

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY OF
MALAY TRADITIONAL METAL
CRAFT IN MALAYSIA**

SYED MOHD FAISAL BIN SYED AHMAD

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the traditional Malay metal craft, a centuries-old practice deeply rooted in the community's culture and heritage. This craft encapsulates the Malay people's beliefs, aspirations, and resilience, originating in Kelantan, Malaysia. The significant value of design, function, and craftsmanship has its own identity, representing the Malay people's lifestyle, culture and practices. Aesthetically, the designs and motifs combine floral elements into beautifully balanced patterns of waves and spirals. Furthermore, the literature review shows that most traditional Malay metal craft designs and practices are correlated to the theory of biomimicry, which values nature through mimicking and learning. However, recent studies indicate a deterioration in the metal craft industry, particularly in silverware, raising concerns about its potential extinction. Modernisation in the current era requires the integration of new traditional approaches to support the continuity of this industry. This research aims to identify the development and strategies of potential practices in reviving traditional Malay metal crafts in Malaysia. Adapted by the Quadruple Helix Model, it concentrates on sustainable industrialisation and cultural heritage preservation. Methodologically, this study gathers data using qualitative research, consisting of literature reviews and ethnographic descriptive research. Observations, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussions were conducted to gather direct information to collect genuine and rich data. In addition, there is a list of expert informants with various backgrounds, including local artisans, practitioners, entrepreneurs, academicians, government agencies, and end users, who contributed direct information to strategies in an effort for the outcome of this research. A thematic analysis of each data collection provides significant findings in formulating a Framework of Sustainability-Centric Integrated Practices (SCIP) that potentially revitalises the metal craft industry and benefits local communities, government agencies, and academics. The results of this research were obtained by integrating traditional craftsmanship with technological trends through the concept of 'moditional' and Malay Biomimicry Design Spiral (MBDS). Through knowledge transfer, the research fulfils the encouragement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) with focus on promoting learning opportunities, to preserve and to augment Malaysia's heritage in the metal craft industry.

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I humbly hope this research will benefit the arts and creative industry while promoting socio-economic growth within the community. Importantly, this research also yearns to foster appreciation on the knowledge and values of art and design not only within Malaysia but further beyond.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
CONFIRMATION BY PANEL OF EXAMINERS	ii
AUTHOR'S DECLARATION	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
LIST OF TABLES	x
LIST OF FIGURES	xiii
LIST OF PLATES	xviii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xxi
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Research Background	1
1.3 Research Motivation	2
1.4 Main Issue	4
1.5 Problem Statement	4
1.6 Research Aim	8
1.7 Research Questions	8
1.8 Research Objectives	8
1.9 Significance of the Study	9
1.10 Structure of the Thesis	12
1.11 Limitations	14
1.12 Delimitation	15
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW	16
2.1 Introduction	16
2.1.1 Introduction of Craft	16
2.1.2 Classification of Craft	18
2.1.3 Global Craft Trends	20
2.1.4 The Contribution of Craft to the Economic	21

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the research topic, its context, and its background. The subsequent sections will outline the research questions, research objectives, and significance. The thesis structure steers the writing from describing the research background which connects it to the contextual problem and motivation for the researcher to peruse further into the research questions and objective. Subsequently, the aims of the research are reflected in the significance of the study after delineating the research limitations.

1.2 Research Background

The traditional Malay metal craft has thrived for more than two centuries which started with influences from the Hindu-Buddhist Srivijaya Kingdom in the 15th century and colonial British-Malaya in the 19th century. The design practice mostly symbolises living expressions of an esoteric and deeply rooted language in the Malay culture. Most metal craft designs and philosophies are derived from nature to represent their beliefs, dreams, aspirations, and strengths. The Malay metal craft industry originates from the state of Kelantan, a prolific place that is also known as the ‘cradle of Malay culture’ and holds a lifestyle that is rich in arts and cultures. However, metal craft it is experiencing a gradual decline in Malaysia as the world moves into the third millennium of the 21st century.

Prior studies have disclosed that Malay metal artisans created intricate metal craft designs with refined characteristics and subtle values. Such practice in traditional metal craft demonstrates an intellectual act of showcasing the local’s culture and traditions. Further findings from previous studies have highlighted the decline in acceptance and demand for metal crafts with reasons which include the diminishing number of skilled metal artisan thus, locating and reaching them is almost obscure. Reportedly, the decline is also contributed to high production and material costs. Astonishingly, it was also identified that contemporary audiences considered current