ISLAMIC HERITAGE

LEADS THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE UMMAH

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Editors

Hasan Bahrom
S. Salahudin Suyurno
Abdul Qayuum Abdul Razak

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Prakata

Sejarah warisan Islam telah memberikan impak yang cukup besar kepada perkembangan dunia hari ini. Ia bukan sahaja memberi sumbangan kepada aspek kerohanian malah turut menyumbang kepada aspek ekonomi, politik, pendidikan, sosial, kesenian, kebudayaan. sains dan teknologi. Perkembangan ini memperlihatkan bahawa pentingnya ketamadunan ilmu kepada ketamadunan dunia. Perkara ini selaras dengan tuntutan al-Quran yang menyatakan dengan jelas bahawa Allah SWT memuji sesiapa yang berusaha menuntut ilmu dan juga bertaqwa kepadaNya. Namun sejak akhir-akhir ini, sumbangan hasil pensejarahan Islam sering dipandang sepi oleh generasi muda. Sejarah warisan Islam tidak lagi dijadikan panduan dan iktibar dalam melebarkan ketamadunan ilmu Islam. Mereka lebih tertumpu kepada ketamadunan Barat yang dikatakan 'kaya' dengan khazanah ilmu. Sedangkan kemajuan hari ini seharusnya berlandaskan kepada ketamadunan Islam.

Penelitian atau pengkajian mengenai warisan Islam perlu direncanakan sebagai ketamadunan dunia. Idea-idea baru mengenai sejarah warisan Islam perlu diketengahkan, Oleh yang demikian, menerusi *1st International Islamic Heritage Conference* (IsHeC 2015) dilihat akan dapat membantu kepada perkembangan produksi seterusnya menjana idea-idea baru khususnya untuk memperkayakan kajian dalam bidang sejarah warisan Islam kepada masyarakat. Dengan penganjuran seminar ini secara tidak langsung membantu untuk menjalinkan hubungan antara para sarjana dalam bidang sejarah warisan Islam. Ini adalah satu cabaran dan membuka peluang baru untuk membina satu perpaduan intelektual merentas sempadan dunia.

Buku ini merupakan kompilasi diskusi ilmu antara para ilmuan yang terlibat secara langsung dalam pembentangan kertas kerja mereka dalam *1st International Islamic Heritage Conference* (IsHeC 2015) daripada pelbagai platform ilmu Islam antaranya Kesenian, Ketamadunan, Komunikasi, Pendidikan, Kewangan, Sains dan Teknologi dan lain-lain lagi. Semoga curahan ilmu melalui penulisan ini mampu memberi sumbangan dalam menambah khazanah ilmu Islam kepada masyarakat.

Editor,
1st International Islamic Heritage Conference (IsHeC 2015),
Akademi Pengajian Islam Kontemporari,
UiTM Melaka.

Kata Aluan Rektor UiTM Melaka

Dengan Nama Allah Yang Maha Pemurah Lagi Maha Pengasih
Assalamu'alaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh
Segala puji bagi Allah, Tuhan seru sekalian alam, dengan limpah kurniaNya serta keizinanNya, kejayaan penganjuran *1st International Islamic Heritage Conference* 2015 yang berlangsung di Hotel Mahkota Melaka pada 11-12 November 2015, telah menghasilkan banyak kertas kerja yang amat bermutu. Justeru, buku ini mengumpulkan puluhan penulisan para ilmuan dan cendekiawan dari dalam dan luar negara untuk bacaan semua.
Pelbagai isu telah dikupas termasuklah perihal seni Islam, budaya, politik, gendar, pendidikan, sejarah, kemasyarakatan, sains dan teknologi, ekonomi, kewangan, falsafah, bahasa dan komunikasi, kedermawanan dan pengurusan. Pembaca juga akan mendapati buku ini memuatkan kajian-kajian yang komited melaksanakan usaha mengintegrasikan antara ilmu duniawi dan ukhrawi. Ini membuktikan kesegaran keilmuan tamadun Islam itu sendiri.
Semoga perkongsian ilmu ini dapat meningkatkan komitmen umat dalam memartabatkan perintah Ilahi dalam kehidupan duniawi sebagai jambatan ukhrawi. Sekaligus ia bakal memberi manfaat pada alam sejagat.
Pihak UiTM Melaka merakamkan setinggi-tinggi tahniah dan ucapan terima kasih atas segala sokongan dalam bentuk material, tenaga dan sebagainya dalam merialisasikan seminar ini. Buat semua penaja yang telah memberikan sumbangan kepada wacana ini, sekalung penghargaan diucapkan. Semoga seminar dwi tahunan ini akan terus diperkasakan demi mengangkat martabat umat melalui kecemerlangan tamadun Islam yang diakui telah terbukti diseluruh jagat.

Sekian, terima kasih. Wassalam

PROF. MADYA DR MOHD ADNAN BIN HASHIM
Rektor ,
UiTM Melaka.

KUFI LARI': THE HYBRID OF KHAT KUFI TO UPHOLD THE MALAYS' IDENTITY IN DIGITAL ART APPLICATION

Mohd Amin Bin Mohd Noh[56]
Mohd Fauzi Bin Harun
Nik Narimah Bt Nik Abdullah
Zaharah Bt Hj. Ramli
Nor Fariza Bt Baharuddin

ABSTRACT

Islamic calligraphy is known as Khat was first introduced by the Arabs. There is a variety of Khat including the Kufi, Tuluth and Nasakh. Each types of Khat has its own identity based on several influences such as ornamentals from flora and others nature elements. The influences of Arabic and Islamic pattern are widely spread and implemented in most of the Malays' culture from centuries ago. The identical influences can be found on wood carving especially from the Malays' traditional houses and palaces. However, with the development and the evolving of technologies as well as in today's digital era, there is little effort to uphold the heritage of the Malays' culture. There are signs of abandonment on several traditional art creation techniques on the most profound artifacts. It would be a great loss for Malays heritage if there is no positive measures are taken to prevent it from extinct. Therefore, the initiative to combine the traditional wood carving motif which is "Awan Larat" and "Larik"; a polishing process in wood carving and with the development and improvement of Kufi Fatimi has resulted in a new hybrid of Khat Kufi known as Kufi Lari'. This study has conducted a pre-post design process of the Kufi Lari' and it was tested with the application of digital art. Besides that, the collections of data were gathered from a focus group among the academicians and practitioners in the field of graphic design. The results have revealed that Kufi Lari' in general has an aesthetic value with the influence of ornamentals element even though there is a confusion to identify specifically if the Malays' identity was embedded based on the ornamentals elements due to the close similarities that has been shown between the Malays' identity with the Arabic and Islamic influences. Other than that, the use of Kufi Lari' in the banner used for the International Al-Quran Recital Competition can clearly justify the high readability and legibility of Kufi Lari' compared to the use of Kufi Muwarraq and Kufi Muzahhar. Ideally, Kufi Lari' is created objectively to inject the appreciation of the Malays' traditional wood carving technique (Larik) and Awan Larat motif used in calligraphy with the intention that it can be widely used as art decoration for buildings and environments or delivering message with the application of digital art such as poster, displays and banners.

Keywords – Kufi Lari', Calligraphy, Wood Carving

INTRODUCTION

Art exists in the form of literature, music, writing, sculpture, and architecture [1]. Islam not only allows art that comes with a variety of ways, but it encourages the development of arts itself. Islamic calligraphy that was introduced by the Arabs is the primary and has the most pervasive element in Islamic art and it is a culture that symbolizes beauty, unity and purity. This paper looks into the Arabic calligraphy that reflects the beauty of Islam itself. It possesses high aesthetical value when it is decorated with various types of calligraphy such as Kufi, Naskh, Riq'ah, or Tuluth. The beauty of

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the Islamic calligraphy is not only recorded on paper for writing the Al-Quran, books and letters but also on fabric, leather, metal, pottery, glass, stone, wood and pulpit. Besides that, calligraphy is also recorded in the form of embroidery, weaving and painting [2].

Here, the expansion of Islam throughout the world brings together the cultures including the writing system within the archipelago [3]. The Jawi writing system was once the solely instrument in the Malays' written language until the European and British colonization has introduced the Rumi words and since then it has been widely used [4]. The development of the Malays' culture, religion and language are influenced from the Arab civilization [5]. Basically, Jawi script in the Malay writing system was derived from the Arabic characters which has replaced the Hindu writing system with an introduction of several characters to suit the phonology of the Malay language such as 'Cha', 'Ya' and 'Nga [1]. The introduction of Arabic letters was called as Jawi is a part of the writing development in the Archipelago, hence the influences of Islamic calligraphy has then improved the uniqueness of this written form towards the writing system.

Nevertheless, Khat has been applied in wood carving for architectures such as towards houses, mosque and palaces. It has been proven that the development of Islamic art did undergo several changes to suit the places and cultures [6]. The implementation of Khat remains until today particularly in traditional houses and mosque. In fact in the modern era, Khat is widely used for books publication, corporate design and displays. Nowadays, the publics' choice of calligraphy is the Kufi Murabba. The design looks neat, in a form of geometric and it coincides with the current trends of a flat design resemblance. It is widely used for wall decoration and logos pioneered by the FoKS (Friends of Kufi Square) community [7]. Therefore, this study observes the use of Kufi in digital art application especially for the design of banners in conjunctions with the Islamic events such as The International Al-Quran Recital Competition. This study also involves interview sessions on a focus group and running a design testing to compare the hybrid design of Kufi Lari' to Kufi Muwarraq and Kufi Muzahhar applications used on banners in terms of readability, legibility, motif and pattern, and its implementation. The design objectives for Kufi Lari' is obviously to expand the variety of Khat Kufi with the influences of the Malays' identity and the motif embedded in it.

Thus, in this era, with the use of fast wireless technology and a widely acceptance of graphic design applications among the youth, the introduction of a new Khat known as Kufi Lari' in the digital art application is a way to offer a variety of Khat for the purpose of designs alongside to promote the use of Islamic calligraphy in digital art. The focus of Kufi Lari' is not merely for digital media purposes. It can even be used in printed materials such as for art decoration, wall design and corporate design.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Calligraphy is the art of a linear graphic, restructuring one's visualization of a language and its topography. Islamic calligraphy or known as Khat comes in different meanings such as a line or beautiful writing in Arab. It is the most revered form of an artistic expression in the Islamic world [8]. Khat has been closely associated through the act of writing the Al-Quran - the word of God revealed in a series of revelations to the Prophet Muhammad. It was recorded and given visual form; composed solely of letters of an alphabet [9]. The use of calligraphy as a medium of missionary and documentation (Al-Quran writing) has been developed with the progression of Islam [10]. Kufi was then created as the first calligraphy and it has been used in Al-Quran before it was replaced by another form of calligraphy known as "Naskh". This beautiful writing method gives a high aesthetic value on the writing style especially in delivering the message from Allah.

The study shows that calligraphy is one of the most practiced cultures, a medium that was born from religion and social obligations. These days, this form of art is

practiced and understood by people from many different countries and cultures [1]. The Islamic calligraphic is the best word to be used as it has been adapted to suit various races and culture that has been influenced by Islam [6]. In addition, it is one of the means of information and has a valuable branch of aesthetic value, which indicates the evolving process of the Arab calligraphy that was adapted to changes without losing its characteristic and its Islamic value. Similarly with the Jawi writing system, it is Malays' identity and it is related to the religion, or Islam to be exact [2]. The adaptation of the people in the archipelago can be seen in the Arabic letters, the Jawi writing, and also looking into the effect of the Arabic calligraphy. It has been used widely in the region since then such as for the government official documents and letters as well as architecture.

The relationships between the Arabic, Islam and Malays elements not only occurred in the use of calligraphy but also existed in the Malays' architecture. The Malays' architecture was prominently known with the art of woodcarving and one of its popular motifs is "Awan Larat". It is one of the productions among works of art that has dominated the Malays' carving. It is an art that reflects reaction and character of ideas, cultures and civilizations [11]. Moreover, the philosophy of carving itself is often accompanied by the Islamic values such as "Awan Larat" that gives meaning in terms of courtesy and manners in the Malay community. This motif also symbolizes the nature of Allah which is infinity. Whether it is Islamic calligraphy or the Malays' woodcarving, both are embroidered with the Islamic value that indicates the Malay culture and civilization [12].

However, the application of Khat and wood carving has been isolated and was rarely seen around us anymore unless it appears on several occasions or places such as in some of the Islamic events that has taken place or in certain buildings. This study is to focus on the application of those elements in a single design for a different platform; in digital art. This is to show that, the design of Khat Lari' has contributed to the longevity of calligraphy and in the Malay architecture elements (Awan Larat and Larik carvings) besides to promote the variety of Khat for design purposes.

METHODOLOGY

Figure 1 indicates that the study has been conducted with the use of a pre-post research and the design process of Kufi Lari' whereas in the pre-design process, observation method was used to look into the current trends of digital art which is the design of banners especially used for The International Al-Quran Recital Competition. Direct observation was to record the types of Khat used to design banners or to look at if there were different types of Khat used in each year or otherwise. This method also shows that all information gathered are direct, besides using a simple application. The validation of the data can be evaluated from the functions indicated by the use of Khat and its implementation can disclose if it has influence the Malays' identity or otherwise [13]. A descriptive survey is also applied in this study with the purpose to collect the professional feedback among academicians and practitioners in the field of graphic design concerning this matter. Informal conversations and interview session are also conducted to generate the information needed.

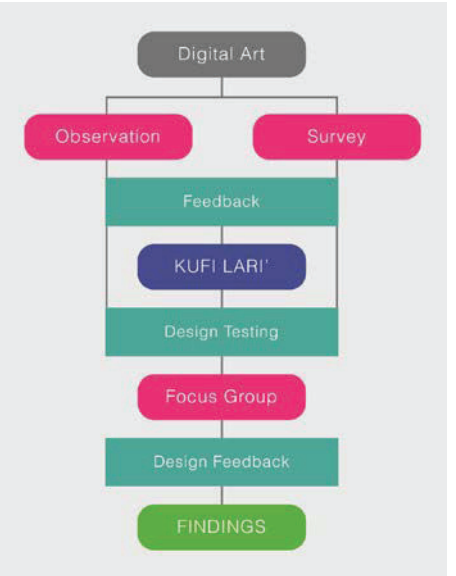

Figure 1: Pre-post Research Model.

Once all information is obtained and gathered, the design development of Kufi Lari' is then conducted as given in Figure 2. Kufi Lari' was originally developed from Kufi Fatimi and it has been combined with the use of traditional motifs and patterns of wood carving which is the Larik carving and the Awan Larat motif before going through the process of designing. The motif and pattern of those Larik carving and Awan Larat were then implemented on specific areas with the Khat characters to add-up to the aesthetical values of the Malays' identity. The design process was carefully developed to ensure that the characteristics of calligraphy letters are still easily identified.

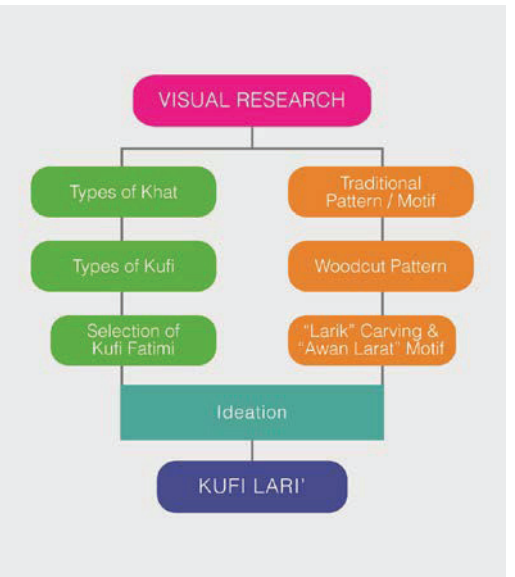

Figure 2: Design Process of Kufi Lari'.

Furthermore, this study also uses the survey method. It is a system for collecting information to describe, compare or explain knowledge, attitudes and behaviors. It is divided into two broad categories: descriptive and analytical research. This research applies a descriptive survey method to seek point of views and comments from two different categories of respondents: the academicians and practitioners in the field of graphic design. Informal conversational interviews are conducted to obtain relevant information on the use of Arabic calligraphic; Khat. This method relies on the spontaneous types of questions as in the interview sessions. While carrying out a survey, interviews were conducted with the academicians to observe this particular respondents' knowledge in terms of typography and calligraphy especially in Khat. A part from that, the designers who are also practitioners in the field of graphic design substantiate by providing information on the application of Khat in the form of digital art for commercial purposes. Various views were given by the respondents based on the existing of Khat and its application. All the knowledge and suggestions are recorded for compilation.

Interview session is the most logical research technique and it involves conversation between the respondents and researchers. There are several different types of interview and this can be achieved depending on the aims and objectives of the research. In this study, during the post design process of Kufi Lari', the approach of having interview sessions has been applied on selected focus group to identify the appropriateness of Kufi Lari on the design of the banner used for The International Al-Quran Recital Competition. In this stage, a design testing of the banner design has produced three exact designs but with a different implementation of Kufi Khat which are; Kufi Lari', Kufi Muwarraq and Kufi Muzahhar. These two types of Kufi (Muwarraq and Muzahhar) were chosen rather than Kufi Lari'. This is because of the similar characteristics; the influences of decorative and ornamentals elements were subjected more to the uses of Muwarraq and Muzahhar. To complete this research, questions prepared for the interview sessions are parallel to the objectives of this study. Semi-structured interviews are non-standardized and are often applied in qualitative analysis [14]. This has proven to be suitable for this study. The duration of the interview session for this study has taken about 90 minutes and it was located at UiTM Melaka with 10 respondents involved. The respondents involved in this focus group are from various background and experiences but they all have a similar criteria which is they do have the knowledge of Jawi or are well versed in Arabic calligraphy. The set of open–ended question are given to respondents based on the existing Khat and to find the types of Khat that is suitable to apply in digital art and the effectiveness of each types of Khat. In this session, the respondents are given questions based on a design proposal to find solutions that is the main concern for this study. Four stages of open-ended questions were implemented in this interview to identify the types of Khat; the comparison between the existing Khats with the Kufi Lari'. The comparison shows focus on the aesthetic values, readability, legibility and the implementation of Khat in the application of digital art.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Three banner designs were involved in this study from each year of the event of The International Al-Quran Recital Competition were held. Based on the observation, most of the designs used various types of Khat including the Kufi, Tuluth and Nasakh. There were no preferences in choosing the types of Khat because of the dominant use of Roman types for the banner especially to deliver the importance of the information and the appropriate messages regarding this event. In the year of 2014, the banner design has used Khat Kufi and Nasakh, while in the year of 2013, Khat Nasakh and Khat Tuluth were used. Besides that, in the year of 2012 only Khat Tuluth has been used. Most of the words and sentences that were using these types of Khat were from Arabic language. This is due to the

fact that the contestants and audiences of this event were dominantly from the Middle East countries and a majority of them were fluent in the Arabic language. Various elements that were implemented in the banner include the arabesque pattern and ornamentals decorative. It suits the design concept of the banner in conjunction to this Islamic event.

Aesthetic Values

In addition, based on the interview sessions with the focus group regarding the banner design that includes Kufi Muwarraq, Kufi Muzahhar and Kufi Lari', most of the academicians mentioned that the application of these three Khat Kufi can contribute to the aesthetic values within the ornamentals decorative in the Malays' culture. However, none of these types of Kufi is strong enough for the academicians to agree that it portrays the true Malays' identity. Similar opinions were shared by the practitioners' perspective regarding the ambiguity between the Malays and the Arabic's identity. The study shows similar influences from the flora and ornamentals elements amongst these three types of Kufi. Whereas the connection and similarity of aesthetic values within these three Kufi are related to each other because of the Islamic and the Arabic elements were seen as the major influences in the early development of the Malays' identity centuries ago. Kufi Muzahhar was developed based on the leaf motif, whereas Kufi Muwarraq was developed based on the flower motif while the design of Kufi Lari' is a combinations of the Malays' carving motifs called Awan Larat. Thus, the name 'Lari' was taken from the word Larik (polishing process in carving). Terefore, academicians and practitioners have agreed that Kufi Lari' has an aesthetic value with the implementation of Awan Larat motif even though the Malays' identity were a bit blurry at that moment of time compared to the Islamic and Arabic's identity that was clearly shown on Kufi Muwarraq and Kufi Muzahhar.

Readability and Legibility

Most of participants in the focus group agreed and were convinced that Kufi Lari' has more advantages in terms of readability based on the decorative implementation that appeared simpler, easier to recognize and higher to recall compared to Kufi Muwarraq and Kufi Muzahhar. Kufi Lari' is easier to recognize without the use of too complicated motifs and decorations on its characters. This contributes to the neatness of Kufi Lari' as compared to Khat Kufi in terms of appropriateness to be used in the application of digital art due to its' simpler yet decorative characters.

Implementation as Digital Art

Moreover, most practitioners agreed the application of Khat Kufi is more suitable for any digital art based on its functions. Kufi is suitable and most appropriate to be used in terms of delivering information in the form of digital art that requires the characteristics to be read easier and the arrangement is suitable for the target audiences. However, if Kufi were intentionally applied for art decoration, then there will be no arguments from these academicians and practitioners. Therefore, the academicians and practitioners believed that Kufi Lari' is useful to be applied in digital art nonetheless to deliver clear messages or as art decoration. The introduction of Kufi Lari' has enriched the variety of Kufi Khat besides its contribution to prolong the influence of the Malays' identity in the decorative and ornamentals elements ranging from the traditional ways of wood carving to the current trend in digital art.

CONCLUSION

There are ten types of Khat in the Arabic version of calligraphy. Each type has its own uniqueness and characteristics. At times, there were similarities between several types of Khat that might confuse the participants to identify them. Therefore, it is important of

each developed Khat to ensure that they are easily recognizable and relatively easy to read without any hassle. The implementation of the Malays' identity based on the "Larik" carving and "Awan Larat" pattern is ambiguous to the readers because of the similarities between the Arabic, the Islamic and the Malay elements that have existed for centuries. The lack of knowledge among participants regarding the form of Awan Larat pattern and Larik carving caused them to fail to identify the differences between Khat Lari', Kufi Muwarraq and Kufi Muzahhar. However, the participants agreed that Khat Lari' is easier to read compared to the others because of its simpler ornamentals pattern. Because of its higher readability and recognition level compared to other similar Khat characteristics, Kufi Lari' has the potential to be used in signpost to symbolize the Malays' identity rather than to be replaced by Roman characteristics because of the limited understanding among the public in Malaysia to read and to understand Jawi or the Arabic language.

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