

# Method Of Designing Ornaments On *Karawo* Textiles In Gorontalo

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**Abstract** Over 30 years, the design of ornaments on *karawo* textiles in Gorontalo-Indonesia is only done by one self-taught designer, without regeneration. This is allegedly because the design process is considered to be done intuitively, so that cannot be learned by others. This study aims to explore the process of designing the ornaments to be systematically understandable by others. Data were collected through observations, interviews, and review of design results. They were analyzed interactively during and after data collection. The results show that the process of creating the design is complex, but systematically done through five steps: 1) identifying the concept from users; 2) exploring the specific products for appropriate design; 3) selecting objects for appropriate motives; 4) articulating the design; 5) evaluating the overall design. These five steps are considered as method of designing ornaments on *karawo* textiles, which can be applied by anyone who has good interpretation to create such designs.

**Keywords:** method, designing, ornament, *karawo* textile, Gorontalo.

## INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENTS

*Karawo* is the technique to create some ornaments on textile (Sudana, 2015), through designing, slicing, and pulling out certain parts of the textile fiber to create the basic surface then filling up the pulled textile fiber with various motifs of embroidery. The structure of the formed motif is called *karawo*, or often called as “ornament *karawo*.” The final product is called the *karawo* textile. This ornament is well developed in Gorontalo province Indonesia.

Other than its designer, the production of this *karawo* textile has been produced for generations by women Gorontalo. Hence, this job is considered as woman subordination symbol (Niode, 2007). In 1990, thousands of women had been involved in the production of *karawo* textile. However, in 2010, there were only 4000 women remain involved in *karawo* production (“The *Karawo* Industry,” 2010). This was due to factors such as the market for *karawo* textile product plummeted almost 30%, as the design is lacking in its variation and that the design is not up to trend (Purnama A., 2011: 5). The problem with this design stagnation is due to the lack of designer. Hence, the *karawo* textile is less developed, and people are less interested to wear it (Raa & Adv, 2012). It was a fact that the design of *karawo* ornament was only created by a designer without regeneration. The designer learned to design on his own, and the design process was considered intuitive, thus, difficult for others to learn.

If the *karawo* ornament is made by many designers, the design will be more developed and varied and will be up to date with the current trends, as new designs will always emerge. However, when the designer is only one person, it is hard to expect new designs to emerge continually. As the design is considered a non-systematic and intuitive process, which made it is hard for others to learn and in turn attract fewer people to become *karawo* designers.

This study was aimed at exploring the process of designing the *karawo* ornaments to become more

systematic and methodical for others to understand and practice it, especially those who are interested in becoming the expert *karawo* designers.

## LITERATURE REVIEWS

McCrary (1996: p. 12) states “the design method is as inherent to the design process as the scientific method is to scientific Exploration.” This means that exploration of the design process, it is possible through structured design method. McCrary (1996) classified the structure of design method in four steps: state of the art and recognition of need, the design concept, design feasibility, production, and marketing. Braha and Maimom (1997), suggest the design process in five cyclical stages: problem identification, solve the problem, Development, testing, adaptation. In the field of textiles and Clothing, LaBat and Sokolowski (1999) organize the design process into three phases: problem definition and research, creative exploration and development, and implementation. In the design process for textile products, Calamari and Hyllegard (2015) found six stages of design: resources and research, consumer need and trend identification, inspiration, creative exploration, product samples, and design completion. Lamb and Kallal (1992) proposed a framework for design process by combining three components: functional, expressive, and aesthetic, which implementation was conducted with problem identification, preliminary ideas, design refinement, prototype development, evaluation, and implementation. Several design framework processes proposed by these experts are used as guideline and reference in analyzing and systemizing the design process of *karawo* ornament to formulate the structure of the method.

Malik and Azhar (2015) and Calamari and Hyllegard (2015) insist the importance of inspirational sources in the design process of a textile. Inspiration contributes to communicating ideas to create new design character. Inspiration is often called as subtle ideas (Lee and Jirousek, 2015). Inspiration is the initial ideas that arises from the designer interest toward an entity, as the basis

to develop the design concept. Understanding the mind of the designer in developing design concepts is needed to reveal the design process (Lee and Jirousek, 2015).

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study uses the qualitative method to reveal the process of designing *karawo* ornaments. The data were collected through interview, observation, and review of the design products. The interview was conducted with a *karawo* designer, John Koraag (57 years old). He was born in 1961, graduated from secondary engineering school and was majoring in mechanical engineering. He has been designing *karawo* ornaments from 1977 to today. The interview was aimed at finding out how the designer found his inspiration, ideas, and developed as well as articulated his concept for the design. The observation was focused on design process to reveal the process in the design. Review of the design products was focused on finding out the characteristics and the quality of the produced design. The data were analyzed during and after data collection were completed, through data selection and data validation, data display and critical interpretation, and conclusion drawing.

## **RESULTS OF ANALYSIS**

This study and its data analysis have revealed that the design process of the *karawo* ornaments was conducted through a systematic process. The description and analysis of each step are presented below:

### **Identifying the Concept From Users**

The users need the initial process which motivates designer to design *karawo* ornaments. The designer has to deal with users with various needs. He tries to identify those needs to find the source of ideas for his designs. This was as revealed by John Koraag (57 Yo) below:

The designs [ornaments] that I created are based on the customers' request, not because I want them because I make my living from selling the designs... I have many customers.... I select and interpret their needs to find ideas, and I imagine the shape of the design (interview, April 23, 2018).

This insists that the design of *karawo* is based on the request from the users, and not purely the designer's will. The designer identifies various information from various users to develop ideas and the concept of the design. The designer develops the concept designs based on that he obtained from users. This process is called identifying the concept from users.

### **Exploring the Specific Products for Appropriate Design**

The designs of the *karawo* ornaments requested by the users are varied according to the types and specification of the textile product. The designer tries to suit those concepts with the specification of the products requested by the users. John Koraag, 57 y.o, stated:

*Karawo* entrepreneurs [users] came to me to make various products: male outfit, female outfit, party outfit, .... They asked me to create designs to suit those products. I have to understand each product to make the design match the products.... The motifs could be similar... but the size and the placements are different for each product (Interview, May 2, 2018).

This indicates that the designer of *karawo* ornaments is not the only expert in creating ornaments but also understands the specification of each product that will be filled with the ornament. The designer's understanding of the specification of each product becomes a guideline to determine the proportion and composition of each ornament design to create an appropriate design. Review toward the products of the design showed that the proportion of the field filled with the ornament for each group of products is different. The proportion for a Female outfit the proportion is around 15-30%, the male outfit was 10-15%, and for party outfits 40-60%. The size of the ornaments varied with the symmetrical or asymmetrical composition to suit the outfit mode to harmonize them, regardless to the similar motif types. This shows the designer's understanding of specific products that will be filled with ornaments. This understanding is critical to determine the success of designing *karawo* ornament, hence, categorized as a step called exploring the specific products for an appropriate design. This finding supports Calamari and Hyllegard (2015: p.4) statement which stated that, "within the 'three P's' [product, process and packaging], the designer makes decisions related to the product specifications".

### **Selecting Object for Appropriate Motives**

Designer's interest in an object as an inspiration to create the motif for *karawo* ornaments is encouraged by the customers' request. Customers request the motifs that they want related to the target area for *karawo* marketing. Designer tries to select objects that are relevant to the marketing area as inspiration in order for the designed motif to attract the interest of customers in that particular area. John Koraag 57 y.o said:

I used to receive orders from *karawo* entrepreneurs to create motifs to be sold in Manado, North Sulawesi; I have to think about things related to North Sulawesi... as an initial idea [inspiration], then I created the coconut tree *karawo* motif to signify that area.... there are customers who requested motifs that signify Gorontalo area; I select corn as its *karawo* motif... (interview, May 2, 2018).

This can be interpreted that the designer makes his own decision on the object selected as inspirations to create motifs requested by his customers. For instance, the coconut tree object was an inspiration to create motifs that signify the North Sulawesi area. This object was not obtained from the user, rather it was selected by the designer himself. The user only informed the designer that they want something to be marketed in North Sulawesi. The challenge for the designer was not in interpreting the customer's request, but rather in selecting a specific object as inspiration and finding ways to articulate that inspiration, in order for the created motifs to reflect the uniqueness of a region through the representation of the selected object.

### **Articulating the Design**

Articulating the design is the designer's effort to transform his concepts into visual forms. This was carefully done in accordance to the created design on the millimeter block paper. John Koraag, 57 y.o. stated, "creating motif [ornament] *karawo* has to be precise, there is a precise calculation to be made on the paper

block ... it cannot be randomly done, as it has to be transferred into the textile and should fit the textile fiber” (interview, April 23, 2018). In this process, the designer thinks of how to be able to easily transform his design into the textile.

It was found through observation that articulation of the design was conducted through several experiments, from sketch experiment to fixation of the form. The sketch experiment is repeatedly done on the millimeter block to find an appropriate shape, a proportional, beautiful, and synchronized motif. The sketch which was made with pencil then bolded with a pen to make it clearer, then bolded with a marker according to the boxes in the millimeter block. In this process, the curved lines were transformed into controlled straight lines. This is one of the characteristics of karawo ornaments, where “the motifs emerge from the variation of long and short straight lines which formed the patterns that composed of motifs as a complete ornament” (Sudana, 2015: p. 279). Finally, the designer fixed the shape by making the part of the design that he wants to stand out become bold and creates the borderline to separate the area that will be filled with ornaments.

### Evaluating the Overall Design

The designer evaluates the final design together with the user. Koraag, 57 y.o stated, “when the design is finished, I called the customer to describe each part of the design to make the customer understand ... sometimes there is a minor revision, but most [of my customers] accepts my design without revision” (interview, may 16, 2018). This statement indicates that the core of the design evaluation was to match the created design with the customer’s request. Below is the example of evaluated *karawo* design and its placement on the textile:

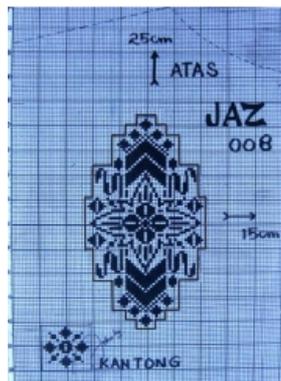


Figure 1. *karawo* ornament design

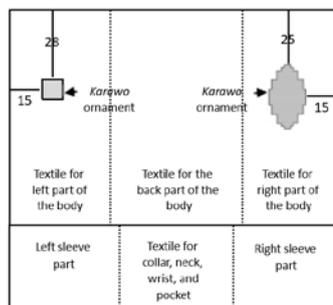


Figure 2. Illustration of the ornaments placement  
Source: John Koraag collection, 1990 on textile  
(Sketch: Sudana, 2018)

The dotted lines on the design indicate the pattern of the textile that will be filled with ornaments. The 25 cm figure indicated with arrow sign to the top shows the distance of the ornament from the width border of the textile, and the 15 cm figure indicated with arrow sign to the right is the distance of the ornament from the length border of the textile. The design is created for the jazz outfit model which code was 008. The size of the design was not explicitly made, as it can be calculated from the total boxes of the millimeter block paper. The word “kantong/pocket” in the small ornament on the corner bottom indicated that the ornament would be applied on the left part of the outfit, where the pocket is located. The placement of the ornament will be in line with the big ornament and the distance from the length border of the textile is 15 cm. the distance of the small ornament from the width border of the textile is  $\pm 28$  cm and the big ornament is 25 cm (see figure 2). Therefore, the textile usage will be effective. Following the evaluation, the design will be able to be transformed into the textile, and the appearance of the final product can be predicted.

### DISCUSSION

The first step that motivates the designer of *karawo* ornament is the design users’ request. He identifies various requests of the users to develop the basic concept for his designs. This step is similar to the customer need and trend identification step (Calamari and Hyllegard, 2015); problem identification (Lamb and Kallal, 1992); recognition of need (McCrorry, 1996); and problem identification (Braha and Maimom, 1997), in which all of them insisted on the users need than the will or creativity of the designer in developing his design concept.

The second step, exploring the specific products for appropriate design, where a designer tries to understand the specification of different products to suit the design. Regardless of the documents being reviewed have not explicitly stated this step as one of the stages in designing, this step is critical in designing the *karawo* ornament, and it determines the success of a design. It has to be acknowledged by the designer in this stage that the lack of opportunity to create new motifs is because he is focused only on adjusting the design shape with the specification of the products through revising the composition and proportion of the design rather than creating new motifs. Here, one motif can be used for several designs with different compositions and proportions.

The third step is selecting an object for appropriate motifs, which is relevant to the inspiration stage (Calamari and Hyllegard, 2015), the source of inspiration (Lee and Jirousek, 2015) and Malik and Azhar (2015), and preliminary ideas (Lamb and Kallal, 1992). They insisted on the importance of inspiration to create new design character. In the process of designing *karawo* ornament, the object selection as inspiration is also essential to create unique and relevant motifs to suit the targeted marketing areas. The created design has to be able to reflect and represent the characteristics of the region where it will be marketed.

The fourth step is articulating the design which is similar to creative exploration and development (LaBat

and Sokolowski, 1999) and creative exploration (Calamari and Hyllegard, 2015), which highlight the strategy of the designers to articulate their ideas and concept to create an appropriate design. The similar activity also happens to *karawo* designer in transforming his design concepts into visual forms. He conducted experiments, explored the various possibility for each element and principles through sketches to finally produced an appropriate design.

The final step is evaluating the overall design which like evaluation stage (Lamb and Kallal, 1992), design feasibility (McCrorry, 1996), and design completion (Calamari and Hyllegard, 2015), in which its essence is to criticize all aspects of the design and determine its appropriateness. For *karawo* ornament design, the evaluation is conducted by the designer together with the user to reach an agreement that the design is ready to be produced, and the user can predict the final product.

Only step four, articulating the design, out of this five steps in designing *karawo* ornament that the public was aware of. As this process can be observed, whereas the other four steps were considered as the designer's intuition. Therefore, training on how to design *karawo* ornaments for a young generation has been carried out several times since 2010. However, these trainings have not produced the expected new designers. Thus, for decades, designing *karawo* ornaments was only done by one expert designer.

## CONCLUSION

It can be concluded from this study that designing the *karawo* ornaments on textile was systematically carried out through five steps: identifying the concept from users, exploring the specific products for appropriate design, selecting objects for appropriate motifs, articulating the design, evaluating the overall design. These five steps were considered as a method in designing *karawo* ornaments as it is systematically carried out and have been implemented for decades by the designer of *karawo* ornaments in Gorontalo province. This method of design can be used as a guideline for anyone who has good interest to create such designs. On scientific field, this method contributed to enrich our knowledge on the design process, especially the process of designing various ornaments for textile.

However, as a designing method, this finding has its limitation as the investigation was only conducted by a singular designer, which method may be different from other designers. Therefore, there is a chance for further study to test this method on another designer in a similar field.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors would like to thanks to the the ministry of research, technology and higher education of the Republic of Indonesia for its contribution to this research through doctoral dissertation research 2018 scheme.

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