangan): the Department of Industry and Development.

EIC: the English East Indian Company.

IMF: the International Monetary Fund.

Jl. (Jalan): Street.

KIT (Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen): the Royal Tropical Institute in Amsterdam.

KITLV (Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde): the Royal Institute of Linguistics and Anthropology in Leiden.

KOPSOP (Koperasi Kerajinan dan Industri Songket Palembang): the Co-operative for the Handicraft and Manufacture of Palembang Songket.

Lr. (Lorong): Lane.

MUBA (Musi Banyu Asin): one of the districts of the Province of South Sumatra.

OIC (Comité tot den Oost-Indische Handel en Bezittingen): Committee of East Indian Trade and Posts.

OKI (Ogan dan Komering Ilir): one of the districts of the Province of South Sumatra.

OKU (Ogan dan Komering Ulu): one of the districts of the Province of South Sumatra.

PIKM (Proyek Pengembangan Industri Kecil dan Menengah): the Development Project for Small and Medium-sized Industries.


RMV (Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde): the National Museum of Ethnology in Leiden.

RPM (Proyek Rehabilitasi dan Perluasan Museum Sumatera Selatan): the Project for Rehabilitation and Expansion of the Museum of South Sumatra.

UBL (Universiteitsbibliotheek Leiden): the University Library of Leiden.

V&A: the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.

VOC (Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie): the Dutch East India Company.
Appendix B: Glossary

1. Terms for measurement and currencies

**asta (hasta)**
The length from the tip of the middle finger to the elbow, which is about 42 cm (*Generale Missiven*, vol. 4, pp. 84).

**baal**
1 *baal* is equivalent to 1 *bundel* (Knaap, 1996: 190).

**bundel**
1 *bundel* is 0.5 *pikul* (Knaap, 1996: 190).

**bunkus**
1 *bunkus* is equivalent to 1 *bundel* (Knaap, 1996: 190).

**corge**
1 *corge* is a bundle of 20 pieces (Sen, 1962:96).

**Dutch pound (lb)**
1 pound is 0.494 kg (Knaap, 1996: 192).

**ell**
The Amsterdam *ell* was 0.68781 m (Laarhoven, 1994: 257).

**gantang/guntong**
1 *gantang* of rice is approx. 11.5 – 13.5 Dutch pounds (approx. 6 kg) (Knaap, 1996: 191).

**guilder (f)**
Dutch currency before they started using the euro in 2002.

**kas**
1 *kas* of gold thread is equivalent to 1 *pikul* (approx. 61 kg) (Knaap, 1996: 191).

**kist**

**pak**
The weight differs according to the content. 1 *pak* of Bengal silk is equivalent to about 1.2 *pikul* (73.2 kg), while the same volume of opium is probably equal to 1 *pikul* (approx. 61 kg) (Knaap, 1996: 192).
Appendix B: Glossary

pikul (or picol)
1 pikul is equivalent to 123.5 Dutch pounds (approx. 61 kg) and 100 Chinese catties (Vos, 1993: Appendix IV).

real (or reale, reaal)
Spanish coin. 2.7 Dutch guilders. In East Indies guilders, 1 real = 3.35 (~1743), 3.2 (1743-68), and 2.7 (1768-) (Vos, 1993: Appendix IV).

rix dollar
1 rix dollar = about 0.75 real (Vos, 1993: Appendix IV).

Rupiah/Rp.
The Indonesian currency. 1 pound sterling was about Rp. 15,152 when the fieldwork for this thesis was conducted from October 2001 to September 2002.

thong (or thon, ton)
1 thong was equivalent to 2 pikuls or 244 ~ 250 Dutch pounds (approx. 120kg) (Knaap, 1996: 193).

2. Others

adat
Customary law, customs.

akad nikah
A wedding ceremony, in which the wedding contract is made.

arak-arakan
The procession of a bridegroom or of a boy who was circumcised.

Bpk (Bapak)
A respectful title for men.

cukuran (marhaban, nyookoor, ngoonteeng)
The first hair-cutting and name-giving ceremony for a baby.

Daerah Suro
It is an old name for 30 Ilir, the centre for songket weaving today. It seems that this name also included an area of 32 Ilir on the road at Jl. Ki Gede Ing Suro.

dukun

enjukan
Betrothal gifts from a groom’s side to a bride’s side.
Appendix B: Glossary

**gedokan**
A back strap loom used in Palembang to weave songket.

**gelar**
Noble title. There are four ranks in the Palembang nobility; they are from the higher to the lower class, *raden*, *mas-agus*, *ki-mas*, *ki-agus*. According to Van Sevenhoven (1823: 65, 67, 69), holders of the last two titles were considered to be commoners, while De Kock regarded them as nobles (1846: 293-294). The titles for women are *raden ayu*, *mas-ayu*, *nyimas* and *nyayu*.

**ibu**
A respectful title for married women.

**ilir**
Downstream. In Palembang, *ilir* also indicates the old town on the side of the *kraton* across the River Musi.

**kabupaten**
Districts. The Province of South Sumatra is divided into six *kabupaten* (see Map 1).

**kemiri**
Candle nut (*Aleurites moluccana*), an oil-containing plant (Tanaka, 2002: 5-6).

**khitanan**
A feast for circumcision.

**ki-agus → gelar**

**ki-mas → gelar**

**kraton**
The palace. There were two palaces in Palembang: Kuto Besak and Kuto Lamo.

**mantrie** (or *mantri*, *menteri*)
Cabinet minister (Echols and Shadily, 1997: 370).

**marhaban → cukuran**

**mas-agus → gelar**

**mesjid**
Mosque.

**munggah**
One of the wedding rituals of Palembang.

**nujuh bulan**
A ceremony which is conducted when a woman is in the seventh month of pregnancy.
pangeran

pengboeloe (pengbulu)
Village chief, Muslim leader (Echols and Shadily, 1997: 419).

perdana mantri
The prime minister.

priaij (priyayi)
One belonging to upper classes (Echols and Shadily, 1997: 437), or noble people.

raden → gelar

rumah limas
Traditional Palembang house for the nobility.

susubunan
(Javanese) Title of the ruler of Surakarta (Echols and Shadily, 1997: 536).

tukang cekit
A person who makes arrangements of motif-sticks for weaving.

tukang guni
An artisan who adds a heddle-function to motif-sticks.

ulu
Upstream. In Palembang, ulu also indicates the old town on the other side of the ilir area across the River Musi.

wong
Appendix C: Textile Glossary

aesan gandik → pakaian selendang mantri

aesan gedeh (or pakaian ksatria)
The first-ranking traditional dress of Palembang. It contains dodot and sarong of songket, usually songket lepus. It was worn by princesses for the most formal ceremonies during the sultanate period (Akib, 1975a: 72). Nowadays, it is one of the two popular wedding costumes in Palembang.

angkinan
An embroidered cloth. The base is usually velvet or silk, over which motifs such as flowers, chains and stars, are embroidered with satin or couching stitches using coloured silk and gold thread, and metal sequins are attached.

apit
A pair of strips in the tumpal, which sandwich another strip called umpak. They are usually woven with chevrons.

armosin
It was named after Ormus (or Hormus on the Persian Gulf). It was silk cloth, either plain, or with a multi-coloured striped, chequered, squared or flowered pattern, produced in Europe, Bengal, Surat and an island called Lamao off the China coast (Laarhoven, 1994: Appendix A, pp. 4).

bafta
Indian plain cotton cloth, either white or dyed, most commonly red, blue or black for the Southeast Asian market (Guy, 1998: 187). According to Laarhoven, it probably had gold thread adornment on the borders in the second half of the sixteenth century (1994: Appendix A, pp. 6). Bafta was derived from Persian báfta which means ‘woven’ (ibid.).

baju kurung
Women’s long tunic (Echols and Shadily, 1997: 43). It is usually coordinated with a sarong and a matching selendang.

batik
“A resist dyeing process in which a substance such as hot wax or rice paste is applied to the surface of fabric as a resist to dyes to form undyed areas of pattern. The resist is removed by boiling, melting or scraping after dyeing” (Maxwell, 1990: 416). “Cotton cloth decorated by a complex process of repeated wax-resisting and dyeing” (Guy, 1998: 187).

benang emas jantung
The best kind of gold thread made of real gold, usually of 14 ~ 18 carats.
berakam → rakam

betille
Muslin produced in Surat, Bengal and Coromandel, some of which were embroidered. It was sometimes adorned with gold or silver thread in the kepala. The name was probably derived from beatas (a fine veil worn by devout women in Europe) and was given by the Portuguese. (Laarhoven, 1994: Appendix A, pp. 8-9).

byram (or beiramee)
Superior-quality cotton cloth in white, red or black produced in Gujarat and Burhanpur (Laarhoven, 1994: Appendix A, pp. 10).

chintz (or chits)
Indian hand-painted or block stamped cloth made of cotton or silk (Laarhoven, 1994: Appendix A, pp. 18-19).

cinde (or cindai, chindos)
This term is used in several senses in the Malay archipelago. According to Heringa and Veldhuisen, it signified patola (1996: 207). Maxwell also states that it is the word for double ikat silks in Java, although “cindé is usually applied to various mordant-painted (and block-printed) Indian cotton textiles, especially those originating on the Coromandel coast” (2003: 114). Langewis and Wagner explain that special silks and cloths decorated with ikat technique were usually referred to by the name of ‘tjiinde’, and this name is found in weft ikat cloths of South-East Sumatra, and also in the names of certain Javanese batik patterns (1964: 20). Meanwhile, according to one descendant of Palembang nobility, cinde usually signifies pelangi, tie-and-dye cloth, in Palembang (Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo, 2005, interview).

committer

damask (or damasten)

dodot
In Palembang, dodot signifies a chest cloth of about 200 x 90 cm. Dodot of songket is a part of the traditional costume of Palembang, aesan gedeh. In general, however, dodot signifies “Batik wraparound worn by couriers and bridegrooms” (Echols and Shadily, 1997: 147). It was “formerly worn by members of royalty, the aristocracy, and court dancers, and draped around the body in a variety of ways” (Smend, 2004: 87). It typically measures 350 x 200 cm, and is characterised by “either a repeat pattern or a composition consisting of a diamond-shaped centre-field, usually decorated with a floral motif reserved on a white ground, surrounded by borders with a related pattern on a coloured ground, usually red or blue” (Guy, 1996: 99).
Appendix C: Textile Glossary

gobar
According to Laarhoven, the name is “related to the Javanese kebar, Malay kembar, meaning double” (1994: Appendix A, pp. 31). It was Indian painted cloth produced mainly in Coromandel. Gobar mataram was an expensive type of chintz (Laarhoven, 1994: Appendix A, pp. 30-31).

Guinea cloth (or guineas lynwaer)
“Plain, checked or striped cotton produced in large quantity on the Coromandel Coast and Gujarat for both the Indonesian and African markets” (Guy, 1998: 187).

hamman
Cotton cloth with strong thick weave produced in Dacca (Bangladesh). Some had a kepala, on which stripes were woven with gold-coloured weft threads. Two thousand pieces were ordered for Palembang in 1770 (Laarhoven, 1994: Appendix A, pp. 34-35).

hiasan pinggir pangkeng
Long songket cloth for decoration of a bed in the room of a newlywed couple.

kain blongsong
Silk cloth for women woven with the weft decorated by ikat-motifs, usually with flowery motifs (Bpk Usman Agus, 2002, interview).

kain gulong
According to Laarhoven, the body of kain gulong was painted chintz. The expensive one had the kepala decorated with gold thread or gold foil. This cloth was produced on the Coromandel Coast around Thanjavur and Pulicat. The word gulong was probably derived from gulung which means ‘to roll’ in the Indonesian language, since the Dutch rolled the cloth in the way the Javanese liked (Laarhoven, 1994: Appendix A, pp. 36).

kain jumputan → kain pelangi

kain limar
Silk cloth woven with weft on which motifs are painted.

kain panjang
Literally ‘long cloth’. It is a skirt cloth. It contrasts with sarong whose edges are stitched to form a tube; kain panjang is an unstitched flat cloth.

kain pelangi (or kain jumputan)
Tie-and-dye cloth which is usually made of silk.

kain perada (or prada)
Cloth adorned with gold leaf.

kain sembagi (or semagi,sebagi)
“Term used in western Indonesia for painted and printed cotton cloth of Indian origin” (Guy, 1998: 187).
**kain tajung**
Cloth woven with the weft decorated by *ikat*-motifs and the warp with stripes. It has check or splashed patterns and is usually for men (Bpk Usman Agus, 2002, interview).

**kain tanjak (or songko)**
Traditional men’s head cloth of Palembang.

**karikam**
Cotton chintz with white, red or blue background produced in Surat and Coromandel (Laarhoven, 1994: Appendix A, pp. 38).

**kebaya**
Women’s blouse the front of which is pinned together, usually worn with a *sarong* (Echols and Shadily, 1997: 267).

**kembang (or tengah)**
In Palembang, it signifies the centre-field of songket of *sarong*, *selendang* and *tanjak*.

**kepala**
Literally ‘head’. It is also a centre-section of a *sarong* which is usually adorned with *tumpal* or bamboo-shoot motif. The *kepala* is also called *tumpal* in Palembang (see *tumpal*).

**kuku**
It means ‘nail’ in the Indonesian language. Needle-spire-figures woven in the borders.

**laken**

**limar** → *kain limar*

**minggir**
Bands on both selvages or weft-ends of *sarong*, or borders of *tanjak*.

**mispak** → *muzawara*

**moire (or moirha)**
It was made of very stout, watered and heavy silk. *Damask*-like flowery motifs in different sizes were sparsely woven (Laarhoven, 1994: Appendix A, pp. 43).

**muri (or moeri)**
Fine-quality plain weave cotton produced in Coromandel. It was used as the base for chintz or batik (Laarhoven, 1994: Appendix A, pp. 44; Guy, 1998: 187).

**muttoon (or mutfoone, madafon)**
Cotton cloth with plain weaving, stripes or checked produced in Coromandel and Surat (Laarhoven, 1994: Appendix A, pp. 41).
muzawara
A woman’s square veil. It is usually made of organdie adorned with embroidery and lace edging using gold thread or ribbon. A rectangular veil is called mispak.

nyambut mantu
Songket which is used when parents of a bride welcome a groom after the arakan (the groom’s march).

ombak
*Ombak* means ‘wave’ in the Indonesian language. The zigzag figure is called *ombak* or *pulir siku*. The outmost sections of the kepala woven with zigzags or waves is also called *ombak*.

pak sangkong (or pakaian pesangko, aesa daerah)
Traditional costume of Palembang. It was traditionally worn by wives of high-ranking officials for attending traditional ceremonies and performing traditional dances held at the palace (Akib, 1975a: 74). It is now one of the two popular wedding costumes in Palembang.

pakaian selendang mantri (or sandan manteri, aesa gandik)
One of the traditional costumes of Palembang. It was once the prerogative of the daughters of mantri (ministers) and leading statesmen, for attending traditional ceremonies and performing traditional dances held at the palace (Akib, 1975a: 74).

palampore
Painted or printed cottons, usually decorated with a flowering tree or large-scale floral design, in demand in Europe and in Asia (Guy, 1998: 187).

parkkallen (or parcallen)
Fine cotton cloth, which was considered very suitable for painted chintz, produced in Coromandel (Laarhoven, 1994: Appendix A, pp. 47).

patola (or patolu, patholen)
Double-ikat cloth usually made of silk, produced in Gujarat. Cotton *patola* imitations were also imported to the archipelago, which were recorded in the eighteenth century.

puncak rebung
Bamboo-shoot motif. It can be found in the *tumpal* of a *sarong* and a *selendang*.

rakam (or berakam)
It means ‘stamping, printing, embroidering’ in the Indonesian language (Echols and Shadily, 1997: 446). A kind of supplementary weft technique using silk or cotton white or coloured threads to add accents, for example, on the centre of a flower or a star figure.

salempore
It was probably cotton plain cloth produced in Coromandel, Bengal, Surat and Ceylon. In Europe, it was used to make Indian chintz imitation. The white sort might have had red stripes on both warp borders of the cloth (Laarhoven, 1994: Appendix A, pp. 56).
sarassa (or sarasa)
It was equivalent to chintz (Laarhoven, 1994: Appendix A, pp. 57-58). Strictly denoted, it was cotton cloth finely hand-painted on both sides (Guy, 1998: 187).

sarong
Tubular skirt-cloth.

satin (or satyn)
“A silk fabric with a glossy surface on one side, produced by a method of weaving by which the threads of the warp are caught and looped by the weft only at certain intervals” (http://dictionary.oed.com). According to Laarhoven, the earliest silk satins are known from China, and it was also produced in Europe (1994: Appendix A, pp. 58).

selendang

sembagi → kain sembagi

setengah tiang
A man's short sarong, which is originally a long sarong folded in two. It usually has a rumpak design.

singep
A square silk songket kerchief to cover the baby’s head at the cukuran ceremony (Suwati Kartiwa, 1996: 36). The one stored in the local museum in Palembang, Balaputra Dewa, is a small rectangular cloth, not square, to put on the baby’s forehead. It usually makes a pair with a larger cloth which is used to cover a baby’s body.

songket bungo
Bungo or bunga means ‘flower’ in the Indonesian language. Songket bungo is a piece on whose centre-field flower figures are woven.

songket lepus
Songket on which patterns are densely woven with gold thread.

songket limar
Songket with a limar background.

songket rumpak (or songket tajung rumpak)
Songket with a chequered background.

songket tawur → tawur

songko → kain tanjak

sulam
Embroidery.
taffeta
"In early times apparently a plain-wove glossy silk (of any colour); in more recent times, a light thin silk or union stuff of decided brightness or lustre" (http://dictionary.oed.com).

tapi
"Relatively inexpensive painted cottons produced for the Indonesian, Malay and Thai markets; coloured piece-goods [...] widely used in Southeast Asia as skirt-cloths" (Guy, 1996: 187).

tapi telepocan
Cloth with circular or cruciform patterns adorned with gold leaf (Laarhoven, 1994: Appendix A, pp. 65).

tawur (or tabur)
*Tawur* or *tabur* means ‘scattered’. *Songket tawur* signifies (1) songket which is a piece which is not *songket lepus*; and (2) a design on which figures are regularly dotted over the centre-field. The *tawur* also signifies the central section of the *tumpal* (or *kepala*) of a *sarong*, or a section surrounded with the *pucak rebung* and the *tretes* (or borders) of a *selendang*.

telepocan → tapi telepocan

tretes (or siku)
Borders of *selendang*.

tretes midar
A type of *songket limar* decorated with patterns woven with gold thread in the *tumpal* and *minggir*.

tudung
A square cloth to be used as a veil for women or a cover for food.

tumpal
It generally signifies a row of triangular shapes in the *kepala* of a *sarong* or the warp-end panels of a *selendang*. It also means the sections which contains *pucak rebung*: i.e. *kepala* of a *sarong* and the warp-end panels of a *selendang*.

umpak
(1) Men’s short *sarong*. It is worn over trousers, coordinated with a shirt and jacket. (2) A narrow band sandwiched with *apit* in the *tumpal*. 
Appendix D: Catalogue of woven figures

1. Flora

1) Bungo mawar (rose) & similar figures

Bungo mawar has a double or triple set of eight round petals. In the centre of the flower there is a small flower-figure, a cross with four dots, or a more complex and dense floral motif. This bungo mawar figure sometimes has rakam-decoration with coloured silk thread on the centre of the flower, or on an outline between the outer and inner petals. Bungo mawar is woven in the centre-field and the umpak-section of the tumpal. There are several patterns for the centre-field: 1) the central figure in a rhomboid; 2) at the corners of rhomboids; and 3) a spotted pattern in the bungo tawur design. The size of this figure ranges from 3.5 x 3.5cm to 8.5 x 6.5 cm.

a) Rose-figures woven in the centre-field

Plate D.1: Bungo mawar (rose) woven in the centre-field.

1 n/d means no data available.
Appendix D: Catalogue of woven figures

Types 1, 2, 9 and 10 in Plate D.1 are relatively simple figures with a double set of eight petals, and Types 3, 4 and 11 have treble petals. Types 5 and 6 have complicated figures in their centres. The petals of Types 7 and 8 are of a similar shape, but those of Type 8 are depicted by curvy lines.

1. Cek Rody private collection (*selendang bintang berantai mawar*, the central figure in a rhomboid): date unknown, probably 100 years old; size n/d.
2. Museum Balaputra Dewa, PK3 (*baju kurung bintang berantai mawar*, the central figure in a rhomboid): date unknown, possibly late 19th century to early 20th century; 3.5 x 3.5cm.
3. Wereldmuseum, 56392 (*selendang bintang mawar jepang*, the central figure in a rhomboid): pre-1963, possibly early twentieth century or before; 8.5 x 6.5cm.
4. Nusantara, S1427 (*selendang berantai mawar bintang*, the central figure in a rhomboid): date unknown, pre-1933; size n/d. This is a similar figure to that of 5.
5. Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo private collection (*sarong bintang berkandang*, at the corners of rhomboids): possibly 100 years old; 3.5 x 4.5cm. This type of rose is also used on:
   - Nusantara, S1427 (*selendang berantai bintang mawar*, at the corners of rhomboids).
6. Nusantara, S2320 (*selendang bintang mawar*, the central figure in a rhomboid): pre-1948; size n/d.
7. Museon, 6819 (*selendang berantai mawar bintang*, the central figure in rhomboids): end of 19th century; size n/d. This type is also woven on:
   - Modern songket (*sarong nampan perak*).
8. Wereldmuseum, 57018 (*selendang berantai mawar berakam*, the central figure in a rhomboid): pre-1965; size 6.4 x 6cm.
9. Modern songket (*sarong bungo bintang mawar jepang*, the central figure in a rhomboid): 5 x 5cm; size n/d.
10. Modern songket (*hiasan dinding* (wall hanging) *limar bintang tawur mawar*, spotted pattern): 5.5 x 5.5 cm; size n/d.
11. Modern songket (*sarong limar nago besaong*, surrounded by four *nagas*): size n/d. It has triple petals.
b) Rose-figures woven in other sections

1. Museum Balaputra Dewa, no number (umpak-section of selendang bintang kayu apo): date unknown, possible early 20th century; 5 x 5.5cm. Green rakam-decoration on a cross in the centre of the figure. This figure is also used on:
   - Modern songket (Ibu Sity Bambang Utroyo private collection, in the centre-field of sarong bintang mawar). It has green rakam-decoration on an outline between the outer and inner petals.

2. Nusantara, S2365 (umpak-section of selendang rumpak): date unknown, possibly early 20th century; size n/d.

3. V&A, IS44-1985 (umpak-section of selendang songket tawar): date unknown, possibly 19th century; 4.5 x 4.5cm.


5. Wereldmuseum, 58618 (umpak-section of selendang bungo jatuh?): pre-1968; size 4.3 x 4.3cm.

6. Modern songket (umpak-section of sarong nampan perak): size n/d.

7. Modern songket (umpak-section of sarong bintang nampan perak): size n/d.

Plate D.2: Bungo mawar woven in the unpack-section.

2) Flower A

Some local people call this figure bungo melati (jasmine) and others call it tampuk manggis (calyx of mangosteen). Flower A is characterised by a double lozenge surrounded by eight round figures with a dot in the centre. The size is generally about 2 x 2cm. It sometimes has a small dot in each of the four triangular spaces created by the lozenge and two round figures (Plate D.3, Type 2). There is a variation decorated with rakam-technique (Type 3). Flower A is
mainly used in the centre-field and the *tawur*-section of the *tumpal*. In the centre-field, it is arranged to create a spotted pattern in the *bungo tawur* design, and at the corners of rhomboids in the *berantai* design and the *bungo cino* design. This figure is often arranged with a small star-figure, as shown in Type 5.

Plate D.3: Flower A.

---

1. Museum Balaputra Dewa, number unknown (centre-field of *hiasan pinggir pangken*): date unknown; 2 x 2cm. This type is also used on:
   - Nusantara, S2365-94 (centre-field and *tawur* section of *kain tajung rumpak*, spotted pattern): date unknown, possibly early 20th century; size n/d. It is arranged with small star-figures.
   - RMV, 300-321 (*tumpal*-section of *sarong rumpak*, spotted pattern): pre-1878; size n/d.
   - Modern songket (centre-field of *sarong bungo cino*; see Plate 2-35): size n/d.
   - Modern songket (centre-field of *selendang bungo tawur*, spotted pattern): size n/d.

2. RMV, 370-2873 (*tawur*-section of *sarong tretes midar*, spotted pattern): pre-1883; size n/d.

3. Modern songket (centre-field of *sarong cantik manis*, spotted pattern): size n/d. This type is also used on:
   - Museon 6819 (*tawur*-section of *selendang*): late 19th century; size n/d.

4. Wereldmuseum, 70180 (*siku*-section of *tanjak*): pre-1986; 2.2 x 2cm. It has a cross in a single lozenge. This figure is also found on:
   - V&A, IS47-1957 (*tawur*-section of *selendang janda*, spotted pattern): 19th century; 1.1 x 1.1cm.

5. Wereldmuseum, 2233 (*tawur*-section of *selendang*): pre-1884; 3.2 x 2cm. Flower A is often arranged with star figures. This combination is also found on:
   - RMV, 370-2871 (*baju* of songket, spotted pattern): pre-1883 (see Plate 4-5 in Chapter 4).
   - Nusantara, number? (*tawur*-section of *selendang jando*, spotted pattern): date unknown, possibly early 20th century.
   - Nusantara S2365-94 (*tawur*-section of *sarong tajung rumpak*): date unknown, possibly early 20th century.
3) Flower B

Some local people call this figure *bungo tanjung* (*tanjung flower*), and others call it *bungo melati* (*jasmine*). This figure has eight oval petals surrounding a cross with a tiny hole in the centre. Flower B is usually used to create a spotted pattern in the centre-field of the *tawur* design and in the *tawur*-section of the *tumpal*. The small type (1.5 x 1.5cm and smaller) is used as a space-filler (Plate D.4, Type 4).

1. Museon, 6862 (centre-field of *sarong bungo tawur*, spotted pattern): end of 19th century; size n/d. This type is also used on:
   - Modern songket (centre-field of *selendang bungo tawur*, spotted pattern): size n/d.
2. Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo private collection (centre-field of *sarong pacar cina*): date unknown, possibly 100 years old; 2 x 2cm. This figure is woven with coloured silk thread in several colours (see Plate 2.35 in Chapter 2).
3. RMV, 370-2866 (*baju kurung*, spotted pattern): pre-1883; size n/d.
4. Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo private collection (the centre-field of *sarong bintang berkandang*, a space-filler in rhomboids): date unknown, possibly 100 years old; 1.5 x 1.5cm.

4) Flower C and similar figures

Some local people call this figure *tampuk manggis* (*calyx of mangosteen*). Flower C has four broad, sometimes heart-shaped, petals with a vertical line in the centre, and they are rimmed. It is used in the centre-field, the *umpak*-section of the *tumpal*, and the *minggir*. There is a type without the rim (Plate D.5, Type 5), and this is used in the centre-field and the *tawur*-section of the *tumpal* as a supported figure to create a spotted pattern.

1. Cek Rody private collection (centre-field of *selendang bungo bintang*): date unknown; size n/d.
2. V&A, IS44-1985 (centre-field of *selendang songket limar bungo bintang tawur*, spotted pattern): date unknown; approx. 4 x 4cm.
Appendix D: Catalogue of woven figures

3. Modern songket (centre-field of tanjak nago besaong, between the nagas): size n/d. This type is also used on:
   - Modern songket (centre-field of sarong bungo cino, between figures creating rhomboids).

4. Modern songket (umpak-section of sarong cantik manis). This type is also used on:
   - Wereldmuseum, 57018 (minggir of selendang berantai mawar): pre-1965; 2 x 2cm.

5. Museon, 6862 (the tawur-section of sarong bungo tawur, spotted pattern): 19th century, size n/d. This type is also used on:
   - V&A, IS44-1985 (centre-field of selendang songket limar bungo bintang tawur, spotted pattern): date unknown; approx. 3 x 3cm.
   - Museum Balaputra Dewa, no collection number (Baju kurung, at the corners of rhomboids): date unknown; approx. 2 x 2cm.
   - Modern songket (tawur-section of sarong bungo cino, a spotted figure): size n/d.

5) Bungo pacar (pacar flower)

Bungo pacar is a tiny (0.5 x 0.5 cm) round figure composed of four boat-figures surrounding a diamond (Plate D.6, Type 1). It is used to create a spotted pattern in the tawur-section of the tumpal or as a space-filler in the centre-field. It is often woven densely as Type 2, and used in the tawur-section of the tumpal.

1. Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo, private collection (tawur-section of selendang janda, spotted pattern): date unknown.
2. Museum Balaputra Dewa, collection no.? (singep of songket): date unknown. This pattern is also used on:
   - Museum Balaputra Dewa, collection no.? (tawur-section of sarong bungo pacik): date unknown.
   - Modern songket (tawur-section of bungo cino).
6) *Bungo jatuh* (fallen flowers)

The figure of *bungo jatuh* is characterised by four leafy petals forming its diamond shape. The size is about 8 x 8cm. It is used in the centre-field, mostly in rhomboids.

1. Ibu Siti Rafmah private collection (centre-field of a *selendang*): date unknown; 7.5 x 9cm.
2. Wereldmuseum, 58618 (centre-field of *selendang berantai bungo jatuh*, in rhomboids): pre-1968; 8 x 7.5cm. This type is also found on:
   • Modern songket (centre-field of *selendang bungo jatuh*).
3. Wereldmuseum, 58618 (centre-field of *selendang berantai bungo jatuh*, in rhomboids): pre-1968; 8 x 8.5cm.

7) *Bungo anggrek* (orchid) and similar figures

This is an asymmetric figure composed of curvy lines. One local source identifies Type 1 as *bungo anggrek* (orchid). Type 2 is a mirror image of Type 1. Type 3 is closer to a circle than Type 1. The similar curvy figure, Type 4, could not be identified by local artisans. These figures are woven in the centre-field and the tawur-section of the *tumpal* to create a spotted pattern, in particular when a centre-field has a limar background.

1. RMV, 370-2866 (*baju kurung*, spotted pattern): pre-1883; size n/d.
2. Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo private collection (*tawur-section of selendang janda*, spotted pattern): date unknown; 2.5 x 2.5cm.

The *bungo anggrek* can also be found on:
   • RMV, B154-6 (*tawur-section of kain panjang*): pre-1963; size n/d.
   • Tropen Museum, 1698-199 (*selendang tretes midar*): pre-1946; size n/d.
8) **Puncak rebung (bamboo shoot)**

**Plate D.9: Puncak rebung and ‘kalga’**.

_Puncak rebung_ is a triangular-figure. A row of several _puncak rebungs_ is woven in the _tumpal_-section of almost all _selendang_ and _sarong_. This figure is roughly divided into two groups: _puncak rebung_ with a triangle-frame (Plate D.9, Types 1–3) and those without it (Types 4–6). Most _puncak rebung_ figures have a ‘spire’ on the top. Type 1, a triple-framed triangle outside to which hook figures are attached, is the one most commonly woven. Types 2 and 3 also have a triangle-frame, inside which geometric figures (Type 2) or curvy patterns (Type 3) are woven respectively. Type 4 and 5 do not have a solid frame. They are composed of curvy lines to form a bamboo-shoot-shape. Types 6 and 7 are not triangles; they have a straight line with a spade-shape in the middle (Type 6) and wing-like shapes (Type 7). Type 8, the paisley-like figure, can be found on some dated songket. Local people do not consider this figure as _puncak rebung_. According to Lynton (1995: 172), this figure is called _kalga_, which is
popular on the Indian sari, and was developed from floral and tree-of-life designs.

1. Modern songket (sarong cantik manis). This popular type is found on:
   - Balaputra Dewa (sarong bungo pacik), selendang bungo kayu apoi.
   - Wereldmuseum, 56392, selendang bintang mawar jepang.
   - Wereldmuseum, 56454, selendang bungo jatuh.

2. Ibu Sity Bambang Utjoyo private collection (sarong pacar cina): date unknown, possibly 100 years old. This type is also found on:
   - Wereldmuseum, 2233 (selendang): pre-1884.

3. Modern songket (sarong bungo pacar): size n/d. This type is also found on:
   - RMV, 370-2873 (sarong bintang): 1883.
   - Wereldmuseum, 57018 (selendang berantai mawar).
   - Wereldmuseum, 58618 (selendang bungo jatuh): pre-1968.

4. Modern songket (sarong bungo cino): size n/d. This type is also found on:
   - Museon, 6862 (sarong bungo tawur): end of 19th century.

5. Modern songket.

6. Modern songket (sarong tretes midar). This type is also found on:

7. Modern songket (sarong bintang nampan berantai).

8. V&A, IS46-1957 (Selendang songket limar): 19th century. This type is also found on:
   - RMV, 300-324 (Selendang songket limar): 1878.

2. Fauna

1) Naga (or nago)

Naga is a dragon-figure with a curly tail. Some figures have a wing. It is woven in the centre-field to form the rhomboid design called nago besaung (Types 1–3), and in the umpak-section, often sandwiching a rose-figure (Types 4–6). The nago besaung pattern was found only in Indonesia in my research.

Plate D.10: Naga
1. Museum Balaputra Dewa, no number (centre-field of *selendang nago besaung*): 19th century, size n/d.

2. Modern songket (centre-field of *sarong nago besaung*): size n/d.

3. Modern songket (centre-field of *tanjak nago besaung nampan perak*): size n/d.

4. Balaputra Dewa, no number (*umpak-section of selendang kayu apo*): date unknown; 8 x 5.5cm. *Naga* in the *umpak*-section is also found on:
   - Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo private collection (*umpak-section of sarong*): possibly 100 years old; size n/d.
   - Nusantara, S2320 (*selendang bintang mawar*): date unknown, possibly early 20th century; size n/d.
   - Tropen Museum, 1778-29 (*selendang berantai bintang*): pre-1948; size n/d.
   - Tropen Museum, 1954-8 (*berantai mawar bungo jatuh*): pre-1950; size n/d.
   - Tropen Museum, 5174-10 (*selendang mawar bungo jatuh*): pre-1987; size n/d.
   - Wereldmuseum, 56454 (*selendang*): pre-1964, 6 x 4cm.
   - Wereldmuseum, 58618 (*selendang bungo jatuh*): pre-1968, 7.5 x 4.7cm.

5. Modern songket (*umpak-section of sarong bungo cino*)

6. Fragment of old songket (*umpak-section*). This *naga* has a child on its back.

**2) Burung (bird) & ayam (chicken)**

![Plate D.11: Burung and ayam.](image)

The chicken-figure is found in the *umpak*-section of an old songket (Type 2). It is also used for a newly created pattern, arranged with lattices (Type 1). The bird-figure has some variants. They are usually used to fill small spaces in the centre-field and between *puncak rebungs* (Types 4, 5, 6 and 7). Two birds are arranged upside-down in the *umpak*-section (Type 8). A big bird...
carrying a small bird is found in Type 3. Four pairs of these birds create rhomboids. A similar pattern is shown in Selvanayagam’s book, and she identified it as a Sumatran-influenced pattern (1990: 99). This pattern, however, was not found in Palembang during my fieldwork.

1. Modern songket (centre-field of selendang ayam, in lattice).
2. Ibu Sity Bambang private collection (umpak-section of sarong pulir): date unknown, possibly 100 years old.
3. Wereldmuseum, 56454 (centre-field of selendang, to form rhomboids): pre-1964; 7.5 x 5cm.
4. Modern songket (centre-field of selendang pulir, between slanted lines).
5. Modern songket (between puncak rebungs of sarong ayam).
6. Modern songket (between puncak rebungs of sarong bintang nampan perak).
7. Wereldmuseum, 56454 (between puncak rebungs of selendang): pre-1964; 5 x 4cm.
8. Modern songket (umpak-section of sarong limar bintang nampan perak).

3) Other animals (rabbits, cats, etc)

The kucing tidur (sleeping cat) is a round figure (Type 1 and 2), which resembles the figure of bungo anggrek. Some people also call this figure sumping (an ear ornament). It is woven in the centre-field and the tawur-section to create a spotted pattern. Ulat (caterpillar) woven in the centre-field has a body with seven pairs of legs (Type 3). Ulat woven in the umpak-section cannot clearly be identified as a caterpillar; two of them sandwich a flower (Type 4). Kelinci (rabbit) shown in Plate D.12 is used in the minggir. It has short ears and a long tail, and looks more like a squirrel than a rabbit. These animal figures were not found on dated songket during my research.

Plate D.12: Other animal figures.

1. Modern songket (tawur-section of sarong bungo intan).
2. Modern songket.
3. Modern songket (centre-field of sarong kenango dimakan ulat).
5. Modern songket (minggir of selendang bintang nampan perak).
3. Others

1) Nampan (tray)

There are two types of nampan perak (silver tray). One is a lozenge, which is usually woven closely over the centre-field (Plate D.13, Types 1, 2, 3 and 4). The other is an octagon, which is woven in a rhomboid. The size ranges from 8.5 x 8.5cm to 5 x 5cm. The centres of some nampan perak are decorated with coloured silk thread. This figure is used in the centre-field. There is a similar figure called nampan emas (gold tray). This has a lozenge frame, in which a round flower is woven (Type 8).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
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</table>

Plate D.13: Nampan.

2. Modern songket (centre-field of sarong nampan perak): 8.5 x 8.5cm.
3. Modern songket (centre-field of selendang nampan perak).
4. Modern songket (centre-field of selendang nampan perak): 6 x 5cm.
5. Modern songket (centre-field of selendang nampan perak): 5 x 5cm.
6. Modern songket (centre-field of selendang nampan perak berkandang)
7. Modern songket (centre-field of selendang kenango dimakan ulat).

2) Bintang (star)

The star-figure is very popular on Palembang songket. It is usually woven in the centre-field and the tawur-section, and sometimes in the minggir. The size ranges from 8 x 8cm to 1.5 x 1.5cm. The basic figure woven in the centre-field is Type 1 in Plate D.14. It has eight lines from the
centre to the outline, separating the star-figure into eight parallelograms. Type 2 has rakam-decoration, and Type 3 has an elaborate figure in the centre. Types 4 and 5 have no partitions, but a double-frame, and Type 5 has rakam-decoration in the centre. Type 6 is a tiny figure (2 x 2cm) woven in rhomboids of biji pare pattern. Type 7 has obtuse apexes.

a) Star-figures woven in the centre-field

1. Museum Balaputra Dewa (sarong bungo pacik): date unknown; 5 x 5cm. This type can be found on:
   - Modern songket (selendang berantai bintang, in rhomboids).
   - Wereldmuseum, 56392 (selendang bintang mawar jepang, in rhomboids): pre-1963; 8 x 7cm.

2. Museum Balaputra Dewa (selendang kayu apoi): date unknown; 6.5 x 6.5cm.

3. Modern songket (selendang nampan perak, in rhomboids). This type is also found on:
   - Nusantara, S1427 (selendang berantai mawar bintang, in rhomboids): date unknown, possibly early 20th century. It has rakam-decoration in the centre.

4. V&A, IS44-1985 (selendang tawur bungo bintang, a spotted pattern): date unknown; approx. 4 x 4cm. A similar figure can be found on:
   - Museum Balaputra Dewa, PK3 (baju kurung): date unknown; 3.5 x 3.5cm.

5. RMV, 3750-1 (sarong berantai bintang, in rhomboids): pre-1961; size n/d.

6. Ibu Sity Bambang private collection (baju kurung biji pare, in rhomboids): date unknown, possibly 100 years old.

7. Modern songket (selendang bintang nampan perak, at the corners of rhomboids).

8. Wereldmuseum, 2233 (selendang, in rhomboids): pre-1884; 1.8 x 1.8cm.
Appendix D: Catalogue of woven figures

b) Star-figures woven in the *tawur*, *umpak* and *minggir*

![Images of woven figures](image)

**Plate D.15: Bintang woven in the tawur, umpak and minggir.**

1. Nusantara, S2365-94 (*tawur*-section of *selendang tajung rumpak*): date unknown, possibly early 20th century, size n/d.
2. Nusantara, S2365 (*tawur*-section of *tajung rumpak*): date unknown, possibly early 20th century.
4. Wereldmuseum, 2233 (*tawur*-section of *selendang*): pre-1884; 3.2 x 2.5cm.
5. Wereldmuseum, 2233 (*tawur*-section of *selendang*): pre-1884; 2.5 x 2cm.
6. Modern songket (wall-hanging, beside the spires of *puncak rebung*): 1 x 1cm. This figure can also be found on between the spires of the *kuku*. 
### Appendix E: Sultans and Dutch Residents of Palembang

#### 1. Sultans of Palembang

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sultans</th>
<th>Ruling Periods</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Pangeran Kesumo Abdurrohim (or Cindai Balang)</td>
<td>1662 - 1706</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c. 1670: Sultan Susuhunan Abdurrahman Khalifatul Mukminin Sayidul Imam)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Sultan Muhammad Mansyur Jayo Ing Lago (a son of 1)</td>
<td>1706 - c. 1714</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Sultan Agung Komaruddin Sri Teruno (a son of 1)</td>
<td>c. 1714 - c. 1724</td>
</tr>
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<td>4. Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin Jayo Wikramo (Mahmud Badaruddin I, a son of 2)</td>
<td>c. 1724 - c. 1756</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Sultan Susuhunan Ahmad Najamuddin Adi Kesumo (Ahmad Najamuddin I, a son of 4)</td>
<td>c. 1756 - c. 1774</td>
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<td>6. Sultan Muhammad Bahaudin (a son of 5)</td>
<td>c. 1774 - 1803</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Sultan Susuhunan Mahmud Badaruddin (Mahmud Badaruddin II, a son of 6)</td>
<td>1803 - 1812, 1813, and 1818 - 1819</td>
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<td>8. Sultan Susuhunan Husin Dhiauddin Sultan Najamuddin II (a son of 6)</td>
<td>1812 - 1813 and 1813- 1818</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Sultan Ahmad Najamuddin Pangeran Ratu (Ahmad Najamuddin III, a son of 7)</td>
<td>1819 - 1821</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Sultan Ahmad Najamuddin IV Prabu Anom (a son of 8)</td>
<td>1821 - 1823</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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(Sources: Woelders, 1975: 2; Palembang, 2000: 77; Soetadji, 2002 [1995]: 26-27)
2. Dutch Residents of Palembang

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<td>1824 - 1826</td>
<td>J. C. Reijnst</td>
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<tr>
<td>1826 - 1828</td>
<td>H. S. van Son</td>
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<tr>
<td>1828 - 1833</td>
<td>C. F. E. Praetorius</td>
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<td>1842 - 1845</td>
<td>Jhr. A. H. W. de Kock</td>
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<tr>
<td>1845 - 1849</td>
<td>A.H.W. Baron de Kock</td>
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<tr>
<td>1849 - 1850</td>
<td>C. P. C. Steinmetz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850 - 1855</td>
<td>C. A. de Brauw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1855 - 1856</td>
<td>A. van der Ven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1856</td>
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<tr>
<td>1857 - 1860</td>
<td>P. T. Coupernis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1860 - 1861</td>
<td>W.E. Kroesen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1861 –</td>
<td>J. A. W. Ophuijsten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Nov. 1862 –</td>
<td>P. L. van Bloemen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Feb. 1867 -</td>
<td>J. A. W. Ophuijsten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Sep. 1870</td>
<td>F. E. P. van den Bossche</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 Nov. 1872 -</td>
<td>M. H. W. Nieuwenhuijs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 May 1873 –</td>
<td>A. Pruys van der Hoeven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 Mar. 1879 –</td>
<td>P. F. Laging Tobias</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Feb. 1883 –</td>
<td>G. J. du Cloux</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Mar. 1887 –</td>
<td>C. A. Niesen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 Feb. 1889 –</td>
<td>J. P. de Vries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Apr. 1897 –</td>
<td>H. J. Monod de Froideville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 Oct. 1900 –</td>
<td>I. A. van Rijn van Alkemade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 May 1906 –</td>
<td>F. L. K. Storm van’s Gravesande</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Jul. 1909 –</td>
<td>C. van de Velde</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Apr. 1914 –</td>
<td>D. A. F. Brautigam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Mar. 1920 –</td>
<td>L. C. Westenenk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Apr. 1921 –</td>
<td>A. H. Hens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 May 1923 –</td>
<td>O. M. Goedhart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Jan. 1926 –</td>
<td>J. Tideman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 May 1926 –</td>
<td>H. E. K. Ezerman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 Jul. 1930 –</td>
<td>J. L. M. Swaab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Jul. 1933 –</td>
<td>W. Steinbuch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Jul. 1936 –</td>
<td>A. Oranje</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 Dec. 1941 – 13 Feb. 1943</td>
<td>Mr. A. W. van Zadelhoff</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Almanak, 1823-1941)
Document F.1: ARA, VOC 3089, fol. 66 (Landing inventory)

Lijst van de gode voedselvaten, als de al hier op de onderstaande
lijst zijn aangegeven in aantallen en als aangegeven in de aantallen
van de andere handelaren, alle op afstand van dekkens, kisten en
zwemvaten, al evenals:

10 November Den primaap aangekomen. Jürgen Tessen
met al evenals chaloup en 22 koppen
die van de voorste zijde laten
met 1 haak, brug
de Kaping en 
37 tien Jaren 1000 oorvoeten
en 5000 gulden, in 3 maten: Lingh, 10 kilo's en 300 pond
en voor een mat de Fingers, 10 kilo's en 300 pond
zijn gemengd met 2 handels. 10 Oktober 1765

7 November De medevoedselvaten voor
met den Jürgen Tessen

10 — Aangekomen Jürgen Moerens
en voor 2 handels. 20 koppen 2
de men is geweet: 1 haak, brug
met 20 tien Jaren 1000 oorvoeten
en 2000 guldens, in 3 maten: Lingh, 10 kilo's en
2000 pond, in 3 maten; in 3 maten.

20 November De medevoedselvaten
voor den Jürgen Moerens
| Artikel | Muntwaarde | Aantal | Lengte | Gewicht |prijs | totaal
|--------|-------------|--------|--------|---------|------|-------
| Linen | 18 | 18 | 24 | 34 | 6 | 108
| Linen | 19 | 19 | 24 | 34 | 6 | 108
| Linen | 20 | 20 | 24 | 34 | 6 | 108
| Linen | 21 | 21 | 24 | 34 | 6 | 108

*Note: The table continues with similar entries.*
### Appendix G: The Chronology of Palembang Textile Trade and Industry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Textile trade &amp; industry</th>
<th>Political &amp; economic situation / Foreign affairs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The 6th century</strong></td>
<td>A kingdom, Kandali, appeared in the place where present Palembang is located.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The 1st half of the century: Kandali produced flowered cloth and cotton (Groeneveldt, 1887: 186).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The 7th – 11th centuries (The Sriwijayan period)</strong></td>
<td>The 2nd half of the 7th century: Sriwijaya emerged in Palembang.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The 7th century: People in Sribhoga (Sriwijaya) normally wore sarong (Takakusu, 1896: 12).</td>
<td>The late 11th century: the capital of Sriwijaya was transferred to Muara Jambi.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>962: Sriwijayan envoys brought back silk thread from China (Groeneveldt, 1887: 187-189).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1028: Sriwijayan envoys were given girdles of gold from China (ibid.).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1080: The daughter of Sriwijayan king sent some tribute including cotton cloth to China (ibid.).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The 13th – 16th centuries (Javanese rule)</strong></td>
<td>1275: Singhasari attacked Jambi, probably also Palembang. The late 13th century: Sriwijaya broke up. The prince of Palembang, Parameswara, fled from Palembang.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The 13th century: Skeins of silk were sent to Sriwijaya from China, and silk brocade was popular in Sriwijaya (Hirth and Rockhill, 1911: 61).</td>
<td>c. 1400: Malacca was founded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The 15th century: Dress of Palembang people was the same as in Java (Mills, 1970: 98-102).</td>
<td>1511: Malacca was conquered by the Portuguese. Palembang was controlled by Raden Patah, the King of Demak (Olthof, 1941: 20, 22-25; Cortesão, 1944: 155).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The 16th century: Palembang bought a large amount of clothing of the coarse kind from traders from Gujarat and the Coromandel Coast (Cortesão, 1944: 155-156).</td>
<td>c. 1550: Ki Gede Ing Suro, a Javanese prince, founded a dynasty in Palembang.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textile trade &amp; industry</td>
<td>Political &amp; economic situation / Foreign affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The 17th century</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1616: The VOC started to bring Indian textiles to Palembang.</td>
<td>1600: The English East India Company was established.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1603: The Dutch East India Company was established.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By 1667: Regular gold thread import started.</td>
<td>1616: The first Dutch contact with Palembang.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;Cloth was Palembang's primary import until 1670&gt;</td>
<td>1619: The VOC established a trading post in Palembang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1671: Import of non-textile articles became prominent. Songket weaving commenced in Palembang (?)</td>
<td>1641: The Dutch conquered Portuguese Malacca. The first contract for the pepper trade between Palembang and the VOC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1677: The Dutch forbade the trade of non-VOC cloths with Palembang.</td>
<td>1642: The VOC obtained an exclusive right to Palembang pepper.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The early 80s: A considerable quantity of Javanese cloth started to be imported.</td>
<td>1670: Palembang sultanate started.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1688: The VOC monopolised the Javanese cloth trade with Palembang.</td>
<td>c.1678: Palembang's pepper trade started to decline.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The 1670s: The pepper price dropped.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The 18th century</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early this century: Import of Javanese cloth became prominent.</td>
<td>c.1724: Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin I came to the throne (-c. 1756).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1738: Kuto Lamo (old kraton) was built.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. 1757: Gold thread import became conspicuous.</td>
<td>The 1740s: Palembang's tin trade activated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-century: The Sultan issued the regulation that men should wear Palembang sarong.</td>
<td>1749: Mesjid Agung was built.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&lt;c. 1750: The Industrial Revolution started in England&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The end of 1760s: Indian cloth import almost disappeared.</td>
<td>1797: Kuto Besak (new kraton) was built.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1799: The VOC ceased trading.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The 19th century</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1803: Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin II came to the throne (-1812, 1813, 1818-1819).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1811: The massacre at the Dutch garrison.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1812: The British attack on Palembang. The British control of Palembang.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textile trade &amp; industry</td>
<td>Political &amp; economic situation / Foreign affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The 1820s: Songket or cloth adorned with gold was exported to North Sumatra (Anderson, 1971 [1826]: 206).</td>
<td>1814: The London Convention. The English agreed to return Palembang to the Dutch.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1822: Gold thread totalling c. 4,000 kg was brought to Palembang from Bangka, Thailand, Malacca, Singapore and China (ARA, Ministerie van Kolonien 3075).</td>
<td>1816: The Dutch came back to Palembang.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1823: “The best silk cloth interwoven gold thread was made in Palembang and sent to everywhere” (Van Sevenhoven, 1823: 79). Songket weaving was no longer confined to the kraton and dispersed to the town. Songket cost $44 in the market (Van Sevenhoven, 1823: 126).</td>
<td>1819: The conflict between Palembang and the Dutch started.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1832: There were 78 songket weavers, and their wages were from $7 to 8 per month (Praetorius, 1843 (1832): 395).</td>
<td>1821: The Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin II was arrested.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The 1850s: Embroidery, lacework and cotton weaving became popular (KITLV, DR 297b, fol. 37). Songket with a maas-kepala or golden edges cost up to $20 or 25, and sarong songket lepus cost $100 (Budhing, 1866: 88). The import of linen and cotton products increased (The Overzigt van den handel, 1849-1868).</td>
<td>1823: The Dutch started to control Palembang.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1854: There were 203 weavers, 8 silk and thread-dyers, 48 thread-makers and 21 sewers and embroiderers (KITLV, DH 297b, fol. 39).</td>
<td>Sultan Muhamad Bahauddin IV (1821 - 1823). Nobles were driven away from the kraton.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1865: Palembang songket was exported to Bangka (Van Diest, 1865: 4-5).</td>
<td>1824: The Palembang Sultanate was abolished.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1875: A photograph of Palembang dancers wearing songket was taken (KITLV, photo collection 3972).</td>
<td>1878: A world exhibition in Paris.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1882: Eight pieces of songket were sent to Europe for an exhibition: selendang songket lepus, $110 (RMV, series of 370 no.5).</td>
<td>1883: A world exhibition in Amsterdam.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1885: Palembang was famed for the weaving of rich silk sarong inter-wrought with gold (Forbes, 1885: 259).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textile trade &amp; industry</td>
<td>Political &amp; economic situation / Foreign affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889: “The weaving of silk <em>sarong</em> used gold thread and the lacework would be practised with advantage by many women” in Palembang (ANJ, 65.8, fol.60; ANJ, 65.9, fol.73).</td>
<td>1891: Oil deposits were found near Palembang.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.1900: Dancers wearing songket photographed (KITLV, photo collection 37124).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The 20th century**

The early part of this century: Lace weaving and songket weaving were the most popular handicrafts of Palembang (Jasper and Mas Pirngadie, 1912: 306). The import of cotton cloths increased (*Gewestelijke maandstatistiek*, 1918; 1919; 1920).

1911: Chinese brocade stopped being produced in Nanking due to the fall of the Qing Dynasty.

1920: Local women wearing a songket costume attended the official event, when the Dutch Governor-General visited Palembang (KITLV, photo collection, no.32328).

1928: The Resident, Tideman, inserted a photograph of the groom and bride wearing a songket costume into an annual report (*Tijd*deman, 1928, *Memorie van Ovelgave*).

1936: The Resident, Steinbuch, recorded that the songket industry had already declined (KIT 322-329).

The 1950s: Songket weaving declined.

c. 1965: The revival project of songket weaving started. Artificial gold thread started to be popular in Palembang. Songket shops started to be established.

1969: 31 people were involved in the songket industry (PIKM, 1997/1998: 5).

1985: 1200 people were involved in the songket industry (Ibid.).

1997-1998: The price of silk thread increased. Songket shops reduced the number of weavers.


1905: The transmigration policy started. A village in the suburbs of Palembang was organised for Javanese immigrants.

1908: A union, Budi Utomo, was set up in Java.

By 1912: Twenty-seven groups which aimed at improving the local people’s life were organised.

1925-: The export earnings of the Dutch East Indies started to decrease.


1929: The Great World Depression.


Appendix H: Songket Collections

[Note] The copyright of photographs Plates H.7 and H.16 is owned by the Tropen Museum. Other photographs were taken by the author.

Kain songket

Plate H.1: Sarong of songket (Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde: no. 3750-1, donated in 1961)

According to local artisans in Palembang, this design is probably ‘songket lepus berantai bintang berakam’. Since real gold thread was used generously all over the surface, it was presumably woven in the nineteenth century. Yellow, pink, blue, and light green silk threads were interwoven in the centre of the star-figures, in a part of each puncak rebung, and in the tiny figures in the border along the selvage, which set off this sarong. One border along the selvage is torn and attached with a maroon cloth.
Plate H.2: Sarong of songket (Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo private collection)

The background of the tumpal and borders (minggir) is red, and that of the centre-field is dark blue. In the centre-field, bintang berkandang (berkandang = pagar: fence) or bintang berantai pattern is woven with gold thread and decorated with silk thread in pink, green and light blue using the rakam technique. At each point of the rhomboid ‘fence’ there is a mawar (rose) figure of 4.5 x 3.5cm. In each lozenge a star figure (7 x 7 cm) is woven, and four small flowers are beside it. According to Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo, the owner of this sarong, it could be one hundred years old.
Appendix H: Songket Collections

Plate H.3: *Kain songket* (Wereldmuseum: no. 2233, donated in 1884)

Local artisans of Palembang cannot name this design. Some people suggested that it may be ‘lepus bintang’ or ‘lepus bunga jatuh’. (212 x 88.5cm)

Plate H.4: *Selendang* of songket (Wereldmuseum: no. 56392, donated in 1963)

This songket has a black background. According to a local artisan of Palembang, this figure is *bunga mawar jepang*. (202.5 x 75.5cm)
Plate H.5: Selendang of songket (Museum Balaputra Dewa)

Patterns are woven with gold thread over a red background adorned with the rakam technique. According to a local artisan of Palembang, the design is called bintang bungo kayu apoi. In the umpak section, nago and mawar figures are woven. (206 x 72cm)

Plate H.6: Kain limar songket (Wereldmuseum: no. 31642, donated in 1951)

The centre-field was woven with limar thread. At both end fields, linear patterns were interwoven with gold thread. It seems that this type of cloth was popular in the nineteenth century.
Plate H.7: *Tanjak (songko)* of songket (Tropen Museum: no. 1772-1418, donated in 1940)

This is a head cloth for men. The centre-field is plainly woven in green except one corner. This part and the four sides are those which will appear outside when it is worn. Woven figures are flowers, including *bunga mawar* (rose).

(89 x 89 cm)

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Plate H.8: *Tanjak* of limar songket (Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde: no. 370-2869, purchased in 1882)

The centre-field is made of *kain limar*, adorned with songket work on the four sides. It was purchased for £35 in 1882.

(85 x 85 cm)
Appendix H: Songket Collections

Baju, baju kurung, baju kutang and celana songket

Plate H.9: Baju of songket (Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde: no. 300-134, purchased in 1878)

This is a short jacket for men with a stiff stand-up collar. On the red background, chequered motifs were woven, in each of which a curvilinear figure is woven with gold thread. There is a round slit on both cuffs. A similar style of jacket is shown in Plate 4.5 in Chapter 4.

Plate H.10: Baju kutang of songket (Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde: no. 370-2870, purchased in 1882)

This is a vest for a man. The vest itself was made of white cotton cloth like the similar one in Plate 4.6 in Chapter 4. A square dark red silk cloth with curvilinear figures interwoven with gold thread is sewn on the front. It is closed with hooks (Fischer, 1918: 54)

(Length: 54cm, Width: 41cm)
Plate H.11: *Baju kurung* of songket (Museum: no. 6861, purchased in 1965)

This is a tunic type top for women, probably made at the end of the nineteenth century. Small flower figures were scattered on the red background. It has a matching *sarong*. According to the museum, this *baju kurung* and the *sarong* were a part of the bridal gift from the groom to the bride. They are also believed to have been worn by a middle-aged woman.

(Length: 102cm, Width of the bottom: 71cm)

Plate H.12: *Baju kurung* of songket (Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde: no. 300-133, purchased in 1878)

On this *baju kurung*, two types of figures are woven alternately; the larger figure, which probably represents some kind of flower, and the smaller one, which depicts another type of flower or a star. Seven gold buttons are put on wristbands. It has a cotton lining.
Plate H.13: *Baju kurung* of songket (RMV: no. 370-2866, purchased in 1882)

Gold and silver threads are used as supplementary weft; the larger figures are woven with gold thread, and the small flowers are woven with silver thread. The seven buttons on the cuffs are made of gold thread (Fischer, 1918: 54).

Plate H.14: *Baju kurung* of songket (Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyo private collection)

According to the owner, this *baju kurung* songket is possibly 100 years old.

(Length: 94 m, Width of the bottom: 61 cm)
Plate H.15: *Celana* (Museum: no. 6867, purchased in 1965)

These trousers were made of silk *tajung*-like cloth adorned with *songket*-work on the bottom. According to the museum, they were probably the trousers for a groom.

(Length: 94cm)

Others

Plate H.16: *Celana Hiasan penutup pinggiran pangkeng* (Tropen Museum: no. 1772-1623, donated in 1940)

This cloth was used to hang below the bed in the *kamar pengantin* (the room for a groom and bride) at a wedding ceremony.

(857 x 34 cm)
Appendix I-1: Questionnaire (statistical result)

(Notes) The respondents to this questionnaire survey included 57 weavers. These weavers were mainly introduced to me by my friend weavers. For this survey, I visited their houses as well as some workshops, which led to some overlapping data regarding those families which comprise more than one weaver (for the analysis of this survey, see Chapter 5).

1) Where are you originally from?

Palembang: 29
Of mixed: 7 (detail: a father is Palembang: 6, a mother is Palembang: 1)
Other areas: 21 (detail: OKI: 18, OKU: 2, MUBA: 1)

2) Do you have a Palembang noble title, such as Nymas? (only for indigenous people of Palembang)

Yes: 15 (Nyayu 13, Nyimas 2)
No: 14

3) Who taught you how to weave songket?

Mother or grand mother: 25
Friend: 15
Aunt: 8
Mother-in-law: 3
Sister-in-law: 3
Sister: 2
Wife’s aunt: 1

4) Do you have sisters/brothers or relatives who are also songket weavers?

Yes: 30 (Wong Palembang and of mixed origin: 22, non-Wong Palembang: 8)
No: 27 (Wong Palembang and of mixed origin: 14, non-Wong Palembang: 13)

5) How old are you?

10s: 0
20s: 11
30s: 14
40s: 20
50s: 11
60s: 1
Appendix I-1: Questionnaire (Statistic Result)

6) How long have you been weaving songket?

- Less than 5 years: 7
- 5 years and more: 1
- 10 years and more: 5
- 15 years and more: 6
- 20 years and more: 16
- 25 years and more: 7
- 30 years more: 11
- 40 years more: 1
- No answer: 3

7) What is your educational background?

- Elementary school: 33
- Secondary school: 17
- High school: 1
- Technical school: 1
- University: 1
- No answer: 4

8) Who is your employer? How much is your fee?

- the shop: 13 (including one person who also weaves independently as a side job)
- the middleman: 30 (including 5 people who also weave independently as a side job)
- independent: 14

Fee/set:
- From a shop: Rp.250,000: 7
- From a middleman: Rp.120,000: 1, Rp.300,000: 7, Rp.350,000: 11,
- Independent: Rp.600,000: 1, Rp.700,000: 6, Rp.800,000: 2

Fee/sarong:
- From a middleman: Rp.150,000 or less: 2, Rp.350,000: 2, Rp.600,000*: 1
  (* weaving with *benang emas jantung*)

Fee/selendang:
- From a middleman: Rp.45,000: 2, Rp.300,000*: 1, Rp.350,000*: 1
  (* weaving with *benang emas jantung*)

9) How many sets do you weave a month?

- Less than 1 set: 3
- 1 set: 33
- 2 sets: 10
- 3 sets: 1
- 4 sets: 1
- 1 selendang: 6
- 1 sarong: 2
- 3 sarongs: 1

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10) How many people do you have in your family?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Persons</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 (him/herself)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 persons</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 persons</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 persons</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 persons</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 persons</td>
<td>15</td>
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<td>7 persons</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>8 persons</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 persons</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 persons</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 persons</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11) How much is your family's budget for a day?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget Range</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>~10,000 Rp.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~20,000 Rp.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~30,000 Rp.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~40,000 Rp.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~50,000 Rp.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50,001 Rp.~</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No data</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12) How many other people earn money in your family? What is their occupation?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation Group</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 person</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 persons</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 persons</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 persons</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 persons</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No data</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Day labourers: 21,  Weavers: 13,  Drivers: 8 (becak: 5; motorbike: 5; taxi: 1; lorry: 1),
Craft workers: 7,  Company employees: 5,  Shop assistants: 5,
Waitresses: 1,  Tukang cekir: 3,  Street vendors: 3,
Guards: 1,  Teachers: 1,  Sewers: 2,
Worker at health centre: 1.

13) Do you have a side-job?

Yes: 16
No: 41
Appendix (-2: Questionnaire (individual answers)
Weaver Sex Age Address Origin

Title

Educational Care~r in
Teacher
backaround weavlno
2
NO
mother

F

38

32 ilir

P

Nyayu

F

42

30 ilir

P

Nyayu

1

20

F

38
32
36

32 ilir
32 ilir
30ilir

OKI
OKI
Px.l

-

2
2
1

30 ilir
30 ilir
30ilir

p

-

NO

F

46
35
29

P
Px.l

Nyayu
-

1
3

F
F
F

44

30ilir
30 ilir
TK

P

50
24

OKI
OKI

Nyayu
-

NO
1
NO

F

31

1
2
3
4

F
F

5

Employer Production
Monthly
Der month income from
S, private 1s
250,000

The number of family members

2: husband

M

F

8
9
10
11
12

13

F

50

14

F
F

25
27

15

1s
NO
1s

250,000
< 250,000
7-800,000

6: husband, 3 children, niece
husband (sales&service TV)
6: husband (N06), 3 children, mother-in- husband (weaver N06)

30+
12
20

grand mother
mother
father's mother

1s
2s
1s

7-800,000
7-800,000
NO

6: wife (N05), 3 children, mother
7: husband, 5 children

31

mother
S
friend (N07)'s cousin S
private
father's sister

2s
3s
1s

500,000
750,000
800,000

6: husband, 4 children, brother
2: daughter (husband died)
3: husband, baby son

3K
2s
4s
1s

420,000
1,200,000
NO
NO

5: 4 daughters
3: a son, a daughter (husband died)
4: husband, 2 children
4 :husband, 2 children

3: parents

TK
32i1ir
32 ilir
32 ilir

27

7

1

P

P

2
2
2

Nyayu

OKI

-

OKI

-

21
20

friend
mother

10

aunt
aunt

15

private
private

M

M
private

S
S

10: mother, sisters, brothers

32i1ir

P

Nyimas

2

20

No21

S

2s

NO

7: mother, 5 children

17

F

F
F

2
1

20

F

Nyayu
Nyayu
Nyayu
Nyayu
Nyayu

1

22
27
15
10
20

elder sister
No21's aunt
aunt (No21)
her sister
aunt

private

18

32 ilir
32 ilir
32 ilir
32 ilir
32 ilir

P
P

19

43
52
38
36
53

700,000
NO
70,000
700,000
250,OOO/s

4:husband,son,daughter
1: herself
3: mother, nephew
5: parents, sister, brother
4: 3 nephews

30 ilir
30 ilir
30ilir
30ilir
KM6

1
1
1
1
1

20
30
20
10
30

mother
mother (No24)
mother
friend
friend (No 7)
aunt
mother-in-law

NO
NO
NO
NO

M
M

40
36
58
47
40
47
52

M
M

29

F

34

30
31
32
33
34
35
36

M
F

40
65

F

39

F
M
F
F

40
35
20
45

F

54

30ilir
30 ilir
30 ilir
30 ilir
30 ilir
30ilir
30ilir
30iJir
30 ilir

M
M
M
M
M
M
private
private
M (No36)

F

42

30ilir

F
F

37
21

30 ilir
30ilir

F

21

30ilir

F

47

30 ilir

F

21

M

22
23
24
25
26

39
40
41
42

20,000
35,000
50,000

18
4
20+

42

38

wife (weaver No5)
None
husband (lorry driver)
None
mother (weaver), brother None
(worker in the health centre)
None
NO
catering
None
sales None
husband
(car
200,000/month)
None
None
None
None
husband (mechanic)
None
husband(shop
assistant: None

6: father, 2 brothers, sister-in-law, niece 2 brothers (craft worker)

F

37

7,000
20,000
20,000

250,000

None

60,000
10,000
7,000
NO
10,000
15,000

15,000

80,OOO/day)

16

28

catering
None
None

1s

law

6
7

27

goods-rental
catering

husband (becak driver)

S
mother
friend (No 7)'s cousin S
mother-in-law
private
grand mother

s

wea~~~s side

Family
budoet/dav
10,000
20,000

other breadwinner in a family

F
F
F
F

30 ilir
30ilir

P
P

P

3
2

P
PxOKI
OKI
OKI
OKU

-

OKI

1
1

-

OKI

-

MUBA OKI -

P

-

OKI

-

OKI OKlxP -

27
25

2

15
17
30
20
20
NO
30
15

sister-in-law
wife(P)'s aunt
mother
neighbor (P)
mother
parents (No28)
mother
mother
mother

2
1
1
1
1

5

private

1s
1s
1SL
1S

S

28

private
private
M (No22)
M (No22)
M

2s
20r3s
1s
2s
10r2s
10r2s

c.500,000

6: wife (No23), 4 children
6: husband (No22), 4 children
1: herself
4: husband, 3 daughters
9: husband, 7 children
6: wife, 3 children, mother-in-law

10r25

c.500,OOO

8: wife, 6 children

350,000
700,000
350,000
350,000
350,000
350,000
350,000
NO
600,000

3: 2 children(students) (husband died) None
4: wife (Palembang, Nyayu), 2 children None
1: herself
None
6: husband, 3 children, mother
husband (labourer)
7: husband, 5 children
husband (labourer)
7: wife, 5 children
wife (weaver)
3: parents
parents (weaver)
5: husband, 3 children
husband (labourer)
6:husband, 3 children
husband (constructor),
children (labourer)

S
S

1s
2s
1s
1s
1s
1s
1s
0.5s
1K+J

c.500,ooo

P
P

-

p

-

2
1
2

P

Nyimas

1

25

mother

M (No36) 1SL+J

350,000

7: husband, 5 children

1
2

20

friend (P)

11

Mother (N046)

M (No36) 1s
M (No36) , 1s
private

350,000
300.000

7: husband, 5 children
3: parents

P

4

4

parents

M (No36) 1SL

300.000

4: parents. brother

P

NO

3

friend (P)

M (No36) 1s(O)

300,000

8: husband, 6 children

OKI(?) -

P

-

r--

daughter
(restaurant: None
250,OOO/month)
husband (labor: 20,000/day) None
None
None
nephew (seller: 10,000/day) None
None
catering
nephew (guard of car-park: catering
10,OOO/day)
None
wife (weaver No23)
None
husband (weaver N022)
None
None
None
daughters (shop assistant)
None
husband (ojek driver)
None
NO
children None
wife
(weaver),
(weaver)
None
None
None
None
None
None
None
None
3 helper

2 making mattress
husband
(labourer),
children
making mattress
NO
father making mattress
mother(weaver),
(becak driver)
parents (labourer). brother (university
student)
(labour)
husband
(becak
15,000lday)

driver. None

10,000
25,000
10,000
10,000
30,000
15,000
NO
NO
NO
20,000
40,000
20,000

25,000
15,000

25,000
5,000
25,000
20,000
>20,000
NO
33,000
50,000
NO
20,000
NO
NO
20,000


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weaver</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Origin</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Educational background</th>
<th>Career in weaving</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Employer</th>
<th>Production per month</th>
<th>Monthly income from</th>
<th>The number of family members</th>
<th>Other breadwinner in a family</th>
<th>Weaver's side job</th>
<th>Family budget/day</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>ilir</td>
<td>OKI</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>sister-in-law (No45)</td>
<td>M (No35)</td>
<td>1s(D)</td>
<td>ND</td>
<td>300,000</td>
<td>3: husband, daughter</td>
<td>husband (labourer)</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>ilir</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>sister-in-law (No45)</td>
<td>M (No36)</td>
<td>ND</td>
<td>&lt;300,000</td>
<td>4: husband, 2 sons</td>
<td>husband (labourer)</td>
<td>making mattress</td>
<td>(90,000/month)</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>ilir</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>mother</td>
<td>M (No36)</td>
<td>1s</td>
<td>300,000</td>
<td>7: son, daughter-in-law, 4 grand children</td>
<td>son (labourer)</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>ilir</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>mother</td>
<td>M (No36)</td>
<td>2s</td>
<td>600,000</td>
<td>6: husband, 4 children</td>
<td>husband (beacak), daughter (weaver)</td>
<td>giving massage</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>ilir</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>mother</td>
<td>M (No36), private</td>
<td>1s(D)+J</td>
<td>350,000</td>
<td>5: husband, 3 children</td>
<td>husband (labourer)</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>ilir</td>
<td>OKI</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>friend (P)</td>
<td>M (No36), private</td>
<td>1s(D)</td>
<td>350,000</td>
<td>5: mother, 3 children, husband died</td>
<td>1st son (seller), daughter (making sheets)</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>ilir</td>
<td>PxOKI</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>friend</td>
<td>M (No7), private</td>
<td>1SL</td>
<td>45,000</td>
<td>7: husband, 5 children</td>
<td>husband (labourer), 2 sons (craft worker: 100,000/month)</td>
<td>weaving is the side job</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>ilir</td>
<td>PxArab</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>mother</td>
<td>M (No7), private</td>
<td>1SL</td>
<td>45,000</td>
<td>5: husband, 2 children, 1 grandchild</td>
<td>husband (craft worker)</td>
<td>weaving is the side job</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>25,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>ilir</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>aunt</td>
<td>M (No7)</td>
<td>1K</td>
<td>100-150,000</td>
<td>11: husband, 8 children, 1 grandchild</td>
<td>ND</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>25,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>ilir</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>1SL</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>3: husband, daughter</td>
<td>husband (making folding fan: 200,000/month)</td>
<td>making mattress</td>
<td>(5,000/day)</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>ilir</td>
<td>OKU</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>friend (PxJ)</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1s(D)</td>
<td>300,000</td>
<td>6: husband, 4 children</td>
<td>daughter (shop assistant), (making mattress), husband (beacak driver)</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>ilir</td>
<td>OKI</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>No53</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1s</td>
<td>120,000</td>
<td>6: mother, 3 sisters, 1 brother</td>
<td>brother (coconuts seller), sister (weaver), sister (secondary school teacher)</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>ilir</td>
<td>OKI</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>mother-in-law (P')</td>
<td>private</td>
<td>1s(D)</td>
<td>7-800,000</td>
<td>6: husband, 4 children</td>
<td>husband (constructor), brother (craft worker)</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>ilir</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>mother</td>
<td>private</td>
<td>1s</td>
<td>ND</td>
<td>6: husband, 5 children</td>
<td>husband (labourer)</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>25,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>ilir</td>
<td>PxJ</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>aunt</td>
<td>private</td>
<td>1s</td>
<td>700,000</td>
<td>9: husband, 9 children</td>
<td>husband (taxi driver), daughter (company employee), 3 daughter</td>
<td>motif making</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>25,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: ND= no data  
1) Origin: P=Palembang, J=Java, OKI= Kabupaten Ogan dan Komering Ilir, OKU= Kabupaten Ogan dan Komering Ulu, MUBA= Kabupaten Musi Banyu Asin, PxJ= The first alphabet indicates the weaver's father's origin and the second is mother's. 2) Educational background: 1= primary school, 2= secondary school, 3= high school and college, 4= university. 3) Teacher: The letters in a bracket indicate the teacher's origin. 4) Employer: S= shop, M= middleman. 5) Production per month (the number of pieces the weaver weaves in a month): 1s=1set, 1K=1 kain, 1SL=1 selendang, +J= use benang mas jantung, (O)= dodot.
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65.8: *Algemeen administratief verslag der Residentie Palembang over het jaar 1888*.

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2) ARA (Algemeen Rijksarchief, Den Haag)

1.04.02: *Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC)*

Lyst van zodanige vaarthuygen als er alhier op de onderstannde datums van diverse plaatzen zyn aangekomen met aanwysing van derselver Manschappen, monturen en wie toebehooren; Lyst van zodanige vaarthuygen als er van hier op de onderstannde datums van diverse plaatzen zyn vaartrekken met aanwysing van derselver Manschappen, monturen en wie toebehooren: In: 2013 (year of 1725); 2051 (the same, 1727); 2073 (1728); 2100 (1729); 2193 (1732); 2934 (1759); 2965 (1760); 2991 (1761); 3024 (1762); 3059 (1763); 3089 (1764); 3151 (1766); 3211 (1768); 3244 (1769); 3273 (1770); 3333 (1772); 3385 (1774); 3413 (1775); 3442 (1776); 3494 (1778); 3525 (1779); 3581 (1781); 3624 (1783); 3649 (1784); 3674 (1785); 3733 (1787); 3960 (1793).

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Tijdeman [Tideman], J. *Memorie van Overgave*, deel 1, Palembang.

3) KIT (Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen, Amsterdam)

4) KITLV (Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde, Leiden)

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D17.4: *Platte grond van Palembang* (1877).
D17.7: *Kratonwyk in 1811 – Naar Major Villiam Thorn* (1811).
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Series van 370: no5 Palembang: *Lyst der voor de internationale tentoonstelling Amsterdam bestemde boederen* (1882)

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Informants

(Informants are listed in alphabetical order. Names with * are pseudonyms)

Bpk Abi Sofian: Tour Guide, Tourist Service (Palembang)
Bpk Ali: Weaver (30 Ilir, Palembang)
Cek Amnah Nawawi: The proprietor of “Rumah Limas” (26 Ilir)
Prof. Andaya, B. Watson: Professor of the University of Hawaii
Mbak Ati*: Weaver (30 Ilir, Palembang)
Bpk Ayub: Weaver (30 Ilir, Palembang)
Dr. Barnes, R.: Research cataloguer of textiles, Ashmolean Museum (Oxford)
Bpk Djohan Hanafiah: Local anthropological historian entitled Raden (Palembang)
Ibu Eko*: Local inhabitant (Palembang)
Mbak Farida: Weaver (30 Ilir, Palembang)
Mr. Harper, D.: Antique collector (Yogyakarta)
Mrs. Heringa, R.: Anthropologist (Leiden, the Netherlands)
Bpk Heru Sumarsono: Officer of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce (Palembang)
Prof. Hitchcock, M.: Professor of the London Metropolitan University
Ibu Ida: Daughter of the shop proprietor of “Serengam Setia” (30 Ilir)
Bpk Jakfar Sidik: The manager of “Cek Onah” (30 Ilir, Palembang)
Dr. Kerlogue, F.: Deputy keeper of Anthropology, Horniman Museum (London)
Mr. Keurs, P. ter: Curator of the National Museum of Ethnology (Leiden)
Ibu Maimuna: Weaver (30 Ilir, Palembang)
Mbak Mala: Thread-dyer, the owner of a work shop (15 Ulu, Palembang)
Ibu Mala: Local inhabitant (Palembang)
Mr. Masui: Sales, Oike Tech Ltd. (Kyoto)
Ibu Murni: University lecturer in history, Srijaywa University (Palembang)
Mbak Novi*: Local inhabitant, Palembang
Cek Ona: Local inhabitant, Palembang
Ibu Robima: Weaver (30 Ilir, Palembang)
Ibu Rohana: The proprietor of “Cik Una” (30 Ilir, Palembang)
Ibu Rohani: The proprietor of “Cek Onah” (30 Ilir, Palembang)
Cek Rus*: Weaver (30 Ilir, Palembang)
Ibu Rusdiyati: Local inhabitant (32 Ilir, Palembang)
Mbak Sanaria: Weaver (30 Ilir, Palembang)
Bpk Sidik: Tukang cekit (30 Ilir, Palembang)
Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyto: Local inhabitant (30 Ilir, Palembang)
Bpk. Sulistiyo: Indigenous person of Palembang titled Raden Ayu (Jakarta)
Prof. Suzuki, T.: Local inhabitant (Palembang)
Bpk Taufik*: Professor of Tokyo Woman’s Christian University (Tokyo)
Ibu Tinny: Local inhabitant titled Kiagus (30 Ilir, Palembang)
Ibu Tinte*: A daughter of Ibu Sity Bambang Utoyto
Mbak Tinte*: Weaver (30 Ilir, Palembang)
Bpk Usman Agus: Staff of Museum Balaputra Dewa (Palembang)
Mrs. Voges-Mönch: Voluntary staff of the Museum Nusantara (Delft)
Cek Yeni: Shop assistant at Serengam Setia (32 Ilir, Palembang)
Ibu Zuro: Local inhabitant (32 Ilir, Palembang)
The leader of RT in Tuan Kentang

Bpk = Mr. Ibu = Mrs. Mbak = Ms. Cek = Ms. (for Wong Palembang)