

Malay Cultural Heritage Preservation Through *Seni Tekat Motif On Kerongsang Tok Design*

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ABSTRACT

Seni Tekat is a Malay intangible cultural heritage, not only popular in Kuala Kangsar Perak but other Malay communities in Indonesia and Thailand. This study focuses on the integration of *Seni Tekat* motifs into the design of *Kerongsang Tok*, a traditional Malay brooch, aiming to both innovate and preserve this cultural heritage. The primary objectives of this research are to create an innovative source of inspiration for *Kerongsang Tok* design and to preserve Malay cultural heritage through new design inspirations. The ideation process, directly linked to the fundamentals of *Kerongsang Tok* design, forms the core of this research. Starting with the initial design, the process incorporates traditional Malay patterns to develop a modern interpretation that remains true to its cultural origins. A comprehensive survey was conducted, gathering input from academics, students, goldsmiths, and jewellery designers to identify the most favoured design. Based on the survey outcomes, a novel *Kerongsang Tok* design was created, reflecting both innovation and cultural preservation. This study not only aims to preserve Malaysia's cultural legacy but also serves as an educational resource for future generations. By promoting awareness and appreciation of our unique cultural heritage, this research contributes to sustaining the relevance of traditional Malay art forms in contemporary design. Preserving *Seni Tekat* motifs in *Kerongsang Tok* design serves as a testament to Malaysia's rich cultural heritage, ensuring that this exquisite art form continues to be celebrated and cherished by future generations.

Keywords: *Seni Tekat, Kerongsang Tok, Malay cultural heritage, design innovation, cultural preservation*

INTRODUCTION

Heritage is belonging that is or may be inherited and has an inheritance value that is worthy of being preserved for the nation. Heritage is defined as a unique and irreplaceable legacy not only of each nation but also of humanity. This valuable legacy is brought from the past, where people are living today, and what will be passed to future generations (UNESCO, 2015; Zuraidah & Aliza, 2010). *Seni Tekat* or Embroidery is a sort of activity that attempts to restore or enhance the beauty of various materials, including clothes, accessories, handicrafts, and fabrics. Needlework utilising thread and machine proficiency. Embroidery also emphasises the beautiful variety of decoration because its design motifs will appear to emerge from the surface of the fabric. Embroidery is rich in various techniques and these motifs also experience currents of change according to circulation times (Saemah and Muliyadi, 2015).

Kerongsang Tok, a traditional Malay brooch, is another significant cultural artefact. Traditionally worn as part of Malay attire, it holds both aesthetic and symbolic value. Combining these two elements, *Seni Tekat* motifs and *Kerongsang Tok* design presents a unique opportunity to innovate while preserving an integral part of Malay cultural heritage. *Kerongsang Tok* is a traditional brooch worn by Malay women in Malaysia. The brooch is usually made of gold or silver and is worn to complement the traditional Malay attire known as the *Baju Kurung*. The *Kerongsang Tok* is a highly decorative piece of jewellery that is composed of three pieces: the *Kerongsang Ibu* (the largest brooch), *Kerongsang Anak* (a smaller brooch), and *Cincin* (a ring). The *Kerongsang Tok* is a symbol of Malay heritage and is often passed down as a family heirloom. It is still commonly worn by Malay women during special occasions such as weddings, cultural events, and religious celebrations. *Kerongsang Tok* are traditional brooches used to fasten garments like *Kebaya* and *Baju Kurung*. These brooches are both functional and decorative, featuring intricate metalwork, and are often embellished with gemstones.

This research aims to explore how the incorporation of *Seni Tekat* motifs into the design of *Kerongsang Tok* can create a new source of inspiration while preserving Malay cultural heritage. The process begins with understanding the historical and cultural contexts of both *Seni Tekat* and *Kerongsang Tok*, followed by the development of new designs that marry tradition with modernity. Through a comprehensive methodology involving literature review, design development, and feedback from a diverse group of stakeholders including academics, students, goldsmiths, and jewellery designers the study aims to identify designs that are both innovative and culturally authentic. A survey conducted among these stakeholders provides critical insights into design preferences, ultimately guiding the creation of final designs that reflect a successful blend of tradition and contemporary aesthetics.

This research underscores the importance of cultural preservation through innovative design. By bridging the past and present, it ensures that the rich traditions of Malay artistry continue to thrive, inspiring and educating future generations. The cultural value and history of *Seni Tekat* can be conserved for the enjoyment and appreciation of future generations by incorporating traditional themes into contemporary designs. One of the most significant benefits of heritage preservation is that it allows us to connect with our past and appreciate the sacrifices made by our ancestors. By studying and preserving our heritage, we can gain a deeper understanding of the struggles and triumphs of those who came before us.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Malay cultural heritage encompasses a broad spectrum of traditions, arts, and crafts. *Seni Tekat*, a traditional form of embroidery using gold and silver threads on velvet, is a prominent example. This craft is traditionally used for ceremonial attire and royal regalia, showcasing the intricate craftsmanship and aesthetic values of the Malay community. Preserving Malay cultural heritage is crucial to maintaining the identity and unique characteristics of the Malay community. It also plays an important role in promoting cultural diversity and understanding in Malaysia. To ensure the preservation of Malay cultural heritage, it is essential to educate and raise awareness among Malaysians about the importance of cultural heritage. This can be done through various means, such as cultural festivals, exhibitions, and educational programs. Additionally, the government can implement policies to support the preservation of Malay cultural heritage, such as providing funding for cultural organisations and heritage sites. It is the responsibility of all Malaysians to work together to preserve and celebrate the rich cultural heritage of the Malay community for future generations to enjoy (Ministry of Tourism, Arts, and Culture Malaysia, 2019).

Seni Tekat motifs often depict elements from nature, such as flowers, leaves, and animals, which are imbued with cultural symbolism and meanings reflecting Malay beliefs and values. The preservation of these motifs is crucial for maintaining the cultural narratives and social values they represent in the past. Both our natural and cultural history are priceless sources of inspiration and life. Heritage is divided into two, namely tangible and intangible which revolves around the process of identifying, maintaining, and preserving heritage assets based on the goal of public interest. On the other hand, the sharing of heritage identity can create a sense of belonging in the people, thus instilling a spirit of love for Malaysia's cultural heritage (Suraya, 2022). Cultural heritage is the legacy of physical artefacts and intangible attributes of a group or society that are inherited from past generations, maintained in the present, and bestowed for the benefit of future generations. The best way to preserve our cultural heritage, whatever it may be, is to share it with others. Cultural heritage has a very high value and is unique (Chiong, 2022). Therefore, cultural heritage assets need to be well preserved and looked after to ensure the sustainability of our identity as Malaysians. The community needs to be aware that they need to appreciate their heritage.

Seni Tekat is a significant part of the Malay cultural heritage, and efforts have been made to preserve this art form. Despite its popularity and cultural significance, *Seni Tekat* is in danger of disappearing as younger generations turn away from traditional crafts in favour of modern pursuits. Efforts are being made to preserve this ancient art form, including through educational programs and initiatives that aim to promote the craft to a wider audience. Another way to preserve *Seni Tekat* is to encourage its use and to support the artisans who create these works of art. By purchasing and displaying *Seni Tekat* pieces, people can help sustain the demand for this craft. Additionally, supporting local artisans who create these works can help ensure that the skills and knowledge are passed down to future generations (Saemah & Mulyadi, 2015; Saemah, 2015; Aziz, 1985).

Modernising traditional Malay accessories to appeal to contemporary tastes while preserving their cultural significance is a growing trend. Integrating *Seni Tekat* motifs into *kerongsang tok* design blends tradition with modernity, making these pieces relevant to today's fashion while retaining their cultural roots (Hema Zulaika Hashim, 2020). HABIB jewellery brand elevates the beauty and uniqueness of *Tekat*'s traditional heritage through the Raya collection, '*Rantaian Kasih di Aidilfitri 2023*'. HABIB Group Executive Chairman, Datuk Sri Meer, said this year HABIB pays tribute to the heritage of *Tekat* art, through motifs inspired by nature and local plants. He said, HABIB takes inspiration and features the traditional heritage of *Tekat*, which is a Malay embroidery decoration produced by embroidering gold thread on a rich velvet background. "Proud to be a local brand, HABIB always upholds the beauty and uniqueness of cultural heritage (Suraya, 2022).










Design innovation not only preserves traditional craftsmanship but also ensures that these cultural practices remain vibrant and relevant in a rapidly changing world. By taking inspiration from *Tekat* art motifs, designers and creators can create works that are not only aesthetic but also appreciate and promote Malay art and cultural heritage. The integration of traditional *Tekat* art with contemporary design can create harmony between natural beauty and innovation, enriching the treasures of Malay art and culture.

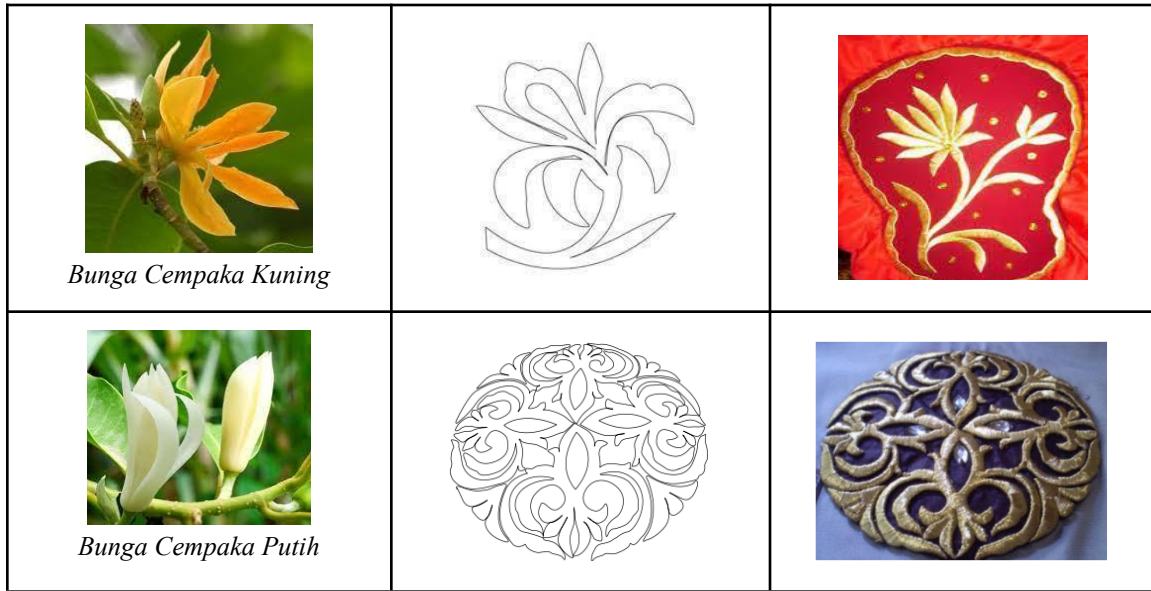
Seni Tekat Motifs

The selection of floral motifs also depends on the sealer or needs of its users. Often plants that are useful to humans are chosen as inspiration motives. Such plants are used in various ways such as in traditional medicine other than food sources. For example, are *Pokok Sireh*, *Daun Senduduk* dan *Ketam Guri*. Some trees are chosen because of their beautiful, fragrant, and uniquely shaped flowers. This prompts Malay craftsmen to perpetuate their love for these flowers in the form of motifs in their carpentry. An example is flowers *Cempaka* (*Michelia champaca*), *Kananga* flower (*ylang-ylang* or *Cananga odorata*), cape flower (*Mimusops elengi*) and others (Saemah and Muliyadi, 2015). This plant motif is manipulated and modified into interesting variations. Examples of commonly used flora motifs are *Bunga Cempaka*, *Bunga Kekwa*, *Daun Asam Batu*, *Bunga Bakung*, *Bunga Bercula Kelopak Pecah Lapan*, *Bunga Kenanga*, *Bunga Pecah Lima*, *Bunga Raya*, *Bunga Teratai*, *Bunga* or *Buah Delima*, *Daun Bunga Jermin*, *Daun Keladi*, *Daun Peria*, *Daun* or *Buah Padi* and *Daun* or *Pucuk Paku*.

Five examples of *Tekatek* art motifs were chosen that have the potential to be developed into a new inspiration in *Kerongsang Tok* designs. The development of the idea will be the implementation of the motif to create new inspiration for *Kerongsang Tok* design (Harozila et al., 2021)

Table 1. Seni Tekatek Motifs – The new inspiration for *Kerongsang Tok* design

Flora	Motif	Seni Tekatek Product
 <p><i>Bunga Kekwa</i></p>		
 <p><i>Daun Asam Batu</i></p>		
 <p><i>Daun Asam Batu</i></p>		



Kerongsang Tok Design

According to Zubaidah (2022), the *Kerongsang Tok*, a prominent piece of Malay jewellery, is highlighted in these texts. It comprises a larger "mother" brooch and two smaller "children" brooches, typically crafted from gold, silver, copper, or pewter. This jewellery is traditionally worn with *baju Kebaya Labuh* or *Kebaya Pendek*, reflecting the cultural and historical significance of the Malays, Portuguese, Nyonya Peranakan, and the Ceti in Melaka. The author emphasises the importance of preserving this cultural heritage, noting modern adaptations like those by Habib Jewels, which incorporate contemporary design elements such as diamond stones while maintaining the traditional aesthetic and cultural essence of the *Kerongsang Tok*. Habib Jewels takes on the role of a giant jewellery company in Malaysia this *Kerongsang Tok* was designed to preserve the old Malay heritage from being lost over time. This product was marketed around 2019 by maintaining the original design concept of *Kerongsang Tok* which was given a new lease of life. The use of diamond stones is applied in the design (Figure. 1).



Figure 1. An old heritage is given a new inspiration for preservation. of Malay cultural heritage
 (Source: Habib Jewels website, 2019)



Figure 2. Malay Cultural Heritage (Traditional Malay Jewellery *Kerongsang Tok*)
 (Source <http://enticz.blogspot.com/2011/03/kerongsang-brooches.html>, 2011)

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative method that refers to the case study approach. The case study will further detail the traditional motifs found in *Seni Tekat* art based on various decorative motifs that will also be used in the creation of *Kerongsang Tok* design. Qualitative research is essential for understanding the intricate cultural and social dimensions of preserving Malay cultural heritage through *Seni Tekat* motifs in *Kerongsang tok* design. This methodology focuses on gaining deep insights into the cultural significance, craftsmanship, and contemporary relevance of these traditional arts. There has been a survey conducted to determine which design fits most closely the primary title. The most important characteristic of *Kerongsang Tok* was present in the finest design that was selected. A specific survey was administered to academics, students, goldsmiths, jewellery designers, and practitioners. This qualitative research methodology aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how traditional Malay crafts can be preserved and revitalised through innovative design practices, ensuring their continuity for future generations.

This design research is based on the ideation process that is related directly to the purpose of appreciation of our cultural heritage. The process is a series that substitutes any findings or data into any type of result (Ulrich et al., 2012). A product development process is an arrangement of data that a designer needs to achieve from a design into something marketable or functional (Ulrich et al., 2012). A survey method was used to assess the marketability, necessity of the research, demand, and analysis of findings (Glasow, 2005). One of the crucial elements of making jewellery is design. To address the needs of the end user, developing creative design methods, approaches, strategies, and procedures is far more important. Designers and jewellers should concentrate on client requirements and current trends throughout this stage (Hema Zulaika et al. 2020). The next step of the process is to determine if the design concept can be used to create a piece of jewellery product. From the initial concept to the final jewellery manufacture, the design of jewellery requires various steps. The five key steps of jewellery design, according to (Galton, 2012) are ideation, sketching, rendering, modelling, and prototyping. The ideation process will take over once the research on the selection of *Seni Tekat* motif is done. The section of the motifs is based on the suitable and has the potential to be created as a new inspiration for *Kerongsang Tok* design.

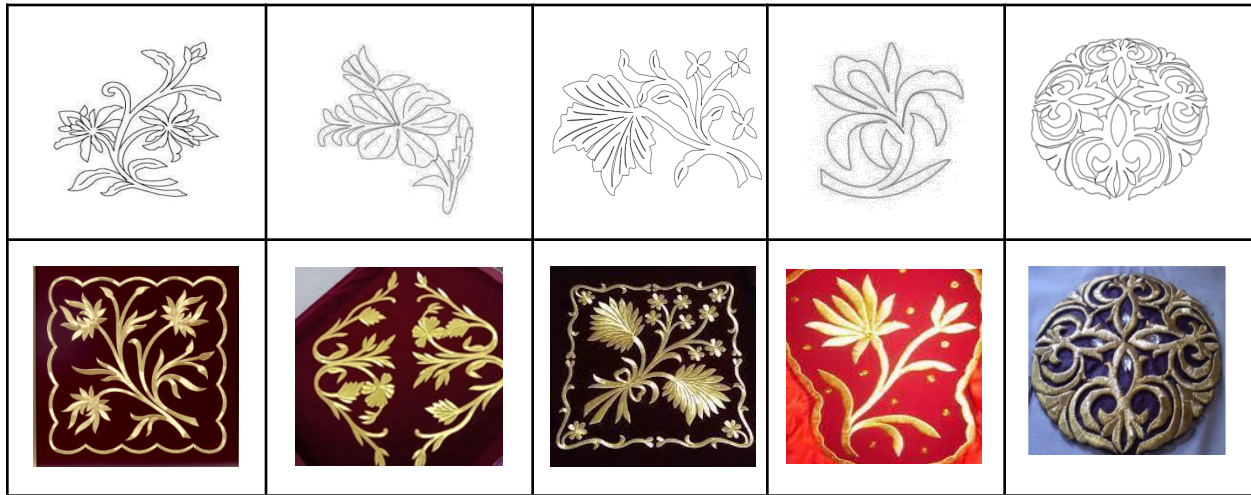
The process goes through 5 key steps.

Phase 1 (Ideation)

Ideation is the initial step in the jewellery design process, where designers produce concepts for their creations by brainstorming and inspiration-seeking. Based on the market survey the design chosen from the survey will be conducted to get suitable inspiration for *Kerongsang Tok* Design. Five *Seni Tekat* motifs were chosen to create new inspiration for *Kerongsang tok* design.

Table 2. *Seni Tekat* Motif design on product

Selection of <i>Seni Tekat</i> Motif that has the potential to develop as a new creation of <i>Kerongsang Tok</i> design to preserve Malay cultural heritage (<i>Seni Tekat</i> and <i>Traditional Malay Jewelry</i>)				
Motif <i>Bunga Kekwa</i>	Motif <i>Bunga Raya</i>	Motif <i>Daun Asam Batu</i>	Motif <i>Bunga Cempaka Kuning</i>	Motif <i>Bunga Cempaka Putih</i>



Phase 2 (Design Process)

Design Process - called sketching, designers make quick drawings of their ideas on paper or a computer. This design process sketching approach ensures that the integration of *Seni Tekat* motifs into *Kerongsang Tok* designs is thoughtful, respectful of cultural heritage, and aesthetically appealing. By combining traditional craft with modern design principles, we can create unique pieces that celebrate and preserve Malay cultural heritage. Quick hand-drawn sketches with various motif arrangements with the chosen motifs. The development of the idea to create a new design of *Kerongsang Tok* is to create rough sketches of initial ideas, exploring various combinations of traditional motifs and modern design elements. Develop more detailed and polished sketches of the selected concepts. Focus on the intricacy of the motifs, the overall shape of the brooch, and practical considerations like size and functionality.










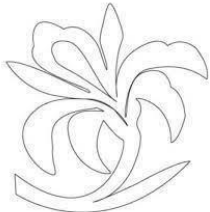


Table 3. The development of the idea to create a new design of *Kerongsang Tok*

Brainstorming the ideas of <i>Kerongsang Tok</i> design from the selection of motifs that are chosen			

Phase 3 (Rendering)

Rendering, which takes place in the third stage, entails producing an intricate visual depiction of the design. Designers produce digital renderings of their designs, complete with colour, texture, and other elements. Rendering in the design process bridges the gap between concept sketches and physical prototypes, providing a clear and visually appealing representation of the final designs. This approach ensures that the integration of *Seni Tekat* motifs into *Kerongsang Tok* designs is both aesthetically pleasing and culturally respectful, aiding in the preservation of Malay cultural heritage.

Table 4. The design proposal

Design	Motifs	Seni Tekat	Kerongsang Tok Design
Design Proposal 1	 <p data-bbox="418 590 636 625"><i>Motif Bunga Kekwa</i></p>		
Design Proposal 2	 <p data-bbox="423 976 626 1012"><i>Motif Bunga Raya</i></p>		
Design Proposal 3	 <p data-bbox="427 1306 623 1369"><i>Motif Daun Asam Batu</i></p>		
Design Proposal 4	 <p data-bbox="402 1843 649 1906"><i>Motif Bunga Cempaka Kuning</i></p>		

Design Proposal 5	 <i>Motif Bunga Cempaka Putih</i>		

In this step Survey was conducted to get the result of the Final Design proposal. Five Design Proposals were proposed via Google Forms. A survey has been conducted to determine which design is the best, with input from academics, students, goldsmiths, and jewellery designers. Based on the poll outcomes, an innovative inspiration for the *Kerongsang Tok* design was created. The final design has already been chosen through the results of the survey. From 5 design proposals that are proposed to the survey Design Proposal 1 is the highest ranking with the motif from *Bunga Kekwa*.

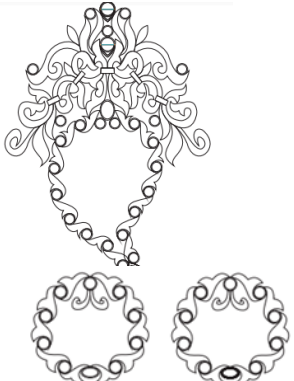


Table 5. The design proposal incorporating with *Seni Tekat* motif

Design	Motifs	<i>Seni Tekat</i>	<i>Kerongsang Tok</i> Design
Design Proposal 1	 <i>Motif Bunga Kekwa</i>		

Phase 4 (3D Modelling)

The fourth stage is 3D modelling when jewellers use sophisticated software to build a virtual model of the jewellery. Before the final manufacturing, this stage enables designers to view the design from many perspectives and make any necessary revisions. The other alternative is production with manual techniques.





Table 6. The final design proposal – result from a survey






STEP	Modelling/ Master Mould/ Custom Made		
Final Design Proposal 1			

Phase 5 (Prototyping)

Prototyping is the last step, where a physical design is created. The new design needs to go through the fabrication process, and selecting suitable materials, such as precious metals, is an essential matter at this stage.

Table 6. The fabrication process to make a final design proposal for *Kerongsang Tok* product.

STEP	Manufacturing/ Fabrication		
1	<p>PIERCING PROCESS</p> <p>To cut metal follow the final design</p>		
2	<p>SOLDERING PROCESS</p> <p>To solder every part of the cutting design to be as 1 part of the brooch</p>		

3	<p>TEXTURING PROCESS (PAHAT)</p> <p>To enhance the design on the surface of the metal</p>		
4	<p>STONE SETTING PROCESS</p> <p>To set the gemstones to enhance the beauty of the design</p>		
5	<p>FINISHING PROCESS / FINAL PRODUCT</p> <p>Finished product</p>		

FINDINGS

The integration of *Seni Tekat* motifs into modern *Kerongsang tok* designs exemplifies the Malay philosophy of harmony and balance. Designers strive to create a balanced blend of traditional and contemporary elements, ensuring that the cultural essence of the motifs is preserved while adapting them to modern aesthetics. Many *Seni Tekat* motifs are inspired by natural elements, reflecting the Malay belief in living harmoniously with the environment. This philosophy is evident in the design process, where artisans draw inspiration from nature to create motifs that symbolise balance and tranquillity.

The study explained the development of new inspiration for *Kerongsang Tok* design, along with a couple of ideas for how its design might be enhanced. The study has shown how jewellery designers can create unique and significant pieces of jewellery while still working within the limitations of the original shape, extra components, and cultural importance. The study has also shown how, by utilising traditional motifs to enhance traditional Malay jewellery, may be revived and modified to fit modern trends and needs.

The latest design proposal, the inspired *Kerongsang Tok* still maintains a total of 3 brooch shapes and the design concept still has the concept of floral motifs. The latest design proposal inspired by *Kerongsang Tok* design still maintains the original characteristics of the brooch, which is the flower design but has been developed and given a new lease of life with a wider selection of motifs from *Seni Tekat* motifs. This inspiration fits with the original concept of *Kerongsang Tok's* design which is interesting and unique.

Table 7. The motif and the design proposal that was chosen from the survey




		
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Table 8. The design process involves the ideation, sketching, rendering, modelling, and prototyping of the final product. Final design produced by the result of the survey.

Sketching	Computer Rendering	Prototyping/Product
		
<p>Sketches of Kerongsang Tok Design inspired by Seni Tekat motif (Motif Bunga Kekwa)</p>	<p>Computer Rendering is created based on a manual actual design done by CorelDraw</p>	<p>Final Design Fabricate follow the design chosen by the survey result</p>
		

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, preserving Malay cultural heritage is viewed as a collective responsibility. Community members, artisans, designers, and cultural organisations work together to promote and safeguard traditional crafts, ensuring that the cultural legacy is preserved for future generations. The implementation of *Seni Tekat* and the design of *Kerongsang Tok* are deeply rooted in Malay customs and traditions. Artisans and designers who honour traditional methods and motifs uphold the cultural integrity and historical continuity of Malay heritage. The incorporation of *Seni Tekat* motifs in *Kerongsang Tok* design not only enhances the aesthetic appeal of these traditional accessories but also plays a vital role in preserving and promoting Malay cultural heritage. By continuing this practice, artisans and designers

ensure that the legacy of *Seni Tekat* and its symbolic significance remain alive, serving as a source of pride and identity for the Malay community. By creating replicas of traditional clothing, teaching *Seni Tekat* to others, and incorporating it into modern designs, the art of knotting can remain an integral part of Malaysian culture for years to come.

In summary, the use of *Seni Tekat* motifs in *Kerongsang Tok* design contributes significantly to the preservation and promotion of Malay cultural heritage in addition to improving the traditional accessories' aesthetic appeal. By carrying on with this tradition, designers and craftspeople make sure that *Seni Tekat's* legacy and its symbolic meaning endure, giving the Malay community a sense of pride and identity. Preserving Malay cultural heritage is crucial to maintaining the identity and unique characteristics of the Malay community. It also plays an important role in promoting cultural diversity and understanding in Malaysia. To ensure the preservation of Malay cultural heritage, it is essential to educate and raise awareness among Malaysians about the importance of cultural heritage. This can be done through various means, such as cultural festivals, exhibitions, and educational programs. Additionally, the government can implement policies to support the preservation of Malay cultural heritage, such as providing funding for cultural organisations and heritage sites. It is the responsibility of all Malaysians to work together to preserve and celebrate the rich cultural heritage of the Malay community for future generations to enjoy.

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