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**ILLUMINATION AND LITERATURE IN ANCIENT KARO
SCRIPTURES FOR SOUVENIR PRODUCT DESIGN:
REVITALIZATION OF KARO LOCAL WISDOM**

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Abstract: Karo illumination and script are the local wisdom of the Karo ethnic group contained in ancient Karo manuscripts, which can be used to design souvenir products as an effort to revitalize local wisdom and grow the creative economy in Karo. The aim of the research is to collect Karo illuminations and characters, then design them into attractive images to be used as typical Karo souvenir designs. The theory used is philological theory with a qualitative descriptive method. Research data collection was carried out by tracing the existence of ancient Karo manuscripts to museums where the manuscripts were stored and certain individuals who were thought to have collections of ancient Karo manuscripts. Next, various types of illumination and Karo script are described. The results of the research are a description of the ancient Karo manuscripts and a classification of the illumination and script of the ancient Karo manuscripts, which consists of: (1) Based on the shape of the illumination of the ancient Karo manuscripts, there are King Solomon's footprints, tupak salah Sipitu-pitu, etc. 2) based on the type of Karo script; nineteen types. In an effort to revitalize Karo illumination and script, which contain the philosophy of life

of the Karo tribe, this illumination is designed with attractive images and is embedded in souvenirs from the Karo area.

Keywords: *philology; revitalization; ancient manuscripts; illumination; scripts; souvenir.*

1. Introduction

There are many cultural relics of the past in Indonesia, one of which is ancient manuscripts. Ancient manuscripts are writings in the form of books written by our predecessors, which contain culture, customs, literature, medicine, and various information about the lives of the people who own the manuscripts. In North Sumatra, there are many ancient manuscripts, including the ancient Karo manuscript. The ancient Karo manuscript is a manuscript produced by the Karo ethnic community and written in Karo language and script. The Karo ethnic group is one of the original ethnic groups in Karo Regency, North Sumatra.

Geographically, Karo Regency is located between 2,500–3,190 North Latitude and 97,550–98,380 East Longitude, with an area of 2,127.25 km², or 2.97 percent of the area of North Sumatra Province. Karo Regency is located in the Bukit Barisan range, and most of its area is highland. Two active volcanoes are located in this region, making it prone to volcanic earthquakes.

The Karo Regency area is at an altitude of 200–1,500 m above sea level. To the north, it borders Langkat Regency and Deli Serdang Regency; to the south, Dairi Regency and Samosir Regency; to the east, Deli Serdang Regency and Simalungun Regency; and to the west, Nang Groe Aceh Darussalam Province.

Karo Regency is one of the districts in North Sumatra Province. The capital of Karo Regency is Kabanjahe, with an area of 44.65 km². The largest sub-district in Karo district is Mardinding sub-district, with an area percentage of 12.56%. Meanwhile, the smallest sub-district in Karo district is Berastagi, with an area percentage of 1.43% (Karo Regency Central Statistics Agency, 2021).

The science used to study the contents of ancient Karo manuscripts is philology. Baried et al. (1994) state that philology is a science that reveals past information contained in written materials left over from the past with the hope that there will be values or cultural results from the past that are needed in today's life. In the Karo ancient manuscript, like other ethnic ancient manuscripts, there are illuminations and script. Illumination is a text framer that not only functions to beautify but also relates to the content of the text it frames (Folsom, 1990). In line with this opinion, according to Morey (in Bland, 1969:16), illumination is an art that emphasizes beautifying an object rather than clarifying or explaining the contents of a text. The illuminations in the ancient Karo manuscripts, which are the object of this research, come in various types and shapes that can be used as designs for typical Karo cultural souvenirs.

Apart from illumination, script is also found in the ancient Karo manuscript, namely the Karo script. Script is a visual symbolization system printed on written media in the form of paper, wood, bamboo, leaves, stone, metal, or other media.

These visual symbols are employed to express or translate expressive elements from spoken language into written language, based on mutually agreed-upon provisions understood by its users. Karo script represents one of the ancient scripts in the archipelago, employed to appreciate the expressive elements in the Karo language, recognized, agreed upon, understood, and jointly used by its users, namely the Karo community. Due to this characteristic, it is referred to as the Karo script (Sembiring, 2012:1-2).

The term “souvenir” originates from the French word “souvenir,” meaning “to remember.” The word souvenir is then translated into English, which can be interpreted as a reminder of a particular object. The objects in question are places, events, and certain people or figures. A souvenir can bring back memories of places, events, and times for the owner of the souvenir (Peters, 2011). According to Nurnitasari (2009:144) souvenirs are objects that are identical to an area or a particular event; their shape is usually small, concise, and has artistic value.

The life of the Karo people in the ancient Karo manuscripts needs to be revitalized in various aspects, one of which is in various forms of souvenirs. This research is also useful for introducing Karo culture, illumination, and Karo script in ancient Karo manuscripts. Examples of illumination and script in ancient Karo manuscripts are as follows:



Figure 1. Illumination in the ancient Karo manuscript
Source: Documentation from the Karo Heritage Museum collection

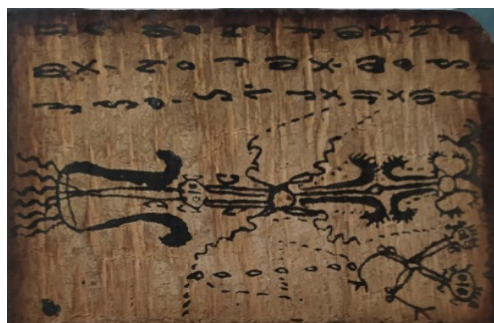


Figure 2. Illumination and Karo script
Source: Documentation from the Karo Heritage Museum collection

2. Literature Review

Philology comes from the Greek words “philos,” which means “love,” and “logos,” which means “word.” In the word philology, these two words form the meaning of “love of words” or “love of speaking.” This meaning later developed into “happy learning” or “happy culture” (Lubis, 2006). In line with this opinion, Baried et al. (1994) state that philology is a science that uncovers past information contained in written materials left over from the past with the hope that there will be values or cultural results from the past that are needed in today’s life. In line with that, Harahap (2021) states that philology is a scientific discipline that examines old manuscripts as objects for study, both the content of the manuscripts and texts because they contain various information about past lives that is considered still relevant to be developed and applied today, as well as the manuscript material and related materials using methods appropriate to the circumstances of the manuscript.

Old manuscripts are decorated with beautiful images called illuminations. Illumination is a text framer that not only functions to beautify but also relates to the content of the text it frames (Folsom, 1990). Even more clearly, according to Mu’jizah (2009:11), illumination is a special term in manuscript science (codicology) to refer to images in manuscripts, which was originally used in connection with gold gilding on several manuscript pages to achieve beauty.

Script is a visual symbolization system printed on written media in the form of paper, wood, bamboo, leaves, stone, metal, or other media. These visual symbols are then used to express or translate expressive elements from spoken language into written language. With conditions agreed to and mutually understood by its users (Sembiring, 2012:1). Karo script is one of the ancient scripts in the archipelago, which is used to appreciate the expressive elements in Karo language. Which is recognized, agreed upon, understood, and used jointly by its users, namely the Karo community. Because of this, it is called the Karo script.

This research is related to several previous studies that examined illumination in ancient manuscripts. The following are the studies that form the literature review for this research. Sulaiman and Henry’s (2019) article entitled *Revitalizing Illumination Designs on Ancient Javanese Manuscripts at the Radya Pustaka Museum in Surakarta* discusses the revitalization of illumination of ancient Javanese manuscripts into digital vector form. The method used in this research is a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. The results of the research discuss the existence of ancient Javanese manuscripts in Surakarta, identification of illumination designs, motif elements in illuminations, and the process of creating vectors and developing alternative digital vector illuminations found in ancient Javanese manuscripts.

Basa (2019), with the title *Development of Creative Industries from the Illumination of Ancient Pariangan Manuscripts: Study of Batik Motifs in Pariangan, West Sumatra*. This research uses a case study method. The object of this research is the illumination found in ancient manuscripts in Pariangan. The results of the research are motifs developed from illumination and products in the form of batik shirts, prayer mats, etc. inspired by the illumination motifs of the Pariangan manuscript.

The Proceedings article (Pramono et al., 2019) with the title “Creating Batik Motifs from Minangkabau Manuscript Illumination” concludes that efforts to apply manuscripts as a product of the past are still very limited. The preservation of manuscripts still focuses on physical preservation. Meanwhile, illumination in a manuscript is still considered by some philologists to be mere manuscript decoration. In fact, as a cultural product, illumination is a symbol of civilization. This article explains efforts to create batik motifs from Minangkabau script illuminations.

3. Methods

This research uses a qualitative approach because the aim is to collect data in the form of words and images, not numbers. This data was obtained from interviews, field notes, photos, videotapes, personal documents, notes or memos, and other official documents (Moleong, 2009:11). Apart from that, the aim of research is to explore, discover, reveal, and explain the meaning or significance of the research object in depth. Qualitative research is also to reveal empirical facts objectively and scientifically based on logic, science, procedures, methodology, and strong theory. The object of research is an ancient Karo manuscript that contains illuminations and script that will be used as a design for souvenir products.

Data collection in this research was done by tracing the existence of ancient Karo manuscripts. The search was carried out by visiting museums where manuscripts were stored and certain individuals who were thought to have collections of ancient Karo manuscripts. This method can be compared to snowball sampling. The manuscripts found were then inventoried so that various types of illumination and Karo script characters were recorded. Next, an in-depth understanding of Karo manuscript illumination was carried out by various competent parties, including traditional leaders and illumination experts.

Data analysis in this research was done using two methods, namely:

Script description, namely describing the manuscripts that become research data in accordance with Harahap (2021: 176–177). The specifics outlined in the manuscript description in general are: a. manuscript number; b. manuscript title; c. manuscript thickness; d. manuscript writing; e. manuscript storage place; f. origin of manuscript; g. manuscript condition; h. manuscript age; i. manuscript status; j. copyright infringement; and k. manuscript contents.

The next step is to describe the illumination contained in the manuscript in two ways, namely:

- 1) Copying the illumination and types of characters in the ancient Karo manuscript.
- 2) Group them based on the type of illumination and script contained in the ancient Karo manuscripts.

After the tabulation and grouping of illumination have been completed, the next step is presenting the data, namely:

- 1) Arranging the ancient Karo script into a word that means the local wisdom of the Karo people.
- 2) Design results in illumination and Karo ancient script, which is embedded in souvenir products.

4. Findings

From the results of the research, several illuminations and Karo scripts were found in ancient Karo manuscripts located in the Karo Heritage Museum, Berastagi. The physical condition of the ancient manuscripts is still good. A manuscript description provides a general overview of the manuscript's condition. According to Harahap (2021:176–177), the specifics outlined in the manuscript description generally include: a. manuscript number; b. manuscript title; c. manuscript thickness; d. manuscript writing; e. manuscript storage place; f. origin of manuscript; g. manuscript condition; h. manuscript age; i. manuscript status; j. copier identification; and k. manuscript contents. The following is a description of the ancient Karo manuscript, which is stored at the Karo Heritage Museum, Berastagi.

Table 1. Description of Ancient Karo Manuscripts

No	Manuscript Description	Information
1	Manuscript number	Manuscript 1 (numbering by researcher)
2	Manuscript title	<i>Pedah Ni Rajah Ni Pursamburaan Ta Ma Inun</i>
3	Manuscript thickness	The thickness of the manuscript is adjusted to the number of manuscript pages of 66 pages
4	Manuscript writing	Manuscript 1 is written using the Karo script
5	Manuscript storage	Karo Heritage Museum, Berastagi
6	Origin of manuscript	Karo
7	Manuscript condition	The condition of the manuscript is good, there are no holes, and the writing of the manuscript can be read but the ink is faded. The physical condition of the manuscript is not good, several pages of the manuscript cannot be read clearly because the ink has faded, 4 pages of the manuscript are blank.
8	Manuscript age	There is no information about the year of writing, either in the manuscript text or in the manuscript colophon
9	Manuscript status	Belongs to the Karo Heritage Museum, Berastagi
10	Copy identity	There is no information, either in the manuscript text or in the manuscript colophon
11	Contents of the script	Tells about <i>the body</i> as a weapon and the science of being immune or killing yourself, which is usually called self <i>-fence</i>

In accordance with what was stated in the introduction, the ancient Karo manuscripts contain illuminations, in addition to characters that are arranged into words and sentences with meaning. This means that the discourse conveyed in the ancient Karo manuscripts is supported by images called illuminations. Sometimes

these images are compositions of characters woven into words or even sentences. The following are the illuminations contained in the ancient Karo manuscripts:

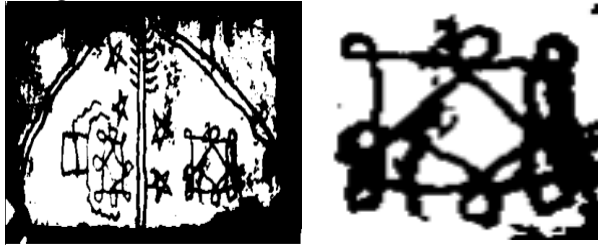


Figure 3. Illumination of the King Sulaiman Site
Source: Documentation from the Karo Heritage Museum collection



Figure 4. Tumpak Salah Silima -lima
Source: Documentation from the Karo Heritage Museum collection

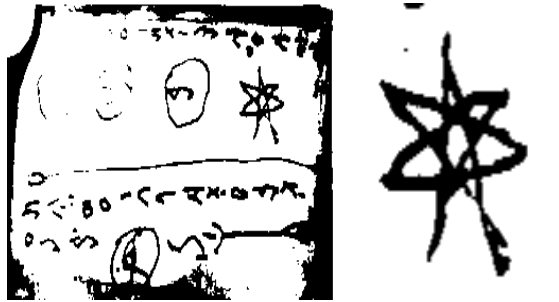


Figure 5. Tupak Salah Sipitu-pitu
Source: Documentation from the Karo Heritage Museum collection

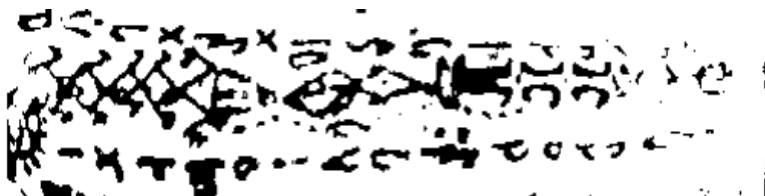





















Figure 6. Dragging
Source: Documentation from the Karo Heritage Museum collection

In the ancient Karo manuscript, there is not only illumination but also 19 types of Karo script: yaitu ha/a, ka, mba/ba, pa, na, wa, ga, ja, da, ra, ma, ta, sa, ya, nga, la, i, u, and ca. This Karo script also has the potential to be used as a souvenir design by combining it into words that represent Karo culture.

The nineteen types of characters in the ancient Karo manuscript are presented in the following table:

Table 2. Scripts in Ancient Karo Manuscripts

No.	Karo script in the ancient Karo script	Be read
1		Ha/a
2		Ka
3		Mba/ba
4		Pa
5		Na
6		Wa
7		Ga
8		Ja
9		Da
10		Ra
11		Ma
12		Ta
13		Sa
14		Ya
15		Nga
16		La
17		I
18		U
19		Ca

Karo script can be combined into a word that has the meaning of Karo cultural identity. For example, writing *merga silima* using Karo script as in the following writing.



Figure 7. *Merga Silima* reading text written in Karo script

The example of the text above is read as *merga silima*, written using Karo script. One of the fundamental elements in the Karo social structure is the *merga silima*, namely, a type of clan that is divided into sub-clans.

After tabulating and grouping several illuminations contained in ancient Karo manuscripts, the next step is to select illuminations characteristic of Karo culture to be used as souvenir designs. The result is the illumination of the ancient Karo manuscripts, namely *King Solomon's footprints*, *tupak salah sipitu-pitu*, *tumpak salah silima-lima*, *pengret-ret*, *panai*, and other illuminations typical of the local wisdom of Karo culture in the ancient Karo manuscripts. These illuminations and scripts from the ancient Karo manuscripts are then designed into souvenirs such as wallets, wall decorations, t-shirts, and tote bags.

The example of the text above is read as *merga silima*, written using Karo script. One of the fundamental elements in the Karo social structure is the *merga silima*, a type of clan that is divided into sub-clans.

5. Conclusion

One of the efforts to revitalize local Karo wisdom is through the illumination and script found in ancient Karo manuscripts by transforming them into souvenir designs. This initiative is also connected to Berastagi, where many ancient Karo manuscripts are stored. Berastagi is a tourist destination frequently visited by local tourists, city residents, and foreign tourists who often come to purchase souvenirs. Therefore, the creation of typical Karo souvenirs designed from the illuminations and script in ancient Karo manuscripts is an effort to revitalize local Karo wisdom and utilize Karo culture to boost the creative economy in the Karo tourist area of Berastagi.

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