CULTURE, MEDIA & FILM | RESEARCH ARTICLE

COVID-19, local wisdom, and resilience: The case of embroidery artisans in Indonesia

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Abstract: The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the socio-economic activities of the large informal sector in developing countries, including in Indonesia. The response of this sector to the resulting crisis in Indonesia has been viewed in two ways: optimistic and pessimistic. The former sees resilience, while the latter vulnerability, in their respective analysis of the informal sector. This article specifically examined the resilience of the Indonesian informal sector engaged in embroidery making in the village communities of Balai Gurah, West Sumatra, and Garot, Aceh. Using literature study, direct observation, and in-depth interviews with the community artisans in both villages, various forms of resilience could be found in the face of the socio-economic crisis caused by the pandemic. Sources of resilience include local wisdom based on Islamic teachings and customary rules, natural resources availability, and community view on embroidery as cultural heritage.

Subjects: History; Cultural Studies; Fashion

Keywords: COVID-19; crisis; embroidery; resilience; local wisdom

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic created a huge impact in developing countries, particularly in the large informal sector, with no less than 90 percent of its members experiencing significant reduction in transactions due to various factors such as social restrictions. This condition is a major challenge for the informal sector workers, as their low-income and lack of social security cause them to become a vulnerable group. Thus, they are in need of resilience to recover quickly from the pandemic and its accompanying economic malaise (Marques da Silva, 2021; Angaw, 2021; Müller & Rau, 2021).

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Two contradictory findings, one pessimistic and the other optimistic, were found from various studies on the pandemic and the Indonesian informal sector's economic crisis (Ben & Boomgaard, 2019; Pitoyo et al., 2020). The pessimistic finding showed the vulnerability of the informal sector in dealing with the impact of the pandemic. An example is the steep decline of the sector’s product demand. The optimistic finding showed that the people who work in the informal sector are resilient, culturally strong, and creative in finding product and market breakthroughs.

Unfortunately in the studies, only economic lens was used to analyze the informal sector, while non-economic lenses, such as culture and religion, were neglected. This article seeks to remedy this lacuna by examining local wisdom and religious values prevalent among the embroidery artisan communities in two Indonesian villages, one located in West Sumatra and the other in Aceh Darussalam. The first village, Balai Gurah in Agam District represents the Minangkabau ethnic group, while the second village, Garot in Pidie District represents the Acehnese ethnic group. These two groups were chosen as their members represent devout Muslims in Indonesia with a tendency to migrate for entrepreneurial purposes. Do the similarities between them affect the ways they deal with the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic?

Historically, since the period of Hindu kingdom, women made embroidery by hand in Aceh’s royal palace (Purbasari & Kuntjoro-Jakti, 2014; Said, 1981; Utomo, 2016).1 Therefore, an influence of Indian culture could be seen in the embroidery motifs, which were later enriched by the incoming Islamic, Arabic and Turkish cultures. This cultural mix is clearly evident in the color combinations of the embroidery pattern of meukutop skullcap. The four colors of yellow, red, green, and black symbolize social classes in Aceh society. Yellow symbolizes the Aceh kingdom, red the military and regional leaders, green the ulama, and black the common people (Hanif, 2020; Junaidi & Riyani, 2017). Raw materials such as cloths, cotton threads, and gold threads were purchased in the city markets of Pidie and Bukittinggi for Garot and Balai Gurah artisans respectively. These two markets in turn imported these materials mainly from Singapore, China and India.

It is difficult to ascertain when and how this embroidery tradition developed outside the palace. However, this development was in line with the widespread demand for embroidery outside the palace for various traditional and religious rituals. A variety of palatial skills, such as weaving and embroidery, was then taught in the villages outside the palace. In Garot, women who master embroidery skill are considered ideal. Therefore, this skill is passed down from a mother to her daughter (Interview with Mrs. MR, Industry Agency, 29 June 2021). When the Dutch colonial government wanted to encourage the informal sector of its colony, progress in the embroidery business was made in terms of product and motif diversity. Many Indonesian cities and even Europe became a market. (Erwiza et al., 2012; Jasper & Pirngadie, 1930). A similar encouragement was proffered by the New Order government (1966–1998). Since then, embroideries have continued to take hold of Acehnese imagination, and their creation by hand have continued to be performed till today (Hanif, 2020; Junaidi & Riyani, 2017).

In contrast to Garot, embroidery making at Balai Gurah had not been a royal culture, but a folk craft introduced by a migrating woman who returned to the village from overseas in the 19th century. This craft then developed to become not only a village identity, but also a status symbol for an ideal woman. Therefore, expertise in embroidery making has been passed down through generations (Yuliarma, 2016). Women were taught to embroider since they were little, when they observed their mothers or other female family members making embroideries. Later, they would attempt to embroider simple and easy patterns. By primary school age, they would be able to help their elders. Helping was considered as something fun and profitable, as they were given a small fee for their effort. Due to the success of this tradition in Balai Gurah, it attracted contractors who then spread it to the surrounding villages (Faizis, 2018; Malik and K, 2018; Majianti, 2013). These contractors trained new artisans and purchased embroideries from them with a lower fee than what was paid to the Balai Gurah artisans.
As a cultural product symbolizing village identity and women’s social status, the embroidery tradition has had a long experience in facing numerous crises. Nevertheless, the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic was especially acute as it limited physical and social interactions, important features of an embroidery market. An attitude of resilience embedded in local wisdom would thus play a great role in the economic survival of embroidery artisans in Balai Gurah and Garot. Therefore, this paper aimed to examine: (1) The impact of COVID-19 on the embroidery artisans in Balai Gurah and Garot; (2) The strategies based on local wisdom used by the artisans to deal with the COVID-19 impact; (3) The implication of using this local wisdom on the artisans’ socio-economic survival.

2. Research theory and methodology

As the keywords of this study, the terms local wisdom and resilience need a theoretical elaboration. Local wisdom, as part of the traditional knowledge system, was found to be crucial to societal resilience. This wisdom was acquired, passed over generations, and practiced by society to deal with ever changing challenges. Based on values and behaviors traditionally instituted (Bodrud-Doza et al., 2020; Mariane, 2014; Settaboonsang, 2006), it functioned as a cultural identity which could absorb, manage, and filter foreign influence in accordance with local character, ability, and environment (Bertog & Koos, 2021; Mungmachon, 2012). It prioritized a balanced life, in harmony with nature and society. Using local wisdom, survival was achieved by managing nature wisely, as well as interacting with others with morality and integrity. As part of the wider society, economic actors within it were also strongly influenced by this wisdom.

The impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the national economic life and the role of local wisdom have been studied by many scholars. The studies could be divided into three categories: geographical, social, and distributional. The geographical studies found that the interior and coastal regions responded differently in terms of food resilience (Hafizd & Nugrahaini, 2020; Aji; Satrio, 2020; Yulia, 2020; Bahagia et al., 2020; Rozaki, 2020). The social studies found that mutual aid and solidarity were practiced in many localities (Arditama & Lestari, 2020; Nurhata, 2018; Supriatna & Leonardo Sari, 2020). The distributional studies found that local products were being distributed online to overcome offline restrictions in relation to the pandemic (Kumar & Shah, 2004; Ridwan & Sari, 2020).

Resilience has many definitions, depending on questions such as “how to determine resilience” and “what are the most important determinants of resilience”. A broad and inclusive definition would be “resilience is a complex construct and may differ in the context of individuals, families, organizations, communities and cultures” (Kanupriya, 2021; Martin et al., 2020; Sothwick et al., 2014). Thus, resilience could be manifested differently according to socio-economic changes faced by individuals, families, communities and cultures. Empirical studies would then be needed to ascertain the resilience determinants.

This is one such empirical study. Two villages, Balai Gurah and Garot were taken as samples to find the determinants in the face of socio-economic crises caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. These two villages are similar in the sense that they are composed of devout Muslims who conduct their economic activity in the informal sector, namely embroidery, as a product of their cultural heritage. Does this similarity produce the same or different forms of resilience? Even if different, their resilience is rooted in local wisdom, and hence is not separated, but connected to each other.

This paper is based on two main arguments. First, the embroidery artisans could adapt to the changing condition caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. This adaptability was due to the values of local wisdom of endurance and flexibility which they have internalized and inherited inter-generationally. Second, the values of local wisdom allowed them to endure any changes based on the principles of religion and custom, as well as to be flexible enough to collaborate with others in the face of said changes. Both these arguments showed that as an “unwritten rule”, local wisdom has enabled the artisans to interact with foreign culture, absorbing and managing this culture, even integrating it with local culture as needed (I. I. Abdullah, 2008).
Using a qualitative approach, data for this paper were collected through literature study and field research. The former was conducted by analyzing books, papers, and news relevant to the study, such as on the concept of local wisdom and resilience. The latter was conducted through direct observations and in-depth interviews. The observations were focused on the geographical conditions of, the means of livelihood in, and the products offered by the two villages. Interviews were conducted with different categories of artisans, some over the phone to accommodate the informants’ schedule and preference of COVID-19 health protocol, others directly in groups or individually. Interviews were unstructured to make the informants speak more freely, such as on the meaning and significance of embroidery. Information obtained from one informant was cross-checked with other informants, and identified for repeated statements. The results of the interviews were then transcribed and coded. Subsequently, they were analyzed and examined to answer the research questions.

The two villages of Balai Gurah and Garot were chosen because they were both traditional embroidery centres which: (1) contributed significantly to their respective economies; (2) were situated similarly in border regions; Garot being close to Sigli, Aceh, and Balai Gurah being close to Bukittinggi, West Sumatra; (3) possessed high entrepreneurial and religious spirit; (4) were greatly influenced by local wisdom based on their environment, custom, and religion.

3. Results

3.1. The impact of COVID-19 pandemic on balai gurah and garot artisans

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted all facets of Balai Gurah and Garot artisans’ life. Greatest was the impact to their embroidery businesses, as demand and sales slowed down, piling up inventories in their storage. Their cash flows were disrupted, which in turn disrupted their production. Like fallen dominoes, the reduced production caused the artisans’ wages to fall too.

Table 1 compiles the responses of the artisans with regards to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic to their embroidery production.

As the table showed, similarities and differences could be found in the responses of the embroidery artisans in Balai Gurah and Garot. In general, both groups of artisans acknowledged similarly that the sales for their products fell significantly, due to a lack of demand and fewer customers.

In particular, the Balai Gurah artisans suffered a 70% reduction in demand. These artisans could be divided into two categories. First, those who worked for contractors for a wage. The contractors gave them the capital necessary to work on their embroideries. Second, those who used their own capital. The source of capital turned out to be a distinguishing factor in the impact felt by the artisans. Those who relied on contractors discovered that their wage fell, and even withheld from them. Those with their own capital could not obtain the materials necessary for embroidery. Alternative means of livelihood such as planting onions and vegetables were also not satisfactory, as the market price for these products was low due to the pandemic.

A similar drastic reduction in demand also occurred for the Garot artisans. The reduced sale price was not to their satisfaction due to the difficulty and duration taken to make the embroidered products. For example, before the pandemic, they could sell an embroidered meukutob skullcap as much as 300 thousand rupiahs, but during the pandemic, the price offered by the customers were only 250 thousand rupiahs, sometimes even lower, due to the customers’ reduced buying power. To make matters worse, competition emerged in the form of mass-produced skullcaps. These latter skullcaps were machine-made in factories which did not pay attention to the cultural value and significance of the handmade skullcap. As such, they were sold for a very low price of 30 thousand rupiahs. Direct purchase of embroideries from the Garot artisans also suffered due to a reduction of visitors and distributors who came to Garot.
3.2. The strategy of balai gurah and garot artisans to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic

To maintain their embroidery businesses, the Balai Gurah and Garot artisans came up with two strategies. First, they used their own capital to sustain their businesses by creating new embroidery patterns and products. Second, they undertook other work temporarily to cover their daily needs by utilizing the natural resources around them, such as planting vegetables, growing livestocks, and tending paddy fields.

Further, the strategies of Balai Gurah and Garot artisans could be divided into three categories: First, some of them created new products related to the pandemic, such as embroidered masks, then marketed these masks online. Second, they built solidarity with the contractors in the form of patron-client relationships. Third, they stocked embroidery inventories at their own home, and continued to produce embroideries even with low sales numbers. Fourth, they worked temporarily out of their embroidery businesses to cover their daily needs. The details of these efforts could be seen in Table 2.

The table shows that the values of local wisdom permeate the responses of Balai Gurah and Garot artisans. They did not give up their embroidery businesses, but instead adapted them to the challenging condition of the pandemic. New products were conceived, and when times were really hard, some artisans temporarily worked on other means of livelihood to cover their daily needs. Their adaptability and endurance did not appear out of the blue, but were a result of a long process of local wisdom inculcation by their elders (I. Abdullah, 2008; Mulyana, 2012).

The values of local wisdom upheld by the Balai Gurah artisans could be summed up in the expression “live by your wits and die by your faith”. This expression encapsulates the never-say-die attitude of the artisans in the face of life challenges, by simultaneously keeping in mind that the real challenge would be faced in the afterlife, hence the need to always keep their faith. A derivative of the Minangkabau principle of “custom based on Islamic law in accordance with the Qur’an” (adat basandi syara’ dan syara’ basandi kitabullah), this expression shows that religion and custom are inseparable in Minangkabau life. In fact, Tuanku Nan Tuo, the 18th-19th century reformer and the teacher of many later Minangkabau ulama in the Paderi movement, formulated this expression in the 19th-20th century (T. Abdullah, 1966).

The first half of the expression, “hiduik baraka, was used as a foundation for all the economic activities performed by the Balai Gurah artisans. When the embroidery and related businesses
were negatively impacted by the pandemic, the artisans covered their daily needs by utilizing lands that were available to them for small-scale agriculture. Those without land tended the paddy fields of the Balai Gurah diaspora. A unique feature of these paddy fields is their status as a permanent inheritance (harta pusaka) which could not be bought and sold in the market. Another expression useful to describe the multi-work phenomena observed in Balai Gurah is “ka kidan suak”, which means a lack of daily needs or a condition of being poor. To avoid this condition, the artisans were willing to perform other work when their main means of livelihood, embroidery, was in a slump.

In addition, the strong relationship between the diaspora and Balai Gurah residents was also a factor in successfully facing the pandemic. Any diaspora member who faces economic difficulties in the cities could always return to Balai Gurah to utilize the permanently inherited land (Ardiansyah, 2017; Djuanto, 2019; Jong et al., 1980). Those diaspora members who are unaffected economically could trust their land to others who choose to remain in Balai Gurah, such as the embroiderers. The use of technology, such as Whatsapp groups of the same family, village, or

| Table 1. Balai gurah and garot artisans’ responses on COVID-19 impact |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
|                     | Balai Gurah         | Garot               |
| **Initials** (age)  | **Responses**       | **Initials** (age)  | **Responses**       |
| AD (35 years old)   | Sales fell drastically by as much as 70%. Inventories piled up at home (see photo). | IK (30 years old)   | Marketing became more difficult. Customers requested too low a price compared to the embroidery skill level required. Due to distribution bottlenecks, available stock was sold cheaply during the pandemic. |
| NJ (55)             | Sales of embroidery could not be done online. Customers must hold, feel, and try on the product. The pandemic put a stop to this process. Less customers came to buy, which also caused souvenir-type embroideries to sell less. | MN (40)             | In addition to the COVID-19 pandemic, now we must compete with factory-made embroideries. They sell their products cheaply, a tenth of our price, 30 thousand compared to 300 thousand rupiahs. |
| PL (20)             | To supplant our income, we planted onions. The work was low-paid, just enough to cover our daily expenses. In addition, we also worked on paddy fields and grew vegetables around our houses. | WR (45)             | Visitors became rare in Garot, so sales and orders of our embroideries declined. |
| NT (33)             | Embroidery raw materials were scarce, as imports of threads stopped due to lockdown policies in India and Singapore. | TN (42)             | Distributors reduced their visits to buy embroideries and sell to Banda Aceh or other cities. Embroidery products thus remained unsold. |
| UI (45)             | Embroidery contractors could not pay artisans due to market slowdown. As such, I became independent embroiderers during the pandemic. | MR (47)             | Market slowed down, buying power was also reduced, thus reducing production and income. |
district, in the form of what is called “Minang Diaspora Global Network”, helped significantly. Any successful diaspora could help their Minangkabau brethren whenever the need arises, as communicated in the Whatsapp groups (Iwin, 2019).

For Garot artisans, custom and religion were similarly intertwined. An often heard local expression (hadith maja) is “hudep be saree matee syahid” (live in dignity die in the name of God). This expression is related to another, “adat meukoh rebong, hukom agama meukoh puriah” (custom has its place, religious law has its place). The meaning is clear, all life problems should be faced by referring to custom and religion (Interview with Pidie’s MAA head, who lives in Garot).

Another expression which shows the endurance of Garot artisans in their economic activities is “meung ek taajon ngon taontok, dalam bak djak djiteubiet nira” (if one can swing and tap, from the trunk sugar sap would leak out). These activities should be preceded by a prayer to God, as shown

| Table 2. Balai gurah and garot artisans’ strategies against COVID-19 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| **Balai Gurah** | **Strategies** | **Garot** | **Strategies** |
| **Initials** | **(age)** | **Initials** | **(age)** |
| YF (35 years old) | I created embroidered masks and marketed them outside of West Sumatra all the way to Jakarta. | FT (25 years old) | I researched what the customers need in the market, then created products according to this need, such as embroidered velvet bags, and masks with distinctive Garot embroidery patterns. |
| NJ (55) | I created new products such as scarves and dresses, as well as bags with suj coek patterns, a distinctive Balai Gurah style. I sold the bags for 150 to 200 thousand rupiahs. | MN (40) | I tended paddy fields and raised ducks to cover my family’s daily needs during the pandemic. |
| PL (20) | I sent materials to the artisans directly by delivery services, such as those who live in Lubuk Sikaping, Pasaman Timur regency. I also planted onions and tended Balai Gurah diasporas’ paddy fields. | FT (25) | I helped my artisan workers by building solidarity with them based on Islamic values. I am convinced that Allah is the Giver of Bounties. There would be ease along with difficulties. |
| NT (33) | As an embroiderer dependent on contractors, I continued my work even with lower pay, as this is a tradition that I must preserve. | TN (42) | I tended my farm and used its produce to create food products such as plek sauce and emping chips. I sold them to buyers in my village. |
| UI (45) | I am an independent embroiderer. I continued my work even if I had to purchase the materials myself. To my mind, struggling to live is an obligation, as I remember the wise saying, “live by your wits and die by your faith” (hidup berokal mati beriman). | MR (47) | I continued to embroider even if there were no buyers who came to the village. I stocked the raw materials for future production, as I must maintain this tradition. I believe my products could be sold in the future. |
by the expression “tuah deungon tagagah, raseuki dengan tatuntut” (luck due to effort, sustenance due to prayer). So material and spiritual aspects go hand in hand in the sincere effort to seek a livelihood (Faizis, 2018). Hence, religion is the driver which enables the Garot artisans to maintain their livelihood.

3.3. Cross analysis of artisans’ adaptability due to local wisdom

The various expressions above showed the resilience of the artisan communities, which is derived from the values contained in local wisdom. As part of the traditional knowledge system, the local wisdom found in the two communities is rooted in a combination of religious and customary teachings. This combination is difficult to separate, as it is integrated and institutionalized through continuous reminders to each generation when they face and solve their own challenges (Abdulkareem et al., 2021; Jones & Comfort, 2020; Mariane, 2014; Settaboonsang, 2006). For example, in Minangkabau, the principle of “custom based on Islamic law in accordance with the Qur’an” (adat basandi syara’ and syara’ basandi Kitabullah) and in Aceh, the principle of “custom has its place, religious law has its place” (adat meukoh reubong, hukom agama meukoh purieh), are the cornerstones of every speech by the ulama, bureaucrats and traditional leaders in various meetings with the communities.

At least four types of resilience could be seen to be derived from local wisdom: psychological, economic, socio-cultural, and food resilience. In contrast to the study of Sukesi et al. (2022), the findings in Balai Guruh and Garot showed the intersection and interconnection of these types of resilience. The psychological (mental) and economic resilience of the embroidery artisan communities stem from their tough (tageh) yet flexible attitude in dealing with market demand. The psychological resilience also comes from the process of embroidery making which requires patience, perseverance and artisanship. This process is also related to the work ethic derived from the teachings of Islam, enabling them to survive as artisans, entrepreneurs and nomads (Abdullah, 2009).

The artisans invented new products to suit the needs of the market during the pandemic, marketing these products through a network of friends, relatives and their respective diaspora communities. They continued to make embroidered products even with significantly reduced wages due to reduced market demand. They did this not only because of economic reasons, but also socio-cultural reasons as embroidery making has become a cultural heritage and community identity; a part of their daily rhythm in addition to work in agriculture, animal husbandry and plantations, or work in civil or private sectors.

The artisans in both communities view embroidery as an “asset” which could be sold when they face financial difficulty. (Interview with W and UI, June, 2022). Embroidery making could thus be seen both as an economic activity which is performed for profit, and as a “cultural identity” which has to be preserved. The challenges faced by handmade embroidery products due to the pandemic or factory-made products were resolved by middle and upper class customers such as wives of high-ranking government officers, who see the importance supporting the cultural identity of the traditional artisans.

The economic resilience also intersected with socio-cultural and food resilience. The former could be seen in the social relationship between the artisan-entrepreneur (patron) and their workforce (client). The patrons continued to provide embroidered materials to their clients, even if the resulting products were difficult to market, to prevent the clients from switching to other patrons. The clients could also be employed by the patrons in the agricultural sector, such as onion farming, as practiced in Balai Guruh village. As a result, the daily basic needs of artisans during the pandemic could be fulfilled.

Even without the help of the patrons, the artisan communities were found to be food-resilient due to their involvement in farms, plantations and animal husbandry. Similar resilience was also
found in other villages (Hafidz & Nugrahaini, 2020; Aji; Satria, 2020; Yulia, 2020; Bahagia et al., 2020; Rozaki, 2020). However, the difference lies in the availability of abundant land, strict customary rules, and diaspora assistance. In Balai Gurah, this resilience was not only found among farmers who own paddy fields. Balai Gurah residents who do not own land could work on the paddy fields of the Balai Gurah diaspora who inherited land (Interview with AF, May 2021). The inherited paddy fields could only be temporarily “mortgaged” to others, to later be reacquired later by members of the same lineage from the mother’s side (Hariyanti, 2021). This permanent inheritance is a significant element of local wisdom which has enabled the artisans to survive the pandemic.

In Garot, the availability of natural resources afforded the artisans another means of livelihood to cover their daily needs. Garot, which is 668 hectares wide, has a different characteristic of land than that of Balai Gurah. There is much more land for paddy fields and plantations relative to its population. Not only tending paddy fields, Garot residents could rely on rearing livestock which could graze on the wide open grassland. Planting perennials such as betel nut and melinjo (gnetum gnemon) is also another option, as well as picking coconuts from the trees around their houses. Cows and goats could freely roam the recently harvested paddy fields. The artisans also raised chicken and ducks, as well as planted vegetables around their houses. All these activities were performed according to the prevailing custom, which is an element of local wisdom. It should also be noted that the Garot residents had faced violence under the colonial regime and against the New Order military attacks (Schulte, 2001). All these interconnected factors contributed to their resilience.

The Balai Gurah and Garot artisans have successfully used the values of local wisdom to maintain their economic stability and survival ability. At the very least, they managed to sustain their identity as embroiderers, as well as the ecosystem which harmoniously surrounds this identity. The negative effect of the pandemic did not destroy this ecosystem, only disrupted it temporarily (Maiyanti, 2013).

The success of Balai Gurah and Garot artisans should attract the attention of other stakeholders such as the government. Local wisdom should be understood holistically, not only in terms of unique culture, but also socio-economic activities distinctive to a particular region. Local wisdom is an intangible wealth, which the government should help preserve as not many local residents are as aware or strong as those in Balai Gurah and Garot. There should be more examination of local wisdom throughout Indonesia, especially in relation to the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

4. Conclusion

It could be concluded that local wisdom has become a source of strength in the face of the socio-economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. This wisdom originates from complex, dynamic and interconnected factors. It is conveyed through expressions which are derived from a combination of Islamic teachings and customary values. This combination has been integrated and institutionalized in the history of these two communities since hundreds of years ago. Every generation is reminded of this wisdom in the face of various challenges, including those caused by the pandemic.

The local wisdom is connected to the embroidery work, social relations, and natural resources in the artisan communities and the diaspora. Embroidery making requires patience and tenacity, both psychological attributes which contribute to status symbol and community identity. Natural resources contribute to food resilience, as livelihood alternatives such as farming, plantation, and animal husbandry become possible. In Garot, these alternatives were assisted by the diaspora and social relations between entrepreneurs and artisans. Thus, the embroidery tradition was sustained even in crisis conditions.

The flexible attitude of the artisans to survive the crisis could be seen in a number of ways, such as the creation of new products and the obtainment of alternative income through utilizing available natural resources. They planted onions, raised livestock, and worked on other endeavors
to ensure their food and other daily needs were met. Finally, the ways in which the two artisan communities of Aceh and Minangkabau dealt with the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic showed the complexity and connectivity between various types of resilience, such as psychological, economic, socio-cultural, and food resilience.

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Note
1. In the 17th century, the manuscript “Hikayat Aceh” described that embroideries were used in important events occurring in the kingdom of Aceh Darussalam, such as in the times of Sultan Iskandar Muda (Teuku Iskandar, 2001). During the Idul Adha celebration of 30 Zulhijjah 1064 H or 26 April 1637, Sultan Iskandar Tsani, the son of Sultan Iskandar Muda, paraded 200 elephants replete with a variety of decorations covered by beautiful velvet cloth embroidered with gold or silver threads (kasob embroidery) in assorted patterns. Umbrellas with gold decorations were also brought before the sultan (Richard C Temple, 1919; Nurdin Muljani, 2017).

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