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INTRODUCTION

ARTE: Art and Expression is a biannual book chapter, published under collaboration of Department of Fine Arts, Faculty of Art & Design, UiTM Perak Branch with Galeri Al-Biruni under the supervision of Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia. 'ARTE' is an amalgamation of english word 'Art', and malay word, specifically Perak slang 'Ate' which translate as conversation starter. 'ARTE' uses the concept of book chapter that platform art enthusiasts to express their inner-creativity in the form of literacy conjecture

VISION

Art and expression as aspiration towards stylistic and artistic practices

MISSION

- To enhance the culture of research and academic publication among academician and artist for international recognition
- To promote intellectual, cultural and knowledge sharing through artistic expression
- To celebrate the diversity and differences in arts practices thus creating and intellectual platform for artist to express their interest in art

PUBLICATION FREQUENCY

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CHAPTER 8

ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHICAL IN MALAY ART AND CREATIVITIES

Nurul Huda Mohd Din

Mumtaz Mokhtar

Wan Samiati Andriana Wan Muhammad Daud

Syafri Amir Muhammd

Abstract

The Islamic philosophical in Malay art and creativities had been divided into two main section. Firstly the advent of Islam and its impact to Malay culture, and secondly, an enrichment of decorative arts from the Malay society. The Malay archipelago already developed a distinct culture of their own. The dominant feature of the culture was the animistic element. Later, the advent of Islam in 13th century, the Malay world view underwent a major shift from being primarily mythological animistic to being more rational and philosophical especially in aspect of nature. A brief cultural survey of the peninsula in the middle of the 19th century would have shown that the full of traditional Malay decorative arts, inherited from Malay kingdom, later the development of Islamic education greatly accelerated through the role of its rulers who were very fond of learning. Therefore, from the spirit of Islam, efforts from royal patronage, trading system, inspiring from nature and material arts which stressed on the love for nature and the guidance for man to seek beauty in the natural world which God has created, further reinforced the beliefs of the craftsman and spread the purpose and meaning of the arts.

Keywords: Islamic philosophy, Malay art, decoration, Malay culture

8.0 Introduction

This chapter is about the approaching of Islamic manifestation and intellectualizing towards Malay practices of daily life and culture. The discussion has been divided into two main sections. Firstly the advent of Islam and its impact to Malay culture, and secondly, an enrichment of decorative arts from the Malay society. The Malay archipelago already developed a distinct culture of their own. The dominant feature of the culture was the animistic element which derived from the Neolithic and Dongson culture. Later, the advent of Islam in the 13th century, the Malay world view underwent a major shift from being primarily mythological animistic to being more rational and philosophical in nature. This element of nature and mostly known as vegetal can be seen clearly in Malay decorative art, such as woodwork, metalwork, textiles and art of books.

8.1 Malay world regions

According to Haziyah Hussin (2006), the Malay word described from several aspects such as the definition of the Malays, the Malay culture, history and civilization of the Malay community that includes prehistoric times, relations with the outside world and the Malay archipelago. Finally the concept of Malay could not be separated from faith and religion they profess, which also affects lifestyle or their customs. Islam is also the starting point is calculated to be the focus and the principle of life that affect the production of crafts Malay. Malay world is an area stretching from Sumatra in the west to the Spice Islands in the east, and from the island of Java in the south to the plains of Cambodia at the top of the peninsula of Indo-China in the north, known as the Malay world, or sometimes called as the archipelago, or popularly known as the archipelago world. (Mohd Taib Osman, 1997)

The word Malay become scholars debate about its origins. Academically, first Malay word recorded by Chinese historians on 644M the call as Mo-lo-yue. Some scholars claim that it comes from the word Himalayas which is a snowy place, but more people agree it comes from the Javanese word, Melayu which means running or traveling, referring to the human movement from Yunnan to the archipelago thousands of years ago. (Mohd Fadli Ghani, 2018). The term Malay is defined as the Austronesia people who live in the Malay Peninsula and throughout the Malay Archipelago. This refers to the Malays in Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines to Madagascar. More generally, it can be said to refer to the people who speak the Malay language, have a Malay culture and live in the Malay Peninsula and Archipelago.

According to Salazar (1989), the word Malay is often referred to as Malay Archipelago (Kepulauan Melayu), which includes the archipelago in Southeast Asia. The word Melayu is also referred to as ethnic Malays or Sumatran Malays and the Malay Peninsula and other places where Malay speakers are spoken. Malay is associated with matters such as the economic, political and cultural systems. From the economic sector, Malay-Polynesians have practiced agricultural and fishery traditions that are still enduring to this day. This kind of tradition has given birth to a system of court culture society that is associated with high artistic values. (Wan Hashim, 1991). Meanwhile, Deutro Malay is a Malay who lives in harmony with Proto Malay and is a nation that gave birth to

a mature Malay. (Winstedt, 1966). He explained that at the end of the 19th century, the Malay population was a mixture of state and merchant children who were referred to as a Deutro Malay ethnic who inhabited the Malay Peninsula.

8.2 The advent of Islam and its impact to Malay culture

Malay Archipelago had already developed a distinct culture of their own. The dominant feature of this culture was the animistic elements derived from the Neolithic and Dongson culture. Archaeological findings have provided evidence of the practices and rituals performed by these early communities and the type of artefacts which were used in these rites. During the Palaeolithic Age, several artefacts of the Tampan Culture found in Perak which quite similar to the finds in the Niah Caves in Sarawak. The most interesting artefacts of the Bronze Age was the nekara (royal kettle drum), a drum-type instrument almost resembling a gendering (war drum) or rebana (drum) with a waist in the middle of it while the upper end was enclosed. (Figure 38)

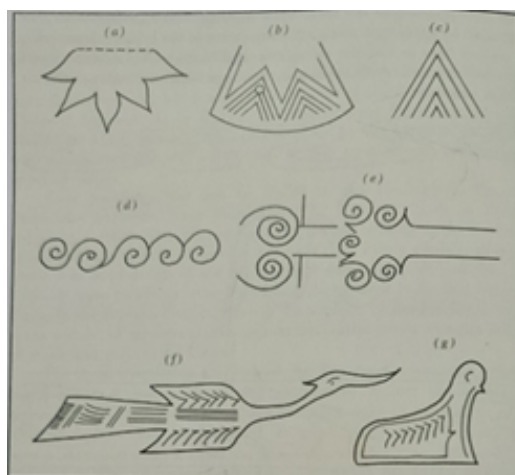


Figure 38: Geometric pattern from Dongson period. a. Star motif, b. Star with stylised bamboo shoot motif, c. Stylised bamboo shoot motif or conical shape, d. 'S' in repetitive style, e. 'S' in combination of line pattern, f. Bird, g. Animal. (Raja Fuziah Raja Tun Uda and Abdul Rahman Al-Ahmadi, 1997)

The arrival of Islam to the Malay world is a starting point that is thought to be the most important in the cultural history of the Malay people. Islam is a religion that is accepted by the Malays. According to Mohd Taib Osman (1989), Islam is an important religion in the assimilation of different groups in Malay society. This means that something that has Islamic values will be accepted by the Malay community as a guideline or principle of life without hesitation. According to D'zul Haimi Md Zain (2007), generally three major theories about the arrival of Islam in Southeast Asia. First, Islam came directly from Arabia which is the birthplace of Islam. Second, Islam came from India, and third, Islam came from China. All three of these theories are supported by historians through geographical factors, political and socio-economic shipping, trade, and so on early settle-

ments in the Malay Muslim community.

With the Islamization of Pasai, it became the first centre of Islamic culture in the Malay world beginning from 13th century. Pasai established its Islamic educational institution at the mosque of Pasai. This Sultanate kingdom became the first centre of Islamic culture in the Malay archipelago. the teaching of Islam spread to other parts of the Malay world. By 1409 A.D. Melaka was converted to Islam, and gradually it grew up into a strong Muslim Sultanate as well as a new centre of Islamic studies after the decline of Pasai. (Ismail Hamid, 1997). The Muslim pupils in Melaka, especially from Java, had studied religious sciences, for example, ilm al-Hadith, Ilm al-Kalam, Tasawwuf and Shari'a, and the following titles is Ihya 'Ulum al-Din by Imam al -Ghazali, Kitab al-Tawhid by Abu Shukur, Talkis al-Minhaj by Imam al-Nawawi were said to have been made their text books. After the defeat of Melaka by the Portuguese in 1511 A.D., Aceh assumed the role of a Muslim political power in this region. The encouragement of learning carried out by Aceh's rulers especially during the reign of Sultan Iskandar Thani, Sultan Iskandar Muda and Sultan Safiat al-Din made Aceh a great centre of Islamic studies. (Zakaria Ahmad, 1972)

According to S.M. Naquib al-Attas (1972), Hamzah Fansuri was the first writer who used the Malay language for expressing rational and systematic ideas, therefore he suggest that Hamzah should be considered as the father of modern Malay literature. Beside Aceh, Johor and Riau become another centre of Islamic learning in the Malay world. After the fall of Melaka, Sultan Mahmud Shah went to Johor Lama and established his new seat of government at Bintang. During the reign of Sultan Alauddin Riayat Shah (1597-1602) Johor Lama became a centre of learning with Tun Sri Lanang as a courtscholar as well as prime minister. In Johor, tun Sri Lanang began writing his work entitled Sulalatus al-Salatin. (Ismail Hamid, 1997). The advent of Islam has also brought the philosophy of Islamic thinking, which has been the basis for forming Malay culture and arts. According to Idris Zakaria, eight Islamic doctrines have been assimilated into Malay thought: (a) understanding faith (akidah); (b) rationale in Islam; (c) tolerance in Islam; (d) ukhuwwah in Islam; (e) the universal view of Islam; (f) the Sunnah Wal-jamaah members' affiliation; (g) the characteristics of peace; and (h) Islamic art.

Continued from Ismail Hamid, when Sultan Badrul Alam Shah (1722-17600 ascended the throne, he transferred the seat of government from Johor Lama to Riau and the development of Islamic education greatly accelerated through the role of its rulers who were very fond of learning. An Islamic institution was established in Penyengat, the capital of Riau. One of the foremost scholars who emerged from Riau was Raja Ali Haji. He pursued his studies until became a scholar in Islamic studies. Later he became a teacher instructing several disciplines of Islamic studies. Patani to the north of the Malay peninsula became one of the centres of learning in the Malay since the 15th century. Patani became a powerful Sultanate in the northern Malay Peninsula with Kelantan dan Terengganu during 15th until 17th centuries. Patani was well known for its traditional Islamic education called the Pondok system. The Sultanate established traditional Islamic institutions throughout the states and encouraged the Ulama to preach Islam and spread its teaching. As a result many Islamic institutions were established and students came from all over of the Malay world to study in Patani. Kelantan, a northern Malay state also came under the rule of Patani Sultanate, also played the role of

spreading Islamic education through the establishment of the pondok system. (A. Bangnara, 1977)

Kelantan in the 19th century, became a centre of Islamic learning as testified by Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir Munshi. He described about the Islamic administration and the development of Islamic learning in Kelantan. Terengganu was another centre of Islam on the eastern coast of the Malay peninsula. The discovery of a stone inscription at Kuala Berang written in Jawi scripts constituting an order to promulgate certain Islamic law indicated that Terengganu was already a centre of Islam since 1303 (702 A.H.). In the 19th century Riau had emerged as a centre of learning and saw the rise of a number of ulama and authors, most of whom were educated in Islamic institutions. They wrote books on Islamic studies as well as works on Malay language and literature.

According to Ding Choo Ming (2016), to date, there are 10,000 titles and copies of Malay manuscripts around the world. It became a Malay authors' intellectual contribution, scholarship, and creativity in various fields. The Malay manuscripts have been written extensively in Malay palaces, also serve as the centre of knowledge power in the Malay World. The manuscript's importance is since the text is a great writing tradition that has not been interrupted from the 13th century to the 19th century in most Malay palaces. As far as is known, there were no less than 70 Malay kingdoms until the end of the 19th century. This number changes from time to time because small and weak kingdoms are usually conquered by bigger and stronger kingdoms. However, none of the Malay kingdom large and powerful can dominate the entire Malay world simultaneously, including Srivijaya and Malacca. Although, the Malay world dominated by English and Dutch start before 1824, but almost all Malay kingdoms large and powerful that have written the history books.

The history of Malay manuscripts began with the arrival of Islam in the archipelago. The appearance of Islamic preachers and traders also brought with them religious books and knowledge. Malay manuscripts are written on paper with ink in Jawi letters. Since Islam was established in the archipelago or the Malay world, Jawi's writing began to develop in Malay society. The writing of Malay manuscripts became more active, especially in the 16th to 19th centuries, when maritime cities such as Melaka and Acheh became centers of knowledge. A palace is a prominent place for the production and development of Malay manuscripts. Malay manuscripts touch on various fields of knowledge such as religion, economics, politics, law, and constitution, social, cultural, and even technological and mystical matters. (Naim Tamdjis, 2020)

8.3 Enrichment of decorative arts from the Malay society

From of Jahani Ali (1993), the art that is produced is the result of human activities that live in society and become a culture that is observed today. According to Khaled Azzam (2013), The Muslim artist exploring the fundamentals of Islamic arts and crafts: geometry, including order in nature, proportion and patterns; Islimi- the eternal spiral, symmetry and structure, rhythm and balance, the art of the arabesque and calligraphy, a cornerstone of geometric and cursive motifs. The coming of Islam with the advent of Islam into the region in the 13th century, the Malay world-view underwent a major shift from being primarily mythological animistic to being more rational and philosophical in nature. The spirit of Islam, Royal Patronage, Crossroads of Trade, Inspiration from nature and

material arts. With the teaching of Islam which stressed on the love for nature and the guidance for man to seek beauty in the natural world which God has created, this message further reinforced the beliefs of the craftsman and ultimately his action. (Raja Fauziah Raja Tun Uda and Abdul Raman Al-Ahmadi, 1997)

A brief cultural survey of the peninsula in the middle of the 19th century would have shown that the full of traditional Malay decorative arts, inherited from Ligor and Langkasuka, was then only to be seen in Kelantan. Terengganu, which had long-established direct links with Patani, had always confined attention for weaving, metal work and wood carving, and these were still flourishing. (Mubin Sheppard, 2011). The Malay craftsmen or artist was inspired by the natural beauty of these indigenous materials. A Malay folk art tradition evolved. From these materials, traditions craftsmen made artistic objects, utilitarian and ornamental, using the most beautiful texture of woods, plants and fibres which were carefully processed and prepared before ready to be carved or sculptured, plaited or woven. (Raja Fuziah Raja Tun Uda and Abdul Rahman Al-Ahmadi, 1997).

According to Adi Guru Norhaiza, the art of Malay wood carving symbolizes the creativity of the mind and the skill of the hand. Then combine with in-depth knowledge of the environment. The concept is adapted to the shape and size or as elements of art. The Malay style of Awan Larat is believed to originate from the exploration of Malay artists who have studied or experienced the nature. In this case, cloud clusters that move produce various interesting shapes and patterns become a source of inspiration to Malay carvers. The uniqueness of Malay art decoration can be internalized through styles, patterns and motifs consisting of various forms and variations. Malay traditional carving art styles distributed to four types of Awan Larat, first Awan Larat, second geometric, third Calligraphy and lastly the combination or the mixing with the three before). This 'ornamental' style is also found in the art of textiles such as batik, songket and metal art production. (Syed Ahmad Jamal, 2007: Nik Hassan Shuhaimi, 2011 and Sabrizaa, 2018).

Abdul Halim Nasir (1986) defines 'circle or rolling cloud' as a form of carving, fluttering, swirling like a white cloud. Usually these carvings are combined with a complete pattern (pola lengkap). According to Wan Mustapha, Awan Larat is a type of design that has special rules. This element may be painted (contradicted) in various forms. He has outlined a number of regulations regarding Awan Larat: Firstly: The form of elements, such as flowers, leaves, stems, etc. carved objects must be in a beautiful and smooth shape form so that softness and beauty become something impossible, when compared with these elements in the real world. Secondly, it is a layout of elements carved in beautiful and soft form. Thirdly, it must meet the requirements of the stated philosophies. According to research conducted by Abdul Halim Nasir, Malay wood carvings have a basic pattern, a single pattern (Pola Bujang), a screen or frame pattern (Pola Pemidang), and a complete pattern (Pola Lengkap). Single pattern or Pola Bujang is also known as Pola Putu. The motive is executed in a free-flowing, self-contained, flow continuously. The characteristics of the original Awan Larat are that they have large flowers and are widely used in the motifs of leaves, twigs, flowers, and fruits but the most emphasized is on the leaves (Muhammad Afandi Yahya, 1995). (Figure 39)



Figure 39: The complete pattern known as a Pola Lengkap, usually is the most beautiful arrangement of wood carving. It is contained the complete section of plants, such as blossom flower, stem, thick, leaf, tendrils and fruit. the Asian Art Museum. University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur.

Sulur Bayung or Tendril refers to the decoration placed on the Malay architecture, jeweleries and utensil equipment. Typically, the tendrils are located at the end of an object or craft. For the the traditional Malay architecture, *Sulur* has a variety of names including *Sayap layang-layang*, *Ekor Itik*, *Anjong Balla* and *Som*. It is a decorative element found on the corner of the roof. The concept of tendrils pattern must be smooth, gentleness and refined formation. The tendril has provided with disciplined of wave motion. The movement of the motif and pattern has been studied and projected in very proper, polite and well organized (Figure 40). *Awan Larat* are created from the natural elements of living things such as whirlpools, waves, clouds, animal tails, fish fins and so on. But, due to the manifestation of Islam that is strong enough to affect the community, so elements and plants most often referred to by the artist. Tendril or *Sulur* at wood carving must be formed in a beautiful, soft and controlled form. In order to give birth to beauty and tenderness. The empty spaces that are the part without carving must be almost the same width and ratio as the carved part. The tendrils or *Sulur* is the pattern most honoured in appreciation of Malay classical carving style.



Figure 40: Wind Comb, Its function is for lighting and ventilation at the top of the wall. The motif used for the carving is *bunga pepulut* and *batang cincang*. The carving technique is *Tebuk tembus bersilat*. While the type of wood is *Chengal*. This complete pattern or *Pola Lengkap* carving derived from the state of Kelantan. It is now preserved and cared for by the Asian Art Museum. University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur.

The traditional art of the Malay world can be seen as through a several types productions such as the art of books and calligraphy, woodwork and carving, textiles, plaiting and weaving, the art of metalsmithing and pottery. The creation of a work does not only involve practicality but is also complemented by decorations that occur simultaneously with the creation process. Aesthetic design is the result of decorating techniques that emphasize the *ragamhias* or design. It has a role as an addition to the beauty of the outer form. (Siti Zainon, 1986). She added the meaning of the *ragamhias* or called as design is a determined by the shape and style cut through motifs and patterns. This handicraft design is a composing of motifs and patterns complement the decoration of exterior shapes. Motif is the main element in design or *ragamhias*.

It was used as a basis structure or form for paintings, carvings or others. The shapes of the motifs are arranged in a particular composition and space so until the pattern is created on a surface. Motif elements are usually taken from natural forms such as plants and animals. Then this motif is composed and arranged to become a 'central motif' which is considered as the main design. The motif of the flowering plants is regarded as the main design in several Malay handicrafts. This design is often found in *songket* and weaving. From Syed Ahmad Jamal (2007), the forms in traditional Malaysian design grew from the purpose or function of the utensil, and form the characteristics of the material used. However, aesthetic consideration is evident in most cases, making the resulting object satisfying in the sense. Styles of form and ornamentation have evolved to suit the requirements and personal tastes of the users.

Since the advent of Islam in the archipelago or the Malay world, *Jawi* writing began to develop in Malay society. Malay manuscript writing became a significant concern, especially when maritime cities such as Melaka and Aceh became knowledge centres. The palace played a role in making the Malay manuscript industry grow, especially in the religious and administrative fields. The production of Malay manuscripts consists of religious, economic, political, social, artistic, cultural, legal, and constitutional fields. Malay manuscripts usually were written in black ink. The Malay community uses black in almost all types of manuscripts. Red ink is mainly applied in copying verses in the Quran at the beginning of the chapters (surah) or particular letters or text. According to Wan Ali Wan Mamat (2017), the Malay community produces ink through various methods. The main ingredients for making the ink are plants and fruits. They processed these recipes according to the guidelines practice by Malay.



Figure 41: MSS 3238. Open page consist surah al-Fatihah verses 1-7 and early surah al-Baqarah verses 1-4 (National Library Kuala Lumpur)

Almost all *Jawi* manuscripts use paper imported from China, India, Persia, and Europe. But, several districts in the Javan uses material from a plant called *Dluwang*. When the arrival of Europeans around the 16th century AD, the activity of copying manuscripts took place more widely, during that era, most of the Al-Quran manuscripts were produced by using European-made paper with watermarks from Italy and other continental European companies. The pens used are from palm and bracken. There are also made the pen from the fur of animals such as geese, ducks, and eagles. However, this type is less used than the pen from the plant type. In terms of writing, Malay manuscripts use beautiful and structured calligraphy. The most common types of writing found in manuscripts especially the Al-Quran are the *nasakh* and *thuluth* styles. The decoration in the Quran and religious manuscripts is the culmination of the art of Malay manuscripts. The position of decorative art in the Quran is on the surrounding frame of the verse found on the front, middle, and end of the sheet. Particular patterns are placed mainly on the chapter or *juzuk* in the Quran. The design and ornaments on the frame develop according to the local district art style. (Plate 2.2 c)

8.4 Conclusion

The Philosophy of Islamic Thinking has given people sufficient knowledge to make them know and realize the creation, responsibility, and way they manage their duties as the caliph of Allah. Additionally, Islamic philosophers say that art should represent submission to God and that artworks that violate the Islamic worldview are not artistically successful. Another tenet of Islamic art should reflect unity, balance, and perfection in its production, as it is symbolic of a mirror of God's essence. Islamic artists are also more subservient due to their understanding and closeness with the creator.

The structure of ornamentation in Islamic art, in addition relating to the function of beauty, also purposely matters of faith which then extend to issues of style and enrichment as well as goals both geographically, dynamism, local influences, manufacturing techniques and details around the issue of motifs, composition and others, or in the sense of a distinctive design concept, where there is an aesthetic value that is also unique and becomes one of the benchmarks individually.

Islamic ornaments in addition to showing the principal symptoms above, also contain functions to reconcile the visual senses, and pleasing to the eye. For example, the symmetry values, entities, shapes, re-patterns, colour settings, diversity of themes, intertwining, complexity, accuracy, unity and perseverance in craftsmanship. Malays Intellectualizing and art creativities, the coming of Islam with the advent of Islam into the region in the 13th century, the Malay world-view underwent a major shift from being primarily mythological animistic to being more rational and philosophical in nature. The spirit of Islam, the effort from royal patronage, the systematic trading operation, obviously inspired from nature and exquisite Malay artworks. With the teaching and guidance of Islam which stressed on the appreciated nature for man to seek beastliness in the natural world which God has created.

The characteristics of *Awan Larat* is having large flowers and are not arranged tightly between one another. The features of *Awan Larat*, are full of leaves and flowers appeared in smaller size and quite denser. This pattern has a starting point, which mean the pattern begin from one place and flows through the space provided. *Awan Larat Melayu* consists of large flowers and the position of each flower is rare or not tight. Secondly, the main stem or pattern actually reflecting the principle and custom. It is the manifestation of the attributes (*sifat-sifat*) of Allah Almighty. Through these attributes of God, various organisms, both flora and fauna, occur with all kinds of miracles and beauty. Plants and flowers are natural elements that are very close to the soul and life of the Malays. All these elements are used as materials for developed the decorations in Malay artworks. The style of *Awan Larat* is a manifestation of the sensitivity of the Malay soul to nature and the environment and eternity towards God.

The formation of art works needs to go through certain principles. The aim is to avoid the feelings of desire and ego that are outrageous. This is an area that escorts the state and quality of emotions. Having a deep understanding of knowledge and thought. The return phase of awareness to commemorate and glorify the Tawhid. The artists has carried out the process of synthesizing information's, experiences and knowledge they have learned. They have established themes, and modules in which their contents are combined and added with creative elements. Then finally, the artist moves to the area or section of creation an artworks. Continuing with the consistent good practices and quality skills, the artwork will be grant with the ideal and magnificent outcome.

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