

The Marriage Traditions of the *Parmalim* Community as Inspiration for Painting Creation

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ABSTRACT

Indonesia is renowned for its rich cultural heritage and diverse beliefs, one of which is Ugamo Malim, a tradition embraced by the Parmalim community of the Batak tribe. The wedding customs of the Parmalim, particularly in Sianjur Mula-Mula, preserve ancestral rituals that diverge significantly from those of Christian or Islamic Batak communities. This research investigates how the Parmalim wedding tradition, particularly its symbolic six-movement ceremonial dance, can inspire the creation of painting artworks. The study aims to delve into the cultural significance of these traditions, enhance appreciation for the beauty of Parmalim's heritage, and promote the preservation and celebration of Indonesia's cultural diversity. The creative process employed a structured methodology comprising preparation, elaboration, contemplation, and realization to develop meaningful and impactful artworks. Utilizing bravura and chiaroscuro techniques, the artist produced twelve paintings inspired by Parmalim's wedding traditions, each capturing symbolic elements such as "Hohom," representing gentleness, and "Mangurdot Somba," reflecting joy. However, this article presents only three of these paintings, focusing on their symbolic elements and artistic interpretation. These works demonstrate a fusion of traditional themes and creative expression, employing freely chosen materials and tools on sketched canvases to achieve optimal visualization and proportionality. The study concludes that creating paintings based on Parmalim wedding traditions not only showcases artistic prowess but also serves as an act of cultural appreciation and preservation. This body of work underscores the profound connection between art and cultural identity, reinforcing the significance of valuing Batak heritage and fostering cultural diversity.

KEYWORDS

Parmalim, Cultural, Appreciation, Diversity, Painting

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country rich in cultural, ethnic, racial, religious, and belief system diversity. One ethnic group with unique cultural traditions is the Batak people, particularly the followers of the Ugamo Malim belief system, known as Parmalim. According to Pamela (2022), understanding Indonesia's cultural uniqueness is essential to fostering tolerance for diversity. The Parmalim community comprises Batak people who preserve their ancestral heritage through religious practices rooted in spirituality and harmony with nature. Ugamo Malim features distinct rituals and traditions compared to other Batak communities, including those observed in marriage customs.

The marriage traditions of the Parmalim community in Sianjur Mula-Mula are rich with cultural symbolism. Customs such as *tompa parsirangan ni aek*, *parpansur golang-golang*, *partapijan jabi-jabi*, *parsuapon mangot*, *paranggiron bodari*, *ompunta siparmeme*, and *pangulosi panuturi* reflect deep respect for ancestors and the embodiment of core life values. As Situmorang (2009) noted, the Batak Toba community upholds various notable life values, including faith, courtesy and respect,

honesty, promoting unity and consensus, tolerance and harmony, responsibility and commitment, compassion, and gratitude.

One significant element enhancing the beauty of Parmalim marriage traditions is traditional dance, performed during customary ceremonies. These dances are not merely artistic performances but also expressions of the symbolic values held by the Parmalim community.

Previous research has primarily explored Parmalim traditions from anthropological and religious perspectives. For instance, the journal "Cultural Heritage and Identity in Traditional Weddings in Indonesia" by Nuning Suryanti et al. (2017) highlights that wedding ceremonies in Indonesia represent unique and diverse cultural identities. These ceremonies preserve and pass down traditions and customs from generation to generation. Within the context of art, traditional wedding practices can inspire the creation of paintings that incorporate distinctive cultural elements.

Another journal, "The Representation of Wedding Rituals in Traditional Indonesian Art" by Ida Bagus Putra Yadnya et al. (2019), argues that traditional Indonesian paintings reflect the unique culture and traditions of various regions. Traditional paintings often depict wedding activities, including customary ceremonies, dances, and traditional music, showcasing cultural richness. Traditional paintings serve as a medium for preserving wedding traditions and cultural heritage in Indonesia.

A third journal, "Tradition and Modernity in the Art of I Ketut Lasia" by Kadek Purnami Sari (2018), shows that modern paintings can integrate traditional elements with contemporary styles. I Ketut Lasia, for instance, combines Balinese cultural elements with his unique modern style, creating artwork with higher artistic and aesthetic value. In the context of wedding activities, incorporating traditional elements can add deeper and richer artistic meaning. Unlike previous studies, this research focuses on the theme of "Dance Culture in the Wedding Traditions of the Parmalim Community" as an inspiration for creating paintings.

According to Ghifari (2021), painting is a branch of fine art born from the artist's imagination and expressed through lines, colors, textures, light and shadow, as well as shapes and forms. Susanto (2011:332) states, "Representative art refers to the description or portrayal of a person or something that is usually created or appears naturally. Since the 19th century, this term has been used to identify elements of realism and naturalism in art." This research aims to integrate representational-realist painting with cultural elements, specifically Parmalim traditional dance, to enrich artistic expression while preserving cultural heritage.

Through this study, the researcher seeks to explore how Parmalim wedding traditions can serve as a source of artistic inspiration. This research is expected to contribute to cultural preservation through paintings that hold not only aesthetic value but also high cultural and spiritual significance.

METHOD

Creation, according to the KBBI (2007), is the process, method, or act of creating. According to Hawkins (in Muljiyono, 2010, p. 80), the method of creation consists of the following stages: preparation, elaboration, contemplation, and realization. This research employs an art creation approach consisting of four main stages: preparation, elaboration, contemplation, and the realization of the artwork.



Image 1 Diagram
Source: Jollin Joseph Simbolon, 2024

In the preparation stage, data were collected through direct visits to the Parmalim belief community in Hutatinggi, Laguboti, Toba Regency. The author also conducted interviews with Parmalim religious figures and reviewed literature from books, journals, and relevant internet sources. This information served as the foundation for developing the concept of the artwork. The

elaboration stage involved exploring data and information to identify ideas that could serve as inspiration.

The author delved deeper into understanding that Parmalim is a traditional belief of the Batak people emphasizing harmony with nature, moral values, and ancestral traditions. This understanding helped determine the visual elements to be realized. In the contemplation stage, reflection was carried out to clarify the theme and objects of the artwork. The author developed a concept that highlights Parmalim's cultural elements, ensuring every detail has relevant meaning.

The realization process began with creating sketches based on the designed concept. The sketches were transferred onto canvas, followed by painting using the impasto technique and mixed techniques. These methods were chosen to produce bright, bold colors that harmoniously blend objects and backgrounds. The finishing stage involved adding details and refining the artwork to align with the chosen theme. Tools used in the process included brushes, palettes, palette knives, and pencils, while materials comprised canvas, acrylic paint, oil paint, gesso, and varnish. Acrylic paint was chosen for its fast-drying properties and suitability for wet-on-wet techniques, as noted by Pitcher (2009).

The artwork was created at the Baginda Sirait Fine Arts Gallery of UNIMED, with the process taking two months, from November to December 2024. An evaluation of the artwork was conducted after the Green Table Session at the Fine Arts Gallery of Universitas Negeri Medan, involving internal validators. The final piece was then exhibited to gather feedback and appreciation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The creation of an artwork requires a sequential process to generate ideas and produce quality pieces. One such process is exemplified in the creation of Martangiang Tu Debata Mulajadi Nabolon. The process began with in-depth research into the Parmalim faith and Batak cultural traditions, particularly those related to religious ceremonies, through visits to relevant locations and interviews with Parmalim cultural leaders. The information gathered guided the artist in depicting the atmosphere of traditional prayer rituals, emphasizing religious and cultural symbols of the Batak people.

The artist then explored the concept of these traditional ceremonies by focusing on the role of the Ihutan (religious leader) and the spiritual interactions of the followers, while developing a visualization of the solemn atmosphere through deliberate choices of color and composition. During the contemplation stage, the artist reflected on the key elements to be included in the work, selecting red, black, and white to symbolize spirituality, blessings, and the strength of prayer, while also emphasizing the harmony between humanity and God within the Batak cultural context.

The final stage, the realization of the artwork, began with a rough sketch transferred onto canvas. This was followed by the use of acrylic paint and the wet-on-wet technique to create smooth and harmonious color transitions that represent the sacred atmosphere of the ceremony. The process took two months to complete, ensuring that every detail and color was perfected, making the artwork ready for exhibition.

Creating visual art in the form of paintings is one of the artist's ways of realizing ideas through an exploration of themes, materials, tools, and techniques. In this endeavor, the artist produced a total of 12 paintings under titles such as Martangiang Tu Debata Mulajadi Nabolon, Manjalo Pasu-Pasu Parbogason, Marsibuah-buahi, Mangido Pasu-Pasu Sian Debata Mulajadi Nabolon, Torop Hohom, Somba Na Hohom, Tortor Parsaoran, Pargonsi, Tuppak, Mangulosi, Mangallang Na Niarsik, and Bale Pasogit. However, this article will only feature three paintings included in the journal.

1. Painting I “Martangiang tu Debata Mulajadi Nabolon”



Title : *Martangiang tu Debata Mulajadi Nabolon*
Size : 80cm x 100cm
Media : Cat Akrilik pada kanvas
Year : 2024
Artist : Jollin Josep Simbolon

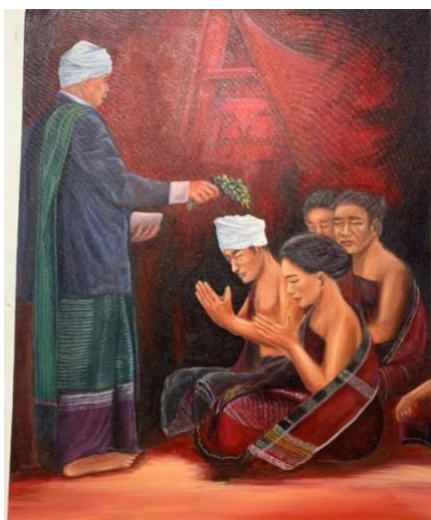
Image 2. *Martangiang tu Debata Mulajadi Nabolon*
(Source: Simbolon, 2024)

Art Description

In this painting, Ihutan, the leader of Ugamo Malim, along with his followers, is depicted conducting a prayer together at the place of worship called Bale Pasogit in preparation for a traditional ceremony. In this artwork, men typically wear white turbans with ulos, while women tie their hair and wear ulos. The red in the painting symbolizes the greatness of Mula Jadi Nabolon and the prosperity bestowed upon those who worship Him. The black represents leadership and courage granted to us, while the white signifies the purity of our hearts and minds to always act righteously.

This expression in Batak culture holds profound meaning about prayers and hopes to God as the source of all blessings and strength. This sentiment is often conveyed during weddings as a plea for guidance, blessings, and support for the couple in their shared life journey. It reflects the belief that every step in life, particularly in building a family, should be accompanied by prayers and divine guidance for a future filled with peace, happiness, and prosperity.

2. Painting II “Manjalo Pasu-Pasu Parbogason”



Title : *Manjalo Pasu-Pasu Parbogason*
Size : 100cm x 80cm
Media : Cat Akrilik pada kanvas
Year : 2024
Artist : Jollin Josep Simbolon

Image 3. *Manjalo Pasu-Pasu Parbogason*
(Source: Simbolon, 2024)

Art Description

In this painting, Ihutan, the leader of Ugamo Malim, is depicted blessing a couple about to marry in a traditional ceremony. In the painting, red signifies the wisdom given to the couple to live a prosperous life. Black symbolizes their ability to lead their future descendants and face challenges with courage. White represents the purity of marriage. The blessing from Ihutan (the chief leader of Parmalim) is given to the bride and groom to bind them together. During the ceremony, the couple exchanges vows of lifelong commitment and receives guidance from Ihutan. This act signifies that the couple is truly ready, sincere, and fully prepared to live together for the rest of their lives.

3. Painting III “*Marsibuah-buahi*”



Title : *Marsibuah-buahi*
Size : 100cm x 80cm
Media : Cat Akrilik pada kanvas
Year : 2024
Artist : Jollin Josep Simbolon

Image 4. *Marsibuah-buahi*
(Source: Simbolon, 2024)

Art Description

In this painting, Ihutan leads the procession, followed by the parents of the couple, then the bride and groom. Behind the couple are women or mothers, followed by the men. This illustrates the traditional wedding procession in Ugamo Malim. The red in the painting symbolizes the courage required to make the decision to live together. Holding a traditional ceremony reflects the bravery needed to face all that lies ahead, as it is a sacred event witnessed by many. Black represents the strength that must be possessed to embrace and carry out this chosen path. White signifies a new beginning filled with serenity as the couple embarks on their journey together. This marks the start of the traditional wedding ceremony, where all attendees follow Ihutan (the highest leader of Parmalim) to the designated venue for the celebration. In this tradition, the groom's side prepares meat, while the bride's side prepares goldfish. The ceremony concludes with a prayer before sharing the meal together.

CONCLUSIONS

The final project on the creation of Parmalim paintings titled "The Marriage of the Parmalim Community as an Inspiration for the Creation of Painting Art" is rooted in the Batak Toba religion, with the following conclusions: Parmali paintings are created using bravura and chiaroscuro techniques. The process involves making a sketch, determining the light and dark areas in the painting, followed by coloring and detailing. In this stage, the artist freely applies materials and tools onto the sketched canvas, allowing for the creation of paintings that maximize both visualization and size adjustment. This process aims to provide the artist with the freedom to use their chosen media.

In this creation, the author has produced a total of 12 paintings. The concept used in these works integrates traditional themes from the Parmalim religion. Based on these two points, it can be concluded that the creation of these paintings is an expression of love for culture and an effort to appreciate the religious and cultural heritage of the Batak people.

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