

Woodcarving Motifs of Verandah and Covered Porch at Melaka Traditional Houses

Farah Wahidah Gazali, Arba'iyah binti Ab. Aziz, Norwani Md Nawawi

Faculty of Art & Design, Universiti Teknologi MARA, 40450 Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia

arbaiyah@uitm.edu.my, norwani178@uitm.edu.my

Abstract — Woodcarving is a traditional significant art to the Malay architecture in Malaysia. Malay traditional houses becomes a symbol of ancient craftsmanship skills which having beautiful architecture and richness of ornamentation. Nowadays, traditional houses at Melaka become hard to find. The documentation of knowledge about woodcarving motifs should be made and exposed to younger generations as well as a valuable collection of traditional Malay heritage. The structure of Melaka houses is made up of covered porch, verandah, the main house, the central section and the kitchen. This paper intends to focus more detail about woodcarving at verandah and covered porch at entrance of the house. The houses have been selecting are Rumah Yusof Awal, Rumah Hashim Tahar, Rumah Wahab Arshad and Rumah Demang Ghani. This research uses qualitative method as a way to understand motif of woodcarving at Melaka traditional houses. Data collection of motifs will be depending at field studies at houses through photography and sketches on site. This research also will use theory Zakaria Ali to interpret and analyzing of woodcarvings motifs. In design perspective, the findings would serve in understanding the visual attributes of woodcarving such as motifs and design forms. The paper would fill in the gap of new knowledge regarding the motif woodcarving at Melaka traditional houses.

Keywords - Melaka Traditional Houses; Woodcarving; Motif; Verandah; Covered Porch

1. Introduction

Woodcarving is a traditional significant art in the Malay architecture. The main features of this ornamental are motifs, composition and carving techniques and several of value of the carver such as patience, technical skills and creativity. Traditional woodcarving having elements such as pattern, principles, composition of motif and carving techniques. According to Noordin, N. 2005, woodcarving is an art work formed according to a specific composition of motif coordinated by specified organizational principles and usually produced for beauty. In woodcarving, motif is decorative elements and the main categories using are flora, fauna, geometry, calligraphy, cosmic and mystical. Motif having early influences by Hindu-Buddhism, Malay Langkasuka, Dong-Son and the arrival of Islam. After the arrival of Islam, fauna motif becoming obsolete and the form of animals were highly stylized. Motif of living things which had previously been important began to change to plant motifs in stylized forms and also carving on Islamic calligraphy (Nasir A.H, 1986). The major motifs used by Malay woodcarvers include the floral motif, the geometric motif and calligraphy (Hanafi, Z, 2000). Motif can be carving in two or three dimensions and arranged by pattern. This motif in woodcarving contains own meaning and philosophy during their era. Malay woodcarving can be seen in traditional houses and palaces. Malay traditional houses becomes a symbol of ancient craftsmanship skills. Nowadays, traditional houses at Melaka still can be found in Malacca. This heritage need to preserve for young generation to know the origin and uniqueness tradition in Melaka. As stated in Star Newspaper 2009, "It is important for us to gazette the areas as heritage villages before they disappear in the future due to development," said the Chief Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Ali Rustam to reporters. Besides, the motifs are hand drawn and only the owner will know how to pattern it. Knowledge and skill about woodcarving motifs should be documentation and has to preserve and sustain especially in this urbanisation era. This paper intends to focus more detail about woodcarving at verandah and covered porch at entrance of the house. The houses have been selecting are Rumah Yusof Awal, Rumah Hashim Tahar, Rumah Wahab Arshad and Rumah Demang Ghani. The research would fill in the gap of new knowledge regarding the motifs of woodcarving at Melaka traditional houses. Furthermore, this knowledge can be gives better appreciation of Melaka traditional houses by the present and future generation.

2. Melaka Traditional Houses

High quality Malay woodcarving can be seen in traditional houses and palaces. Malay traditional houses becomes a symbol of ancient craftsmanship skills. The beauty of this architecture also a reflection design of Melaka Sultanate palace in the 15th century. According to Sumarjan, N., Mohd, Z. M. S., Mohd, R. S., Zurinawati, M., Mohd, H. M. H., Saiful, B. M. F, & Hanafiah, M. (2013), the Melaka traditional Malay houses, also called long- roofed Melaka house can be found in all districts in Melaka, which were built with special architectural styles. The structure of Melaka houses is made up of covered porch, verandah, the main house, the central section and the kitchen.

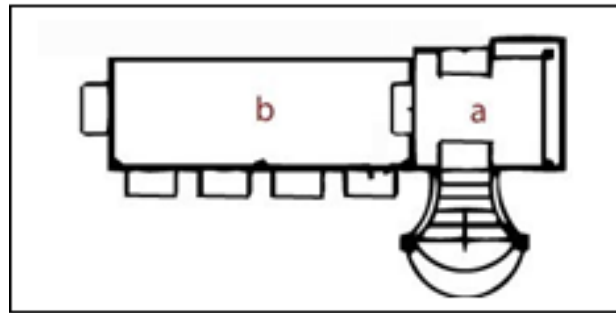


Figure 1.(a) Covered Porch – Anjung; (b) Verandah- Serambi

A typical traditional Melaka house stands on 12 to 16 main pillars. Many of the traditional homes in Melaka were built using the best timber and often they stood on pillars, have high floor and gable roof, and a front staircase adorned with colorful tiles Abidin, W.B. (1981). The arrival of European, China and India trader during 14th century affecting the architecture, local motives and carving.

2.1 Covered Porch

Front zone of the covered porch (anjung) and verandah (serambi) serves as a formal space and usually using as the main entrance for male guests. Male guests are invited to the house through the area for formal purpose. It became place for a gathering, ceremonial ritual, entertain guests and social activities.

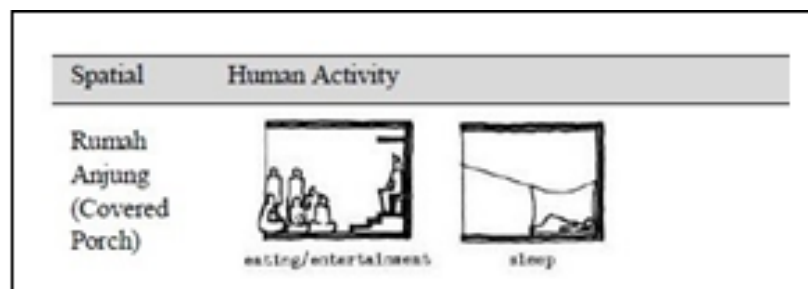


Figure 2.Covered Porch – Anjung Activities Sources: Abidin, (1981)

2.2 Verandah

The verandah (serambi) is a space for reception and entertainment activities. Verandah is place to entertain guest, formal meeting and discussion area, rest area, feasting place and sleeping area during the night. In verandah , ceremonies such as wedding also took place with the men sitting on woven mats on the floor. Verandah also serves as prayer area and study area for the children to reciting Koran and learn how to pray.

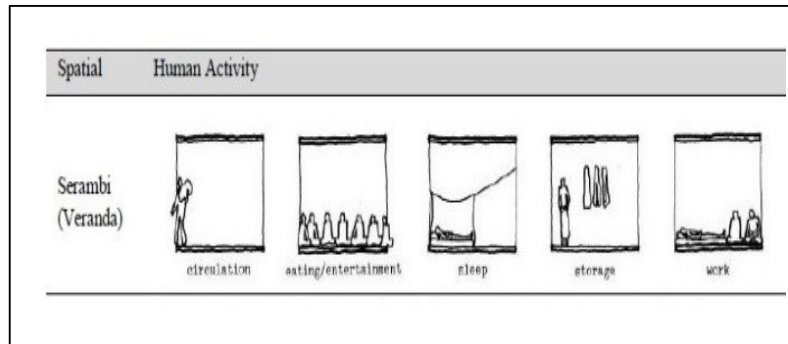


Figure 3. Verandah– Serambi Activities Sources: Abidin, (1981)

3. Research Methodology

This research uses qualitative method as a way to understand motif of woodcarving at Melaka traditional houses. Data collection of motifs will be depending at field studies at houses through photography and sketches on site. This paper will follow the flow chart as illustrated in figure 3. The flowchart below explains the workflow of the process which involved observation and categorizing motifs.

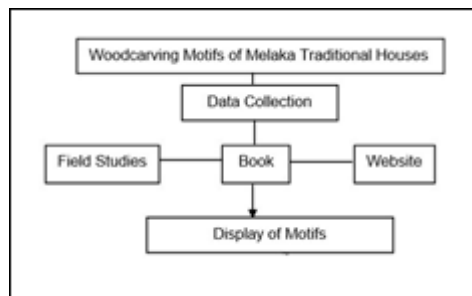


Figure 4. Flowchart of Methodology.

This research also will use theory Zakaria Ali to interpret and analyzing of woodcarving motifs. Theory of Malay Aesthetic by Zakaria Ali will understanding the influence, the symbol and the purpose using five principles. In design perspective, the findings serve in understanding the visual attributes of woodcarving such as motifs and design forms.

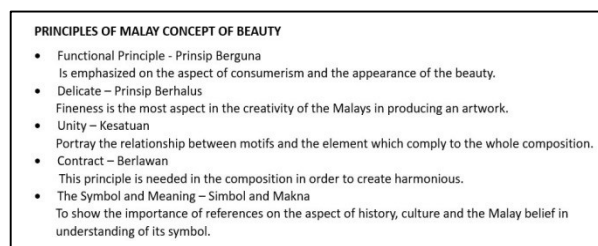


Figure 5. Theory of Malay Aesthetic by Zakaria Ali (1989)

4. Research Finding: Woodcarving Motifs on Verandah and Covered Porch

Motif means repetition of decorative design or pattern. A basic pattern or motif is repeated and adjusted according to the position in which the carving is done. ‘Motif dalam seni ukiran kayu dimaksudkan dengan sesuatu perhiasan yang diukir dalam dua atau tiga dimensi, kemudian disusun dan digubah menjadi pola atau corak hiasan tertentu’ Othman, (2000) and Zakaria, (1989). In woodcarving, motif is decorative elements and the main categories using are flora, fauna, geometry, calligraphy, cosmic and mystical.

4.1 Rumah Penghulu Abdul Ghani, Merlimau



Figure 6. Oldest Malacca House

The figure 6 above indicate the House of Penghulu Abdul Ghani bin Abdul Majid in Merlimau, Jasin, is among the oldest Malacca House. It has a very unique architecture with a mix of Malay, Chinese and European architectural styles. This house was built in 1864 by some Chinese craftsmen. There is a unique pair of doors decorated with two dragon racing between the verandah and the porch. In addition, the flora and bird motifs on door head and windows that are rarely found in native Malay houses highlight the traditional Chinese Peranakan craftsmanship as shown in figure 7 below.






Verandah (Serambi)	Category
	Motif Flora Geometry - Framing Pattern
	Flora Motif - Framing Pattern
	Flora Motif - Single Pattern
	Flora Motif - Complete Pattern
	Motif Flora Font - Framing Pattern











Figure 7. Flora and bird motifs on door head and windows

4.2 Rumah Hashim Tahar, Padang Sebang



Figure 8. A Malay traditional house

According to the owner of the house Mr. Hj. Hashim in Tahar, this traditional house is over 100 years old. There are various carvings that can be seen in this traditional house. This Traditional Malay House is more focusing on the complete pattern of engraving technique. This shape emphasizes the elements of the plant including roots, stems, fruits, branches and leaves as shown in figure 8 and figure 9.

Verandah (Serambi)		Category
		Flora
		Flora
		Flora Fruits
		Flora
		Flora











Covered Porch (Anjung)		Category
		Geometry
		Geometry
		Flora Geometry
		Geometry
		Flora

Figure 9. Shape and pattern of the said Malay house

4.3 Rumah Yusof bin Awal, Yasin

This house is owned by the former Kampung Rim village chief, Yusof Awal and this house is almost 80 years old. The uniqueness of this traditional home architecture built in the Malay-style heritage design with features such as long roof roofs, tile-coated stone stairs and wood carvings, especially in the unique porch including flora and geometric shapes.

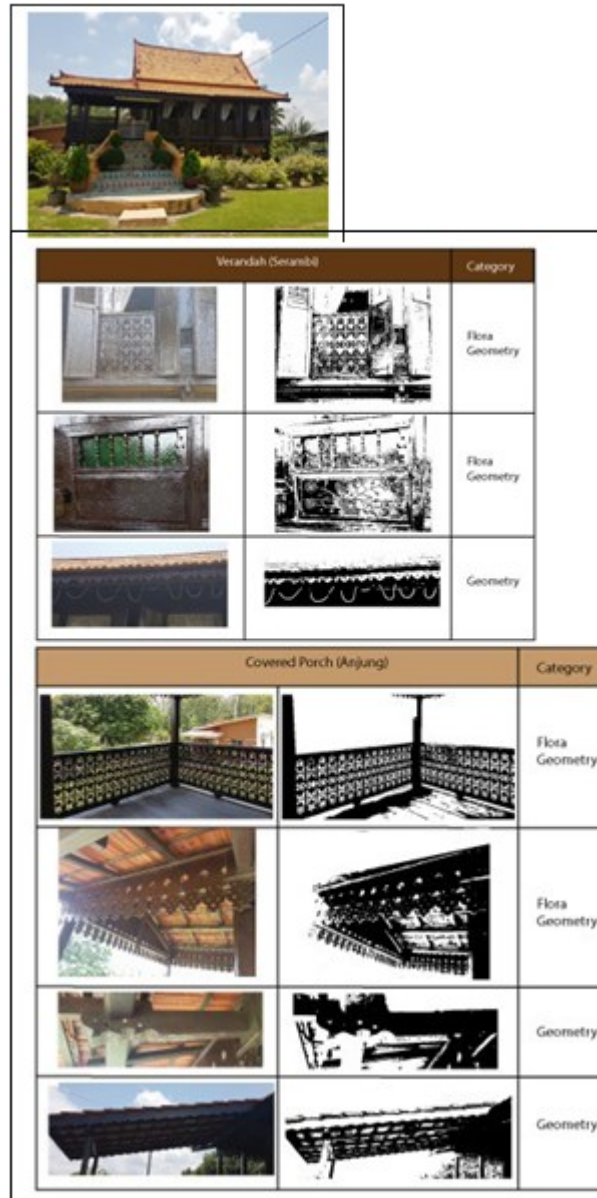


Figure 10. A Malay house with a heritage design

4.4 Rumah Wahab Arshad, Padang Sebang

The Wahad Arshad Heritage House was built around the year 1924. Uniqueness of the heritage Wahab Arshad house is for displaying original carvings and still maintaining the Malay tradition. Otherwise, this heritage house also has a special verandah for guests who come as well as places for families with leisure figure 11.



Figure 11. A Malay traditional house with original carvings

5 Conclusion

This paper present mixture motifs of woodcarving which coming in many influences from arrival of European, Middle East, China, and Indonesia trader during 14th century at Melaka. Influence of woodcarving motifs also comes from the surroundings of nature element and religious belief of Malay woodcarver itself. Motif of woodcarving can be found from covered porch and verandah of the house and motif categories by flora, fauna and geometry. This research fills a gap of new knowledge regarding motifs of woodcarving at Melaka traditional houses.

References

- Noordin, N. (2005). Mengekalkan Motif Ukiran Kayu Tradisi Masa Kini (Contemporary Application of Traditional Woodcarving Motif). In Proceedings of the International Seminar Spirit and form of Malay Heritage.
- Nasir, A. H. (1986). Ukiran kayu Melayu tradisi. Dewan Bahasa & Pustaka.
- Hanafi, Z. (2000). Pola-pola hiasan di dalam bangunan tradisional Melayu. Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
- The Star.,2009. State to preserve village houses, Retrieved April 3, 2017 from: <http://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2009/12/20/state-to-preserve-village-houses/>.
- Sumarjan, N., Mohd, Z. M. S., Mohd, R. S., Zurinawati, M., Mohd, H. M. H., Saiful, B. M. F., ... & Hanafiah, M. (2013). Hospitality and tourism: synergizing creativity and innovation in research. Crc Press.
- Othman, Y. (2000). Mengukir Kegemilangan Lalu: Biografi Wan Su Othman Penerima Anugerah Seri Negara Kuala Lumpur 1997.
- Abidin, W.B. (1981). The Malay House: Rationale and Change (Master Thesis). M.I.T., Massachusetts. Cambridge.
- Zakaria, A. (1989). Seni dan seniman: esei-esei seni halus. Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia.