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arte

Art and Expression

ART + COMMUNITY

**SOCIAL
HUMANITY**



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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

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AUTHENTICITY TRADITIONAL COSTUME OF ZAPIN SYMBOLIZE WEALTH IN THE ART OF A CULTURE IN JOHOR

a chapter by

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Abstract

In the current modernization, Baju Melayu and Baju Kurung now only remain as formal attire for some occasions because it is more polite, according to the events attended. Each state has its designs and silhouettes of traditional costume. In line with the changing times, now various fashion shows and modern designs have been accepted by society. This is one of the reasons for the change in Baju Melayu and Baju Kurung that is happening now as an example of traditional to contemporary such as Baju Melayu Hipster and Baju Kurung Modern. As a result, Baju Melayu has now changed to Kurta and Baju Kurung has changed to Tunic. This makes traditional costume no longer as original as it used to be which symbolizes Malaysian identity. As Malaysians, they should maintain these traditional costumes with original designs and preserve them as a continuation of our ancestors to future generations. Now, Baju Melayu and Baju Kurung are no longer worn with a complete set. This is also due to the elements of modernization of global culture that have a wide influence. The mass media became a priority to make it happen quickly and widely.

History of Zapin Johor

Zapin dance is a combined action of both Middle Eastern and Malay elements. It was introduced to Peninsular Malaysia by Arab communities who settled in the state of Johor before the 14th century. Since then, Zapin has been transformed from a village folk dance strictly narrated by men to a more rigidly stylized dance form performed by both genders in Malaysian popular culture.

Zapin Johor is a traditional Malay folk dance and the movement is fast. This dance is popular in the fifties (50s) and sixties (60s). Zapin Johor is known in two forms, Zapin Melayu and Zapin Arab. The two dance shows differences in terms of adaptation. In reality, the two genres Zapin comes from the Arab community arts brought from Hadramaut.

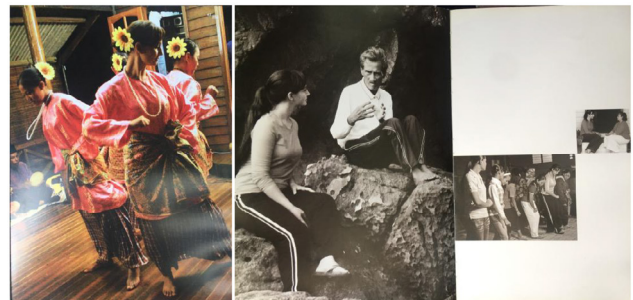


Figure 1: The traditional of Zapin dance
(Source: *Dansa* by Sasha Bashir)

The differences between Zapin Melayu and Zapin Arab are the element and purpose brought. Zapin Melayu has been accepted as an art and entertainment function as an official ceremony at the palace or ceremonies in celebration of festivals. Zapin Arab more to praise the Prophet Muhammad like Salawat and will be presented at the mosque. Zapin Melayu though born of the adaptations made on Zapin Arab selectively but undeniable this Zapin Melayu shows more subtlety and beauty of motion than Zapin Arab.



Figure 2: In a scene from the award-winning *Berinai*, Aris Kadir and Ameera Mazlan capture the emotions of the virginal Malay bride

(Source: Book : *Malaysian Dancescapes* by Joseph Gonzales)

Zapin dance will not be complete if it is not followed by the sound of traditional music playing behind. Music equipment is closely related to the Zapin dance, and it will be perfect. Some of the musical instruments included a violin, a small handheld gendang (drum), and the most distinctive of all, a pear-shaped, six-stringed lute, (gambus).

Zapin creates a sense of brotherhood with each of the dancers and musicians will be complimentary. Symbolically these Zapin dance moves appeared with group interests rather than individual efforts. If viewed from this perspective, the uniqueness and privileges of Zapin Johor are evident.

Definition of Traditional Costume

Baju Melayu and Baju Kurung are traditional Malay costumes that have been popular since the 15th century. It loosely translates to mean “enclosed garment”. In the beginning, the name Baju Kurung was used for both men and women, but now in Malaysia, women’s attire is called Baju Kurung, while men’s attire is called Baju Melayu, wearing sampin for men and kain sarong that need to tie up itself.

This costume is the national attire of Malaysia and Brunei. Indonesia, it is one of the regional costumes in this multi-cultural and ethnic country. It is found mainly on the island of Sumatra, where many ethnic Malays and Minangkabau women wear it. It is also available in Singapore and Thailand.

Critical Issues

The problem of this study is the loss of authenticity of Baju Melayu Teluk Belanga and Baju Kurung Johor brought by the identity of Zapin Johor. The researcher believes that although in general, we have received modern influences in everyday wear, traditional costume remains the choice of Malaysians, especially in Johor for formal occasions. Materials and fabrics to produce traditional costume also change from time to time. These changes were made to adapt to the current situation, but it turned out to almost lose the authenticity of the clothes. The researcher wants to explore the type of original features and the cutting with the shape of traditional costumes in Zapin Johor. There are now various Baju Melayu and Baju Kurung known by their renewed and unique names. Therefore, Baju Melayu and Baju Kurung which has evolved in line with the changes of the times, but the design that is modernized according to the needs of consumers without realizing it has changed to some extent from the original design.

Yayasan Warisan Johor (YWJ) or known as Johor Heritage Foundation was established by the Johor government which aims to preserve the cultural heritage and history of the state of Johor. The researcher was told by Mr. Haji Shafie from YWJ that the problem was when a handful of groups that were not from the Johor government brought influence in the Zapin Johor dance by wearing clothes, not from the state of Johor. It will cause a phenomenon that should not have happened and from there it will become a trend that will be followed all the time with the loss of Johor’s authenticity. That is why every identity must be maintained and nurtured for it always remain and cannot be changed or exaggerated until it becomes a drastic change.

Statement of Significance

The researcher believes that Malaysians may know about the wearing of Baju Melayu and Baju Kurung but not the right way and the purpose of the costume itself.

For example the level of wearing sampin for men and kain sarong that need to tie up itself.

The importance of proposing this research is to elevate and raised again the authenticity of Johor traditional Malay costumes in the eyes of Malaysia. When it became a phenomenon in Johor with its own identity that was taken by the Sultan of Johor, it will make Malaysians aware of the importance of creating or maintaining their own identity with pride compared to foreign countries. In addition, this research can help future generations to continue to maintain traditions and national customs.

Apart from that, through the study of traditional costumes, it will also be able to give awareness, especially to young people so that they are not complacent and fully influenced by the rapid global changes. This can help them to be able to differentiate between original and modernized traditional clothing are two different things. It can not be combined or modified according to the taste trends brought by the changes of global.

Eventually, with this research, our society itself will make it an enduring national identity. Thus, they will be able to know that the traditional costume has a positive implicit meaning to be conveyed by our ancestors.

Methods

This study uses a descriptive method. Before setting an appointment with Mr. Haji Shafie, the researcher has made a study to get some information on this issue to prepare the questions about the problems that occur now in Malaysia. The researcher chose this method because, through descriptive research, the data collection process is easier to understand and easy to interpret facts. It is also easy to describe and analyze. The researcher used Primary Data and Secondary Data. Both of these methods were used to gather the information needed in this research. For the primary data, the researcher used observation by making a case study on the Johor traditional costume. The researcher conducted observations at the Johor Heritage Foundation to get the facts from cultural functionaries by seeing the original costume of the past at the Johor Weaving Museum. In secondary data, the researcher collects the information by using books, articles, journals, and websites.

Johor Heritage Foundation (Yayasan Warisan Johor)

The Johor Heritage Foundation (YWJ) was established on December 17, 1988, under enactment no. 7 of 1988, the 1988 State Heritage Foundation Enactment, aims to preserve the state's heritage and history. The Johor Heritage Foundation (YWJ) officially exists on October 11, 1988, when the 1988 State Heritage Foundation Enactment was approved by the State Assembly of Johor.



Figure 3: The head office of Yayasan Warisan Johor (Kompleks Warisan Sultan Abu Bakar) (Source: <http://www.ywj.gov.my/>)

The main philosophy held by YWJ is the development and progress of a country should be balanced with a holistic approach. YWJ also plays a role in maintaining the same cultural heritage as its slogan. Strengthening the identity of Johor through the conservation of the nation's cultural heritage is the vision brought by YWJ to this day and to uphold the historical heritage, literature, art, and culture of Johor as their mission.

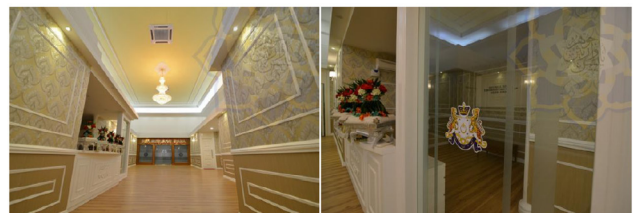


Figure 4: Inside the Yayasan Warisan Johor (YWJ) (Source: <http://www.ywj.gov.my/>)

YWJ's objective is to carry out research and historical, literary, artistic, and cultural retention efforts. To systematically and scientifically maintain historical heritage, correspondence, art, and culture. On the other hand, to document and disseminate the business of preservation of historical heritage, writing, art, and culture

through systematic welding, cataloging, and storing tasks. To process literary heritage, art, and culture that is historically valuable as an economic source.



Figure 5: The collection of Bajus Johor
(Source: <http://www.ywj.gov.my/>)

Their function is to preserve, conserve, expand and disseminate information and knowledge about Johor's historical heritage, art and culture. Besides that, it is also to generate the public's awareness and tendency to work together and support the conservation and efforts of Johor's history, arts and culture. To study and research to restore the history, art, and culture of Johor and spread developing knowledge on Johor's history, art, and culture through bulletin publications, journals, books, lectures, courses, workshops, and seminars.



Figure 6: Weaving gallery and workshop
(Source: <http://www.ywj.gov.my/>)

The foundation's involvement in the re-excavation of the heritage of Johor's cultural and historical heritage is vast and widespread as far as the state of Johor. The efforts to rescue Johor's historical heritage, art, and culture are now being actively undertaken by the Johor Heritage Foundation. Four divisions have been set up according to their respective expertise to

carry out the duties of preserving the heritage of Johor, The Museums Division, Arts and Culture Development Section, Literature and History Division, and Performing Arts Division.

An Interview with Mr. Haji Shafie Ahmad (Johor Heritage Foundation)

The researcher interviewed the performing arts cultural functionary at YWJ, Mr. Haji Shafie by questioning him about Johor's Zapin dance and its costumes. He said 'Malay' dance was usually defined by "who performed it, when it was performed, and what was its function in Malay



Figure 7: The attire consists of brocade with a silky finish woven and a raised pattern using gold thread
(Source: Book : *Pakaian Cara Melayu* by Siti Zainon Ismail)

When the researcher asked about the creation of Zapin in Johor, according to him, Zapin is the oldest syncretic representative of Arab culture that arrived in Malaya centuries ago through early seafaring traders. In the past twenty years, through the efforts of the Johor State Government and the Johor Heritage Foundation, scholars such as Mr. Haji Shafie and choreographer-teachers like Mr. Onn Jaafar and Mr. Mohd Seth Hamzah. Through their work, including research, performance, the organization of state-level competitions, and the establishment of active local groups in nearly every village and school in the state, Zapin has been elevated to become one of the very symbols of 'Malayness'.

Asking about the costumes of Zapin Johor, he stated that the dancers will wear Baju Melayu Teluk Belanga for male dancers and Baju Kurung for female dancers with complete accessories such as for male dancers is songkok, sampin, capal and for female dancers is rose flowers as headgear, sanggul, gold chain, tatapan (scarf), sampin, pending and heels. Every Zapin dance movement is closely related to music, the costumes, and accessories worn by the dancer.

An Interview with Mr. Abdul Shukor (Johor Heritage Foundation)

The researcher also managed to interview the costume designer of the performing arts at YWJ, Mr. Abdul Shukor through the second appointment and known as Meq Sue. The researcher asked him about Baju Melayu and Baju Kurung. He told about Malay costume is the cultural heritage of the Malay community in the past. Baju Melayu was originally used to go to mosques and on certain occasions such as palace customs. The Baju Melayu Teluk Belanga and Baju Melayu Cekak Musang cannot be separated from the Malay community and Malaysians in general.

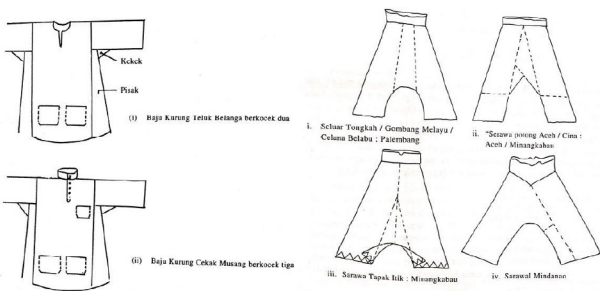


Figure 8: Baju Melayu with two/three pocket and seluar panjang-lapang
(Source: Book : Pakaian Cara Melayu by Siti Zainon Ismail)

This attire is worn by men, becoming a cultural heritage of the Malays, and has Islamic religious elements. It is also true that Zapin dances themselves are originally from the elements of Islam. The match between the Baju Melayu is very strong with the Zapin dance.

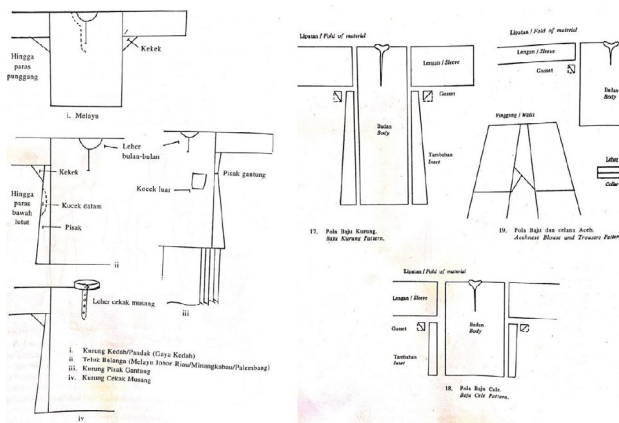


Figure 9: Types of pattern Baju Kurung
(Source: Book : Pakaian Cara Melayu by Siti Zainon Ismail)

Baju Melayu Cekak Musang is similar to Baju Melayu Teluk Belanga or Baju Kurung Johor which is very popular among Johor. The difference in this attire is on the neckline. The Baju Teluk Belanga has a neck shape like Baju Kurung and made a tailoring stitching of tulang belut matched with a special button.

“In Johor, we have a garment called the Baju Sejari that is almost the same as Baju Cekak Musang”, he said. The Baju Sejari has a high collared and split front and made a reinforcement. Both of these types have three bags, a small pocket on the top left and the other two on the bottom of the shirt, left and right. The lower part is smaller than the upper reinforcement, the upper and lower reinforcement parts will be punched with the buttonhole. Special buttons on the Baju Melayu Sejari are placed on the buttonhole, usually 4 buttons or 5 buttons.

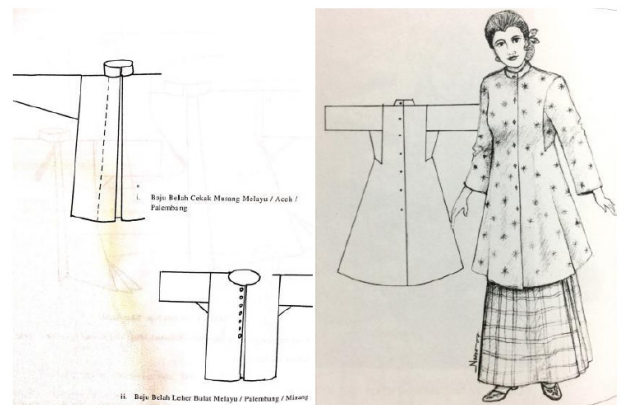


Figure 10: Baju Belah and Baju Riau or Baju Turki is a long dress with a front opening secured by seven or more buttons
(Source: Book : Pakaian Cara Melayu by Siti Zainon Ismail)

An Interview with Ms. Lunayu Aurora (Johor Heritage Foundation)

The researcher interviewed a senior dancer known as a choreographer of the performing arts at YWJ, Ms. Lunayu Aurora also during the second appointment. The researcher asked about Malay folk dance, and she said the main genre of Malay folk dances are Joget, Zapin, Inang, and Asli.

Islam has been an important influence on traditional Malay dance, since “the Malay race regards their grace, politeness, peace-lovingness,

virtue, and Godliness as the pillars of their identity with Islam at an apex and the core of this identity”, she said. Choreographers who work with traditional dance material have either consciously or subconsciously incorporated this facet into the movement vocabulary.

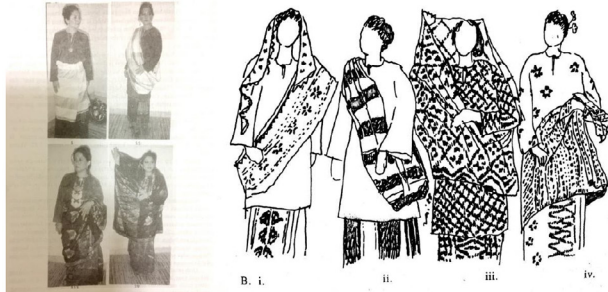


Figure 11: Baju Kurung Johor ‘berdagang luar’ and sarong as accessories on top and bottom (Source: Book : Pakaian Cara Melayu by Siti Zainon Ismail)

Dances such as the Zapin and other types all extol the virtues of Islam and that of the Prophet Muhammad SAW and his friends through songs or praise and worship or zikr. These dances too arrived in the Peninsula via Muslim traders before the fourteenth century. Yet there is an undeniably flirtatious quality to many of the Malay ‘social dance’, despite the taboo against physical touching between male and female dancers, at least in their early forms.

Conclusion

Now, the traditional costume faces threats of extinction due to the influx of global cultures that have begun to affect the minds of the community. This phenomenon prevents existing efforts to maintain traditional costumes. The civilization of a nation can often be seen in the heritage of its art. Traditional legacy needs to be preserved to be always relentless and remembered by the Malaysian community, especially for future generations. This traditional costume should be maintained because of its own identity. The researcher hopes there will be continuity in studying this traditional costume. Through traditional culture, they will know their origins and at the same time, it will bring awareness to them. It can expand and expose the community, especially for Malays to know about the history of traditional Malay costumes such as Baju Melayu and Baju Kurung.

The researcher hopes this isn’t just a spectacle in the museum and existing books with no readers as well as support. It should be extended to those out there who may not yet know or want to know about this whole traditional costume. Therefore, efforts to nurture and preserve the heritage of this legacy should not be underestimated. Society plays an important role in assisting each of these suggestions. Everyone needs to be together to keep it going remain forever.

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“BERKHIDMAT UNTUK NEGARA”

Saya yang menjalankan amanah,

SITI BASRIYAH SHAIK BAHARUDIN
Timbalan Ketua Pustakawan

nar

Setuju.

27.1.2023

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