

## Deficient Representation Of Bamboos Woven Motifs And Patterns In Malay Architecture

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**Abstract.** Home is the first place where the message of Islam was spread or where Islamic teaching was practiced. Its construction is in accordance with Islamic law. Residents are also educated with Islamic values. Inside the house, there are decorations to beautify the home. Indeed, God does not prevent his servants to decorate the house as long as the source obtained is good and lawful. The present research employs qualitative research encompasses the concept of descriptive design. The techniques denote a documental photography including the materials in its surrounding. The latter focused upon possible differences in types of motifs and patterns of bamboos woven in Malay architecture through design arrangement and weaving composition. The research indicated the Islamic art in visualize of bamboos woven motifs and patterns used on roof, walls, doors, and windows of Malay architecture. It clearly describes the deficient representational of visual depicted from nature through the usage of bamboo. This research nurtures awareness among community in appreciating the Malay's architectural heritage. In the teaching of Islam, something that is appreciated must be things that are good, noble, beautiful, true, meaningful and useful. Indeed, enjoying literary art is not merely for appreciation, but it adds to the belief in God. This is because a sense of pleasure and gratitude can learn the truth of art. Hence, it built positive effects in the level of mind and heart. Positive mind and heart will build the power of faith. As a result, an educated will be born society with manners and acknowledges the oneness in God in their world affairs.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Malay's life has been influenced so much by its surroundings. Bamboo plants that existed in Malay's surroundings have contributed in Malay architecture to show aesthetic values. These aesthetic values have been interpreted by Malays in various types of architecture such as personal properties, private buildings, religious buildings and small kiosks.

A lot of bamboo architectures can be seen in most of the Northern part of peninsular Malaysia [9]. For example, the architecture which is made from bamboo in the state of Kedah is still good and has become tourist attraction such as Mahsuri house. It is located on the island of Langkawi. The walls of the house are made of woven bamboos (*Kelarai*). Bamboos woven (*Kelarai*) applied various patterns to show the beauty and unique design. Then, it is applied with shellac for the purpose of treating bamboo to make it more durable. Mahsuri house has been categorized as a traditional Malay house or as the earlier house for the village people.

In the state of Perak, the architecture made of bamboos which are still preserved are *Rumah Kutai*, *Masjid Ihsaniah Iskandariah* and *Istana Kenangan*. *Rumah Kutai* means old house or else the old house. Its age is estimated to be over 200 years old. Among the *Rumah Kutai*, the oldest is *Rumah Penghulu Anjang Padam Pelita* located in Pasir Salak. It came into the year 1800 [5]. Obviously, *Rumah Kutai* was named by the villagers in Perak. It referred to the houses made of bamboo as the earlier Malay houses in Perak.

### 2. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MALAY HOUSE AND HUMAN ANATOMY

Jamil [4] explains that the Malay community is famous for its philosophy of building something with some meaning and symbols based on the relationship between God, man and nature. For example, a traditional Malay house is not just a shelter but is considered as a symbol of human body structure (microcosm). This statement is further elaborated by Wan Hashim and Abdul Halim [9], in which the architectural structure is depicted similar to human's anatomy. The human

anatomy consists of legs, body and head which each of these part has its own unique function

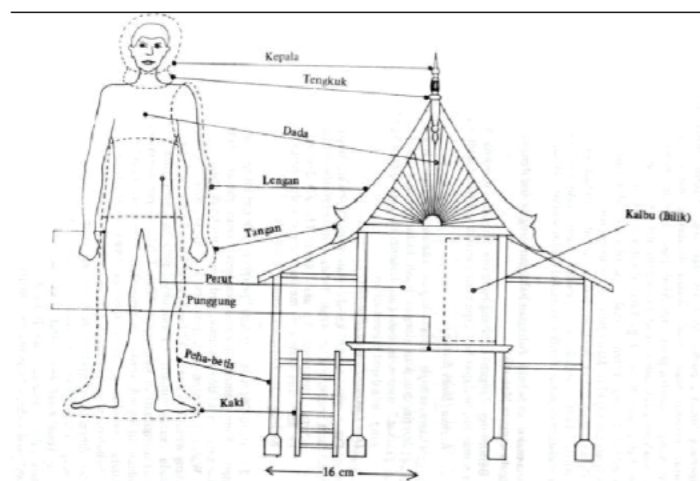


Figure 1: Comparative Structure of Malay House and Human Anatomy [6].

Each of the function and structure of Malay house has been symbolized with the human anatomy. Indeed, each of Allah creations; humans, animals, skies, mountains and the earth has its own function and importance. As Allah stated in His Al-Quran;

*“Do they not look at the camels, how they are created? And the heaven, how it is raised? And at the mountains, how they are rooted (and fixed firm)? And at the earth, how it is out spread?”*  
(Surah al-Ghashiyah 88:17-20). [7].

Learning from the importance of each of God’s creation, the carpenters build Malays architectural structure based on this principle. In fact, this relationship enables human being to be close to the Creator. This means, not only the architecture serves as a structure but also as integrity of the Malays.

Firstly, the base of a building is the most important structure in a building construction. It holds the buildings pressure, avoidance of erosion or landslide and also stability to the structure. It is common for Malay Houses to use pillars as the foundation of the structure. It holds the similar principle with as to human anatomy. The pillars of a house start from the beginning of the ground beam or „*rasuk bawah*” till the end of the roof beam or „*rasuk atas*” [2].

This structure should be strong enough to hold the building’s pressure. Other than this pillar a building requires a pillar support. It has the ability to support and distribute the pressure equally to pillars. These combinations of pillars will ensure the stability of the structure. As compared to human anatomy, the legs are symbolized as pillars to support the rest of the body. The long and strong legs can support the human body’s weight. Thus, legs are important to stand firm and hold its position for long period. Allah creates humans with a pair of legs provided with a footprint on each leg. It has the same role as the pillars support. This is because each of legs holds equal burden on both of the feet. Tall pillars function similar to the long legs. Whenever flood occurs, these pillars will be able to save the house from the water.

The second measurement which serves as the human anatomy is the wall. The walls were built to protect the contents in the home such as human and furniture from disasters. Other than that, they also function to prevent heat and cold from entering the home. They also prevent raindrops from entering the house, hold the flame of the fire and have sound proof function. Therefore, climate and weather are another significant issue in which should be cared for. This is to ensure the suitability of the building materials and for long lasting or at least long term maintenance or preservation. There are several other building supports in part of resident wall such as doors, windows and floors. Each of these components contributes different functions to the walls. Without all of these supports, a building structure will be incomplete and unable to function properly.

The door is a space which is built as entrance and exit points in the building. Usually, a complete structure is built with the main door, room’s door and the kitchen’s door. Whereas, window is a space built on the wall in which it must match 1/20 of the floor measurement. It is intended for lighting, air distribution, sound insulation, and to protect from weather. Next, the floor it is the base of the building which holds the resident’s activity. There are several aspects of floor development which need to be considered by the contractors to ensure safety guaranteed for the building to be occupied to be living in. Among others are it needs to be strong, stable, durable, comfortable, safe and easy to maintain [8].

Every part of the support is usually carved and decorated with a variety of unique designs. For houses of the Malays

in Kedah and Perak, there are woven bamboos or “*Kelarai*” on the walls as exterior decoration of residence. The wall symbolizes as the whole parts of the human body which encompasses the stomach, hands and neck. Hands and neck are the places where usually the jewellery is worn to present the beauty of the wearer.



Figure 2: Woven Bamboos Pattern  
(Source: Researcher collection).

The last principle of measurement is the roof in which it serves as the head. The roof is a vital component in which it functions as a protector for the residents from heat and rain. Tong (1994) explained that there are several factors required for consideration in the development and installation of the residential roof for tropical area. Among the factors are;

- i. Wind - The roof should be built efficiently attached to the house. It avoids the roof from being blown away by strong wind.
- ii. Heat – Hot temperature in a house can be controlled and reduced with the high roof construction. In addition, selection of the roof materials such as fiber board, ceilings and roofs from natural sources will ensure the heat insulation. Therefore, Malay traditional houses used bamboo and palm leaves to make roofs. Besides, by painting the roofs with white color can also reduce the heat.
- iii. Air - To replace the air inside the house, a high built windows are used.
- iv. Animals – intrusion of animals such as bats, rats, birds and another small animal can be curbed by installing wire mesh (eave filler).
- v. Lightning - Lightning conductor need to be fixed to house residences.
- vi. Rain – when the rain comes, the influx of water from the roof of houses can be overcome by making the drain. Other than that, a steep rooftop ensures the flow of the water down to certain areas that have been provided.

In the Qur’an, Allah also mentioned the importance of the roof. As Allah said which means;

*“And We have made the heaven a roof, safe and well-guarded. Yet they turn away from its signs (i.e. sun, moon, winds, and clouds)”*

(Surah al-Anbiya” 21:32). [7].

This phrase can be interpreted in such way that rooftop should be built high in architectural buildings. It enables the heat to be repressed out of the house. This is according to the original construction of the *Nabawi Mosque* built in 622M (1H). It has an area of 850.5 square meters and a height of 2.9 meters. At that time, branches and leaves from dates palms were used as the roof for the *Nabawi Mosque*.

### 3. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Indirectly this will uphold the heritage of the Malays through deficient representation of bamboos woven motifs and patterns on Malay architecture. There were only two buildings selected such as Restaurant Pohon’s Kitchen and The Gemalai Village Resort. This study is undertaken to:

- i. To identify the types of woven bamboos motifs and patterns on Malay architecture.
- ii. To describe the deficient representation of bamboos woven on Malay architecture.

### 4. METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted by using a qualitative method which is a descriptive research design. Research was carried out on the the visual of bamboo motifs and patterns through deficient representation of bamboos woven on the part of roof, walls, doors and windows. Deficient representation was mentioned by Dzul Haimi [3]. Therefore the origin of this concept was discussed by Al-Faruqi. There are four steps in the representation images or figures, which are;

- i. Imitation
- ii. Denaturalization

- iii. Stylization
- iv. Abstraction

**Imitation** - The first process is imitating natural objects such as floras, faunas, and cosmos to be used as a form. It is the artist's view of the apparent illusion of Divine creation.

**Denaturalization** - All objects that have been imitated must be denaturalized, so that they do not resemble the original form. This process involves the arrangement and organization of objects to be used as a motif.

**Stylization** - At this stage, artists produce perfection image or motif using their creativity. Usually, the characteristic of the original object has been in manipulation by the artist to appear not the same as the original form. Eventually many different images can be generated through this process

**Abstraction** - This is the process of creating a work of art in an extraordinary weird and informal way. So, artwork will look more exotic, elegant, charming, and enthralling. Elements and principles of art are widely used to represent abstract objects. Artists' imagination will transform the art objects in various designs and creations in accordance with certain condition and time.

5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Sample 1: Pohon's Kitchen Restaurant.



Table 1: Identify the deficient representation of woven bamboo motifs and patterns on Pohon's Kitchen Restaurant.

Part of Building	Image	Pattern	Motif Description
Roof			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Position: <i>Tunjuk Langit</i> (the king-post in the roof of the house).</li> <li>• Motif: <i>Kelarai Siku Keluang</i>.</li> <li>• Motif inspiration: Shape of flying fox's elbow.</li> <li>• Deficient representation: Imitation form shape of <i>Siku Keluang</i>.</li> </ul>
Wall			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Motif: <i>Kelarai Kepala Lalat</i>.</li> <li>• Motif inspiration: Symbol of a fly's head.</li> <li>• Deficient representation: Stylization form „eye“ of <i>Kepala Lalat</i>.</li> </ul>

*Siku Keluang* motif was imitated from fauna object. It is produced from observation of the Malays in the past towards a type of bat that wanders at night, and into the crevices of their roofs. They were imitated Allah's creation of nature as *Kelarai* motif. After that, Malays craftsmanship created new symbol or form to look different and new from the original nature. The letter "V" used as part of the imitation process. This process continued from generation to generation but the style and character of the original are still maintained.

In *Kepala Lalat* motif, Malay craftsmanship created the „eye“ at the centre of the weave. It is similar composition to the original form of *Kepala Lalat*. Then, the object invented into other style, known as stylization. Every pattern was stylized and arranged into a geometric form as harmony. This is because the Malay art is always associated with religious elements. In the Muslim faith, fauna patterns are prohibited from being used. These patterns have been stylized into new forms such as geometrical. Stylization process of *Kepala Lalat* motif involves elements of art such as line, shape, texture, value and color. A black color is the most important aspect to show the „eye“ of *Kepala Lalat* motif. Basically, Malay craftsmanship used black as dominant color to in bamboos woven strip. *Kelarai Kepala Lalat* or also known as Diamond weaves. This motif was used on the roof (*Tunjuk Langit*), wall and window (*Pagar Musang*).

Sample 2: Gemalai Village Resort.



Table 2: Identify the deficient representation of woven bamboo motifs and pattern on Gemalai Village Resort.

Part of Building	Image	Pattern	Motif Description
Roof			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Motif: <i>Kelarai Berhati</i>.</li> <li>• Motif inspiration: Human attitude.</li> <li>• Deficient representation: Abstract process.</li> </ul>
Wall			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Position: <i>Kepala Pintu</i>.</li> <li>• Motif: <i>Kelarai Berhati</i></li> </ul>
Window			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Position: <i>Kepala Tingkap</i> (top part of a window).</li> <li>• Motif: <i>Kelarai Berhati</i></li> </ul>

The selection of *Kelarai Berhati* motif on the decoration of the Malays building was to show the height of the manners and culture of the Malays. It's referred to the Malay culture that is very careful in nature. These features have been upholding the position of the Malays to continue to be respected. *Berhati* is the attitude of the Malays in their daily lives. This attitude is formed to always be careful not to make mistakes or sin. They make themselves good and do not do evil. In accordance with Islamic demands, make man do well and leave all the prohibitions.

*Kelarai Berhati* is categorized as abstract motif. The composition pattern was composed in unity. Then, repetition pattern can be seen to show abstract process. *Kelarai Berhati* means "careful" weaving by its weaver as extreme precautions were taken while weaving it. If there is any mistake or mishap, the whole weaving can be ruined. This part was manipulated more creatively. So that any results of their work will look attractive and very smooth. A human creativity difference depends on their experiences and skills.

6. CONCLUSION

Perfect and realistic images or figures are prohibited in Islam. Having them in Muslim homes is categorized sinful. This is to prevent Muslims from idolizing and admiring the images or figures created. Some of the designs are presented in their natural form which is known as naturalistic. There are also some other parts which are simplified and abstracted according to the suitability. This reflects the identity of Malays and also its aesthetic value of the art. However, these unique weaving designs are closely related to its originality [1]. Thus, the motif and creative designs of weaving prove the knowledge and skills of Malays in carpenter works.

The emphasis on meaning is the essence of real literature in Islam. The implications of the right language, is to explain the true meaning. This is because Islam rejects the concept of mimesis brought by Western perspective. Indeed, humans are not able to replicate any of God's creation. The concept of mimesis is based on the personal experiences of man skills, interests and influence of emotion which is at default. Western art is only prioritizing decorations and excitement. It is influenced by emotions and desires. The lusts culture of man will prevent them from knowing God. On the contrary, the concept of stylization is to interpret natural events and bridging human with God. Stylization is a portraying experience and knowledge through God's gift of nature. The artists are encouraged to think creatively and produce a work that is beautiful and meaningful.

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