

The Visual Representation of Malaysian Cultural Identity in 1950s Printmaking Artworks

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ABSTRACT

Printmaking is one of the categories of visual arts that is still practiced and plays an important role in the development of visual arts in Malaysia. In the production of printmaking artworks, the representation of images or visuals is important in reflecting the artist's background, which is often closely related to understanding history, heritage, or culture. Nonetheless, there is a lack of written material that analyze the Malaysian cultural identity and its relevance to Malaysian printmaking art scene, particularly in the development of printmaking artworks. This research identifies the visual representation of Malaysian culture, which was portrayed in Malaysian printmaking artworks in the 1950s to justify the characteristic of Malaysian culture from the perspective of images and symbols. The method for identifying Malaysian culture is through an integrative literature review and a few 1950s printmaking artworks have been selected to be analyzed based on Malaysian cultural elements through a content analysis approach. The outcomes of this research concluded that elements of Malaysian culture in the form of visual representation consist of material cultures, namely norms, symbols, knowledge, ceremonies, festivals, language, social structure, social institutions, and non-material cultures, which consist of art, architecture, artifacts, clothing, pastimes, and foods. These elements of culture have been portrayed as a visual representation in selected 1950 printmaking artworks and it appears as evidence that reflects the Malaysian past environment. These cultural elements' identification through visual representations contributed to the existing literature by exploring more cultural elements that will expand the understanding of Malaysian culture from the perspective of the visual arts.

Keywords: Visual Representation, Malaysian, Cultural, Identity, Printmaking Artworks



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1. INTRODUCTION

In the world of art, printmaking is just as common as sculpture, painting, and drawing. Printmaking is a process of image transfer to any surface. According to Abidin et al., (2013), the term "printmaking" encompasses a wide range of media used to describe the process of making numerous prints. This includes print products and artwork. In addition, in printmaking, a plate may be used as a matrix and a medium to develop certain images. Printmaking is a versatile visual art media that may be defined by its visual language, material, and processes (Abidin et al., 2013). Abidin et al., (2013) emphasized that printmaking techniques are divided into four major categories: relief, intaglio, planographic, and serigraphy. In addition to traditional printmaking methods, the new contemporary printing technology also includes digital print, photographic media, and hybrid processes that use both digital and traditional

methods. This statement demonstrates how quickly printmaking methods and technology are evolving with the changing times. Nowadays, traditional and modern printmaking artworks have been produced using a variety of printmaking techniques and concepts that have been explored from time to time.

Yet there aren't many literature or artworks that explore Malaysian printmaking and its relationship to the Malaysia's cultural identity, especially in the creation of modern printmaking artworks. It has been observed, according to Yatim, (2009) that certain aspects of Malaysian society today make little effort to debate issues including culture and activities that sustain social values. As a result, it might be challenging to apply concepts relating to the Malaysian language, values, disciplines, and spirit. This includes the understanding of culture through visual representation in visual arts such as printmaking.

The development of contemporary Malaysian art is centered on the process of national modernization, and it includes visual arts, cartoon art, literature, and other sorts of art in Malaysia's cultural development (Sim, n.d.). In Malaysia, visual arts like printmaking, painting, sculpture, and sketching have grown over time, and in printmaking art, education, and industry, the relief printing method, intaglio printmaking method, and serigraph printmaking method are the three printmaking processes that are still used today. However, printmaking, on the other hand, is sometimes overlooked as a creative tool in the visual arts industry, though it is frequently regarded and recognized as a supporting component in the growth of visual art, garnering the attention of only a select group of art collectors (Abidin et al., 2013b).

Based on this notion, the goal of this research is to better understand Malaysian culture through the study of printmaking artworks done by Malaysian printmakers in the 1950s. The grounds for conducting this research in the first place include a limited of sources that critically assess Malaysian culture through visual artworks, less research on Malaysian printmaking industries, and the low exposure of printmaking artworks made in the 1950s. This is due to the fact that there are only a few accessible publications focusing on the history of Malaysian printmaking and its connection with Malaysian culture from the perspective of empirical research and advancement. Based on this situation, it is unquestionable that the aforementioned difficulties significantly reinforced and strengthened the research's problem description.

The contribution to the field of research on Malaysian cultural identities is what makes this research significant. This research will explore and emphasize aspects of Malaysian culture through traditional printmaking artwork, thereby simultaneously celebrating national unity. This research will highlight and celebrate the beauty of diversity in Malaysia as well as explore the distinctiveness of Malaysian via the visual representation in traditional printmaking that has been created by Chinese printmakers, hence, strengthening Malaysian art historical foundation. This research will enlighten and deepen cultural studies in art, which are crucial for comprehending national identity based on how culture has been adapted to the Malaysian social context.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Malaysian Printmaking Art Scene

Not only in the art of painting but printmaking in Malaysia is also one of the visual arts that have been used in recording cultural developments in Malaysia. According to historical data, the printmaking process has been utilized for hundreds of years, with parts of the printmaking technique being employed as a manner of exhibiting pictures prior to the introduction of photography technology (Haji Tahir, 2017). According to Mulyadi (2003), printmaking in Malaysia began during the British Colonial era, and at that time, to capture particular visual images, artists employed the printmaking process to reflect the beauty of the Malaysian panorama onto surfaces, whether it was the landscape or the aquatic life. The discovery of this method presented colonial artists with an alternative to watercolor and oil painting as a means of showcasing their work (Haji Tahir & Md Noor, 2010).

Table 2: Table of Malaysian printmaking development timeline until the 1980s according to Khoo & Mohamed (2012).

Year	Description
3000-4000 years ago	Stencilled hand print were found on the cave wall with charcoal drawings and paintings in East Sabah
1800s	Using watercolour and aquatint, a British artist portrays the magnificent beauty of Malaya
1770s-1860	Aquatint print by William Daniels and William James Huggins has been produced in Penang
1813	Aquatint print title 'Malaya' was on eBay auction at Fort Cornwallis, Prince of Wales Island
1846	A printing press was introduced to Malacca
1930s	Contemporary of Visual Arts begins in Malaysia
1940s	Contemporary printmaking arise with the introduction to woodcut printmaking into Malaysia by Nanyang Academy of fine Art's graduates.
1950s-1970s	Printmaking artworks from Nanyang Academy graduates were used as illustrations for Chinese Newspaper in Singapore
1952	Wednesday Art group was formed
1955	Nanyang woodcut printmaker's club was formed .
1956	Angkatan Pelukis Semenanjung was formed.
1960	Printmaking artist, Lee Joo For returned from his studies in Art and become a successful printmaking practitioner
1962	An Art Department was formed in the Specialist Teacher Training Institute (STTI) and this department provided a modest printmaking workshop with printmaking press machines for intaglio , lithography and type-setting printmaking technique.
1960s	Lee Joo For's printmaking artwork title Bird & Fish (1959) and a colored woodcut was collected by NAG
1960s	Chew Teng Beng and Chew Kiat Lim introduced monoprint printmaking artwork
1960s	T.Karan's monotype printmaking titled 'Flying Birds' was collected as part of NAG's collection
1963	Foreign Thai artist, Praphan Srisouta, hold print exhibition in Malaysia.

1964	Printmaking artist Phoon Poh Hoong submitted two colored monotype printmaking artwork titled 'Harbour & Market Scene' in NAG's annual exhibition.
1965	NAG collected five Lee Joo For's printmaking artwork
1966	Lee Joo For and Eng Sim represented Malaysia in the 15th International Biennale
1967	Institute Technology MARA has been established which includes the course of Fine Arts, Graphic Design, Photography, Ceramic, Textile, Fashion and Industrial Design.
1969	29 printmaking artworks has been collected by NAG
1969	New Scene Group has been formed
1970s	NAG become a platform in promoting printmaking
1971	National Cultural Congress was introduced by the Government
1972	Young Contemporary Competition was organized by NAG.
1973	The first printmaking competition organised by NAG
1973	NAG held a printmaking exhibition, where artworks by Long Thien Shih and Kok Yew Puah combined eastern and western elements.
1974	Chew Teng Beng stated that the National Art Gallery injected encouragement in visual art, however the emphasis was mostly on paintings.
1974	National Open Graphic Prints has been organized.
1974	Printmaking artist, Ilse Noor, migrated to Malaysia.
1974	NAG organised a printmaking exhibition to spark interest in the graphic arts industry.
1977	National Open Graphic Prints Competition has been held Lee Kian Seng has won this competition with his artwork titled "Of Image Object Illusion-Off Series Mechanism".
1978	Chew Teng Beng solo exhibition at Universiti Sains Malaysia Museum and Gallery.
1978	Art competition called Salon Malaysia was organized and Ismail Latif with his coloured intaglio printmaking artwork has won Honourable Mention prize.
1981	Three Artist Graphic exhibition was held at Wisma Loke, Kuala Lumpur Printmaking exhibition by Malaysian Artist Association (PPM) at Singapore
1983	Print and Drawing exhibition by Mustapha Haji Ibrahim at Hotel Equatorial.

1986	Lye Yau Fatt producing mezzotint printmaking artwork with a custom-made etching press.
1989	Printmaking get separate category in Salon Malaysian art competition.
1989	Chew Teng Beng has been selected to represent Malaysia in the 1 st ASEAN Symposium in Aesthetics under workshop and exhibition.

Khoo & Mohamed (2012) have detailed the development of Malaysian printmaking in the table above. As seen in the table above, printmaking artworks began to be recognized along with the emergence of Malaysian printmaking circa the 1950s. Years after that, printmaking recognition gradually developed, along with the government's support from the establishment of the National Cultural Policy in the 1970s as an effort in the nurturing of Malaysian culture.

2.2 Culture

Because culture changes through time and sometimes in parallel with the expansion of the world, there is a great deal of understanding and disagreement on what it is. Raymond Williams, a well-known philosopher, reportedly said that "culture" is one of the hardest concepts to comprehend and communicate (Batina, 2009). (Lebron, 2013) defines culture as an inclusive phrase that describes a society's way of life. According to Whiten et al (2011), culture influences a significant portion of human existence, and culture is often defined as anything that is continually learned to develop norms and traditions. According to Gill (2013), culture is a sharing of many cultural aspects, including beliefs, practices, knowledge, attitudes, and artifacts. These elements are connected to one another and have an impact on both the behavior of an individual and a community. Based on the statement described earlier, it turns out that there are various opinions and beliefs in debating the culture and its definition. However, in general, culture should be understood from various angles as it is a subjective discussion. In addition, culture is an individual's way of life or lifestyle in society, and culture is also often inherited or influenced by environmental factors in a community.

2.1.1 Malaysian Culture

Malaysia, as said in the introduction, is a nation renowned for its cultural variety. One of the country's draws for tourists is its distinctive culture, which has helped Malaysia establish a reputation as a land with a diverse range of cultural traditions. According to Deraman (2001), in Malaysian culture, two types of culture are material culture, which consists of living equipment such as houses, boats, and weapons. Or a non-material culture consisting of beliefs, customs, and laws (Deraman, 2001). However, (Md Nor, 2009) stated that the main elements that make up the understanding of culture consist of four important things, namely values, norms, institutions, and artifacts. Kim, (2009), on the other hand, explained that the diversity of the Malaysian race is not complicated, but it includes all forms of the country's political, economic, religious, social, and educational activities. Based on the statements above, in general, the elements that describe Malaysian culture are discussed from various different perspectives.

From a historical perspective, the Kadazan-Dusun, Iban, and Melanau races are among the three major races that have existed in Malaysia besides the Malays, Chinese, and Indians. The notion of taught, shared, global, transmitted, varied, iconic, and insight into nature serves as the foundation for cultural practice in Malaysia (Zulkefli, 2019).

Deraman (2001) asserts that culture and society are closely related. He continued by stating that it is believed that Hindu and Islamic influences, as well as historical developments made during the foundation of the Malaysian state, are what led to the development of Malaysian culture rather than Western influences. Cultural alterations may also result via assimilation, a societal shift, or a conflict of civilizations. Saat (2009) also explained that Malaysia is the most special country when compared to other countries in the world because although Malaysia is a small country, there is a diverse mix

of communities due to the diverse background of the population, including customs, culture, ancestry, language, and religion. He then added that It is this uniqueness that has made Malaysia the preferred destination for overseas tourism (Saat, 2009). The distinctiveness of Malaysian culture, which has been mentioned above, has also inspired and evolved the visual art scene in Malaysia, where images and symbols are mostly employed to convey the environment of Malaysian culture.

2.1.2 Malaysian Culture Elements and Its Definition for Malaysian Visual Art Study

Malaysian visual art is thought to have begun in Malaysia around 1930 because of the influence of English colonization, foreign immigrants, and the development of education (Sim, n.d.). The evolution of contemporary Malaysian art is built along the process of national modernization, and it encompasses visual arts, cartoon art, literature, and other sorts of art in Malaysia's cultural development (Sim, n.d.). According to some historians, Malaysian art began in the 18th century as a result of evidence showing the scene in Malaya involving European colonials, Chinese traders, and explorers (James, 2012). Because of the collision of regional cultures and spiritual traditions that occurred during the migration of traders and during the colonial invasion of Malaysia, it is thought that art, culture, tradition, and customs arise from the same atmosphere (Aminullah & Mohamed Khairuddin, 2003). The statement that has been mentioned again confirms the reality of how art and culture in Malaysia began along with the circulation of the times. Art in Malaysia at one time acted as a method of storytelling of Malaysian culture through visuals. This statement is evidenced by the production of artworks by artist Dato' Chuah Thean Teng. Dato' Chuah Thean Teng has used the art of Batik in interpreting the visual of rural life and kampung scenery along with the daily activity themes. According to Dato Chuah Tean Teng, he portrayed local views in his artwork to preserve the beauty of folk scenery before the wonderful visual experience vanished owing to the effects of growth (Chee Kuan, 2013).

2.3 RESEARCH CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Based on a knowledge of the concept of culture and its characteristics, this research has constructed a study framework that represents the whole structure of this research, beginning with cultural comprehension through a collection of definitions provided by previous literature studies. The gathered cultural elements are then classified based on their compatibility with Malaysian culture. The identified Malaysian cultural traits are utilized to analyze sample printmaking artworks created by Malaysian artists in the 1950s.

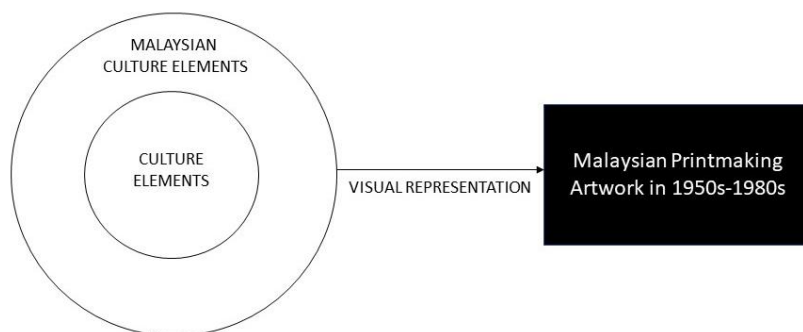


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework for the Study Malaysian Cultural Elements and its relationship with Malaysian Printmaking Artworks.

3. METHODOLOGY

The research method used for this study is the integrative literature review method, where literature related to the definition of culture, types of culture, cultural characteristics, and cultural elements, as

well as Malaysian cultural characters and elements, is collected to formulate a cultural understanding, focusing on Malaysian culture. Later, the cultural elements that were collected were categorized according to the theme and used as the research framework for this research. Following that, 3 samples of printmaking artworks created in 1950 were described using content analysis methods based on predetermined cultural elements. These artworks were analyzed through artifacts observation process, where the results of the analysis process formed a new structure for identifying cultural elements and their relationship with visual artworks that can be used as a reference for future researchers and can even be used by visual artists in the process of producing their artworks.

4. THE DISCUSSION OF MALAYSIAN CULTURAL ELEMENTS

In determining the characteristics of the cultural elements that develop a culture, as explained at the beginning of this writing, several literature reviews that have talked about cultural elements have been collected.

Drew (2022) for example, has stated that cultural elements consist of norms, language, festivals, rituals and ceremonies, holidays, pastimes, food, architecture, religions, values, taboos, sports, clothing and outfits, music, social hierarchy, symbols, dance, and art. Prior to that, Kaur & Kaur (2016) had also explained that culture consists of two categories i.e. material and non-material, where non-material consists of values, norms, language, rituals, and symbols. Materials are also such as objects, arts, and institutions. In contrast, Lebron (2013) explained that there are several researchers, such as Hofstede (1991), Trompenaars (1993), Czinkota, Ron Kanen (1993), and Kanungo (2006), who have agreed that cultural elements consist of Language, Economics, Religion, Policies, Social institution, Class, Values, Status, Attitudes, Manners, Customs, Material Objects, and Education. However, Tharp (n.d.), in his writing, explained that rituals, myths, languages, values, and beliefs, are the main elements in cultural understanding. On the other hand, according to Eriksen (2004), EB Taylor (1981), who is a philosopher in the field of culture, has said that cultural elements are knowledge, belief, art, morals, customs, including experiences, or behaviors of an individual in a society.

Apart from the studies collected from books and articles, literature studies from the website are also given attention to acknowledge the elements of the culture as well as strengthen the understanding of the culture.

On Study.com website, there is a description of where the culture consists of social organization, customs, religion, language, government, economy, and art (*Types, Elements & Subsets of Culture*, n.d.). While open.lib.umn.edu states that culture is derived from elements of ideas, symbols, artifacts/physical items (*The Elements of Culture*, n.d.). On the other hand, sociologygroup.com stated that culture is built through language, norms, beliefs, symbols, values, and cognitive elements (*What Is Culture: Basic Elements of Culture and Features*, n.d.). Historyplex.com added that culture consists of Language, Social Structure, Customs And Traditions, and Arts (What Are the Basic Elements of Culture? n.d.). Referring to the literature mentioned earlier, to understand Malaysian culture, the elements mentioned earlier have been categorized and adapted to the cultural concepts that have existed and that have been practiced by the Malaysian community.

Table 1: Table of Malaysian Cultural Elements and the description

Malaysian Culture			
Non-Material Culture	Description/Sample	Material Culture	Description/ Sample
Norms	Malaysian society’s way of life consists of attitudes, beliefs, morals, taboos, religion, customs, policies, manners, ideas, and myths according to multi-races practices and cultures.	Art	Earthenware, ceramics, metal handicraft, wood handicraft, handwoven crafts, batik, traditional kites such as "Wau", weaving items, "Songket" fabric, and pottery are among Malaysia's well-known traditional arts (<i>Famous Handicrafts and Arts of Malaysia</i> , n.d.).
Symbols	National symbols-Malaysian tiger and Hibiscus flower (Kamal, 2019). Traditional Symbols – Wau Bulan (Traditional Kites)	Architecture	Traditional architecture, Colonial architecture, Modern architecture, Regional architecture, Post-Modern architecture, Nouveau or Pseudo-Nouveau architecture, and Green architecture are all types of Malaysian architecture (Wahid et al., 2021).
Knowledge	Malaysian education institutions, Malaysian cultural institutions such as the National Museums in Kuala Lumpur, Perak Museum in Taiping, Sabah Museum in Kota Kinabalu, Sarawak Museum in Kuching, Islamic Arts Museum in Kuala Lumpur, National Art Gallery, and National Theatre Center in Kuala Lumpur (Security of Malaysia, n.d.).	Archaeologic al Artifacts	Artifact found in Malaysia
Ceremonies	Malaysian celebration ceremonies such as birth, baptism, naming, graduation, marriage, anniversary, retirement, and funerals. These ceremonies are often held according to the culture of each race in Malaysia.	Clothing and Outfit	Clothing in Malaysia is usually according to the race and ethnic in Malaysia. As an example, Baju Kurung and baju Melayu are for the Malays, Cheongsam and Tang Suit are for the Chinese and Sari and Dhoti are for the Indians.
Festivals	Among the celebrations celebrated by the Malaysian community are according to the practice of each race, and among the celebrations celebrated is Hari Raya Aidilfitri for the Malays, Chinese New Year for the Chinese, and Christmas for Christians (<i>Malaysian Culture</i> , n.d.)	Pastime	Malaysian traditional pastime activities includes Congkak, Batu Seremban, Sepak Takraw, Gasing, Wau (Kun & Mat Nayan, n.d.). Malaysian modern pastimes involve gadgets, games, and social media.

Language	<p>Since Malaysia is a multi-racial and multi-ethnic country, the languages and dialects used as a way of communicating in Malaysian society are diverse. However, Bahasa Malaysia is the official language of Malaysia.</p>	Food	<p>Traditional food in Malaysia is according to the culture of a community. In fact, Nasik Lemak is the food of the Malays, Yong Tau Foo and Hokkien me is Chinese food and Roti Canai, Thosai is an Indian food (<i>Cuisines in Malaysia</i>, 2018).</p>
Social Structure	<p>Kinship- Older and experienced people are more respected Social system- A person who is better educated or as an example, a person who is skilled in mastering a third language has a high position in the community system (Evason, 2016).</p>		
Social Institution	<p>Social institutions include the family, the media, education, the economy, and the government (Nickerson, 2022). Malaysia is also a country that has institutions consisting of the family, the media, education, the economy, and the government.</p>		

According to the aforementioned classification, Malaysian culture encompasses more than simply diversity. To avoid ambiguity in the description of Malaysian culture, the components of Malaysian culture need to be discussed in full. This is due to the fact that the majority of past literature focuses more on Malaysia, which is rich in ethnic and cultural variety, than describing the specific components of the culture.

4. The Visual Representation of Cultural Elements in 1950s Printmaking Artwork

As more students began learning the art of woodblock printmaking in the 1950s, the Nanyang Academy established a woodcut printmakers society in 1955. Since then, artists like Foo Chee San, Lim Yew Kuan, See Chen Tee, and many others have been among society's active members (Thien Shih, n.d.). Empathetic studies of the poor in Malaya and Singapore, such as depictions of manual laborers, street hawkers, and living in urban slums and kampongs, seem to have inspired the images and visual presentation of social concern in printmaking artworks of the 1950s era. Until the 1960s, these themes were reportedly unchanged (Thien Shih, n.d.).

In the process of analysing the contents characterized by cultural elements in the selected 1950 printmaking artworks, Erwin Panofsky's iconography theory is used. According to Erwin Panofsky, the iconography theory has 3 main levels, namely Pre-Iconographical Description, Iconographical Analysis, and Intrinsic Meaning or Content (Panofsky, 1972).

Table 2: Table of The understanding of Theory of Iconography by Erwin Panofsky

Level	Theory of Iconography	Description	Remarks
1	Pre-Iconographical Description	A "practical experience" is the fundamental, natural, or real representation that must be brought to analysis when observed (Willette, 2013)	Observing objects or subjects that are viewed externally.
2	Iconographical Analysis	The "knowledge of literary sources" means; translating images into a conventional meaning (Willette, 2013).	Translate the objects and subjects with a specific meaning or message in the form of representations.
3	Intrinsic Meaning or Content	a "synthetic intuition," or iconological analysis, is a study of the culture that created the original sign. iconology necessitates that the viewer is familiar with the history of cultural symptoms (Willette, 2013).	Interpreting and associating the subject based on the knowledge of the cultural, historical, or social environment.

Referring to the understanding in table 2, three printmaking artworks that had been produced in the 1950s were selected for content analysis based on Malaysian cultural characteristics using Erwin Panofsky's iconographic theory approach. This process is important in identifying elements of Malaysian culture that exist in visual form. In addition, artwork is a platform to convey a message to others in addition to sharing expressions and emotions in the form of visual works.

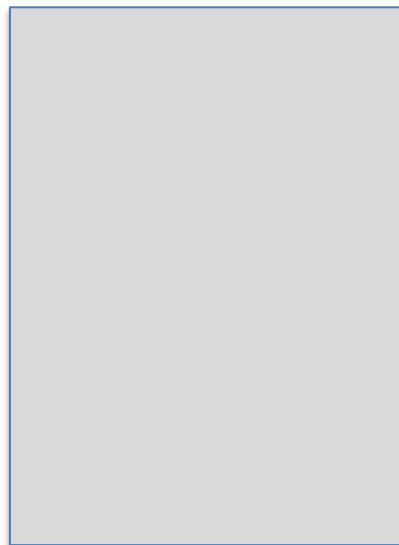
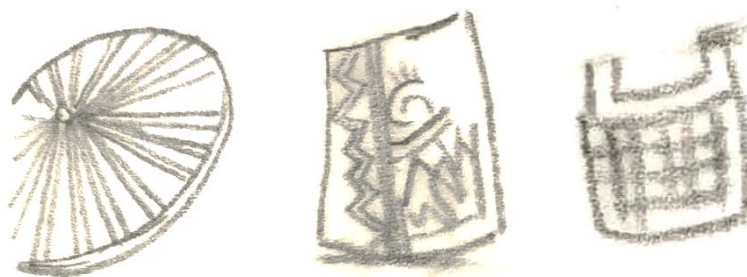


Figure 1: Cheong Soo Pieng, Fruit Hawker, Woodcut print on paper, 23cm x 18cm, 1952
 Source: (*The Single Leaf: Woodblock Printmaking*, 2012) (This artwork won't be completely visualised in this study in order to protect the artist's copyright).

Pre-Iconographical Description - As explained in the description above, Cheong so Pieng's printmaking artwork entitled 'Fruit Hawker' has been produced using a woodcut printmaking technique in a size of 23cm x 18 cm. The artwork, which was produced in 1952, depicted several subjects, such as figures of three individuals, clothes, and a dog. Among the other objects seen in this artwork are an umbrella and a wheeled cart.



Figures 2, 3, and 4: Chinese Umbrella, Batik Cloth, and Handbag



Figures 5, 6, and 7: A Man, Headgear, and Dog



Figures 8, 9, and 10: A man's cloth, a wheel, and fruits on a wheel cart

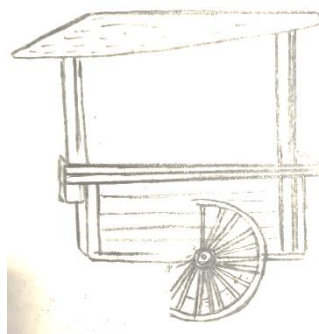


Figure 11: Full Image of wheel cart

Iconographical Analysis – In this artwork, three fully clothed figures and one animal figure have been depicted in dynamic positions. The first figure is depicted holding an umbrella and a bag and wearing a batik sarong. The second figure is depicted sitting behind a wheeled cart, and the third figure is standing next to an animal figure identified as a dog. The third figure's hand position shows as if it is holding something. When viewed from the clothing worn by the three figures, the first figure has the potential to be identified as a woman because she is depicted dressed in batik cloth, holding a bag and an umbrella. It coincides with the traditional features of women's wear in the 1950s in Malaysia. The second figure is described as a male characteristic because figure 2 appears not to be dressed but wearing headgear. Figure 2 also has the potential to be seen as a fruit seller (referring to the title of the work)

because of the image of a piece of cloth that has been placed over the shoulder. It coincides with the style of a fruit seller who often puts a cloth on the shoulder for the purpose of cleaning the outlet or for the purpose of wiping his hands. Figure 3 is depicted as a man dressed in short sleeves shirt, and he is wearing a headgear that looks like a songkok, a Malay male headgear. Figure 3 also depicts standing next to the dog, where the position is reserved like a dog and its master.

From the elements and principles of the art point of view, the colors used in this work are black and white, hence developing the effects of carving skills from the woodcut printmaking technique. Through the carving technique, the diversity of lines is generated in constructing the shapes and forms of each subject in this work. This artwork shows a cohesive balance when the deep space is developed resulting from the foreground (Figure 3 and figure dog), middle ground (Figure 2 and wheeled cart), and background (Figure woman in batik cloth). The production of this artwork shows that the artist wanted to portray the daily routine of Malaysian society and their way of life.

Intrinsic Meaning or Content – Cheong so Pieng is among Singapore-born artists and is famous for using the image of Malay and Balinese women as the main subject of his artwork. The style within each of his artworks is also influenced by the Hindu, Chinese, and European styles (*Cheong Soo Pieng (Singaporean, 1917–1983)*, n.d.) The images of Malay and Balinese women can be seen in his paintings artworks such as *On the Way Home* (1975), *Long House Inhabitants* (1975), and *Ladies in Sarawak* (1977).

Different from his artworks that were produced in the 1950s. The printmaking artwork titled 'Fruit Hawker', which was produced in 1952, is seen visualizing the Malaysian cultural element through the images of the social activities of the local community. As categorized in the development of the Malaysian Cultural framework (refer to Figure 1), some of the cultural elements that have been identified include:

Norms: This artwork seems to describe the lifestyle and daily routine of the local people hence reflecting the norms of Malaysian culture. Through the visual of women wearing batik cloth, the use of headgear on figure 3 shows that there are cultural elements that are closely related to the traditions of the local community. The artist Cheong Soo Pieng has clearly reflected the diversity of Malaysian culture through the clothing style of each figure in his artwork. The presentation of Figure 2, which is described as fruit seller, also symbolizes the economic pattern that was being carried out by the local community at that time hence, part of the Malaysian norms.

Social Structure: In this printmaking artwork, social structures exist where there is a connection between the seller and the buyer. Although it cannot be identified which figure represents the buyer, based on the composition and position of the figures, it visualizes a clear social structure. Another relationship in the social structure that has been identified is the relationship between figure 3 and the figure of the animal. The figure of the animal is depicted close to the position of figure 3, and the posture of the animal's body indicates a close relationship with the figure, such as the relationship between the master and his pet. Having a pet is not something that is alien to the Malaysian community because besides being a companion, pets such as dogs also perform their duties as farm keepers or to keep their master safe. These images are strong evidence that the social structure between humans and animals has been established for a long time.

Social Institution: When it comes to social institutions, the economy is one of the elements of Malaysian culture that helps the development of Malaysia. Placing the title of artwork like 'Fruit Hawker', also clearly explains the economic patterns of the local community. Malaysia is one of the countries rich in agricultural activities where agriculture is one of the country's sources of income.

Clothing and Outfit: As stated earlier, this artwork has featured figures with different clothing styles considering Malaysian culture are based on the multi-racial concept. There are two kinds of clothing styles that have been depicted in this artwork. First, the women's traditional clothing, such as batik cloth, and equipped with accessories such as the Chinese umbrella. Second, the wearing of short-sleeved clothes is visualized on figure 3, which is matched with headgear such as Songkok. Apart from wearing traditional clothes such as 'Baju Melayu', 'Samfoo' or 'Dhoti' cloth, short-sleeved or long-sleeved shirts were also among the clothing style that was often worn in the 1950s. Apart from that, the persona of Figure 2, which is described as a fruit seller, is conveyed memorably. Although the figure is not illustrated in full dress, the presence of a small towel stuck to his shoulders is enough to complete the disposition of a fruit seller.

Food: As explained earlier, Malaysia was a country that was rich in agricultural activities, especially in the early 1950s to 1970s. This statement is supported by the theme that artist Cheong Soo Pieng is trying to highlight. In addition to the title of his artwork, the visuals of the figure who plays a fruit seller with his wheeled cart have also been well portrayed. Although the image of the fruits on the sales cart is unclear (since it has been placed in the middle ground of this artwork), the images still clearly convey the seller's source of income by selling the agricultural product.

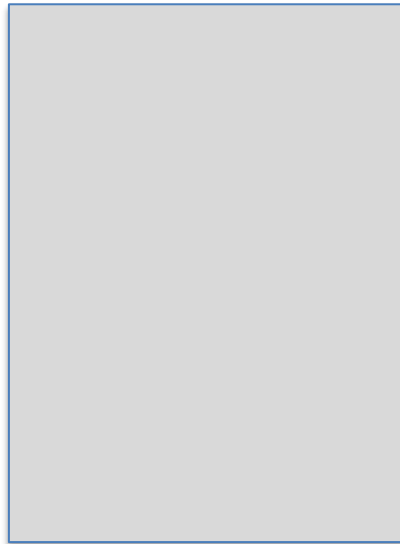
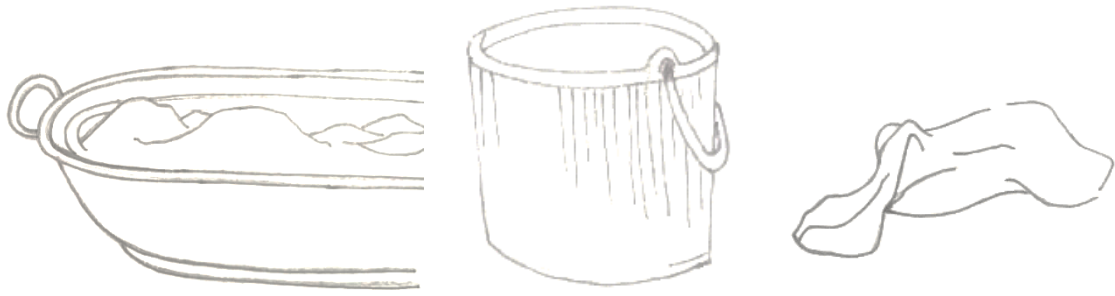


Figure 12 Tan Tee Chie, *Washing Cloth*, Woodcut print on paper, 16cm x 21.5 cm, 1953
Source: (*The Single Leaf: Woodblock Printmaking*, 2012) (This artwork won't be completely visualised in this study in order to protect the artist's copyright).

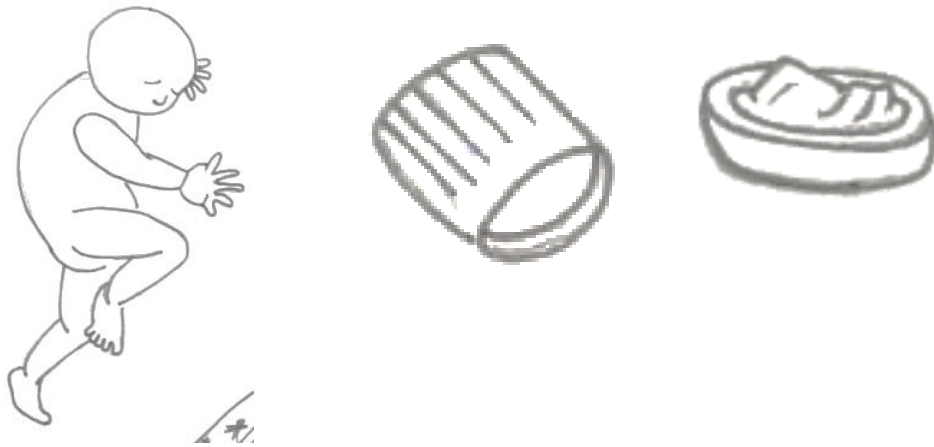
Pre-Iconographical Description - Tan Tee Chie's printmaking artwork entitled 'Washing Cloth' is also produced using a woodcut printmaking technique in a size of 16cm x 21.5 cm. The artwork, which was produced in 1953, depicted subjects such as a figure of two individuals, clothes, a basin, a bucket, a washing board, and a soap container. It is believed that the atmosphere and all of the subjects that are trying to be highlighted are related to the environments of the washing area or the bathroom in a village house.



Figures 13, 14, and 15: A woman, Batik Cloth and Washing board



Figures 16, 17 and 18: A basin, a bucket and a cloth



Figures 19, 20, and 21: A child, a container, and a soap



Figures 22 and 23: A sandal, and a woman's cloth

Iconographical Analysis – As illustrated in this work, there are two figures that have been made as the main subject. One of them is known as the adult female figure based on her wearing style. Figure 1 wears a plain cloth which suggests ‘Baju Kurung’ since ‘Baju Kurung’ is usually worn with batik cloth or Sarong. In addition, figure 1 portrays the position of the hands holding the clothes together with the laundry board. The image of clothes soaking in a basin and the visual of soap depicts the gesture of clothes washing which is a daily activity of the women in every house, especially in the village area. Together with Figure 1, Figure 2 is also depicted as small in size with a similar picture of the child's body shape. Figure 2 is also portrayed without clothes and not having hair. These characteristics

precisely match the characteristics of a child. Both figures are depicted with a dynamic composition where the composition is illustrated from the side angle, and the child's figure clings to the adult female figure, indirectly reflecting the relationship between mother and child.

From the point of view of elements and art principles, lines and shapes are produced accidentally from the carving technique since this artwork implements a woodcut printmaking technique. The variety of lines highlighted the pattern on the batik cloth hence reflecting the way the village women dressed. It has become a Malaysian culture to wear batik as a daily cloth. The colors used in the production of this artwork are limited since the artwork uses only black and white colors. Although minimal, the depiction of these figures has been clearly conveyed. The space of this artwork produced by Tan Tee Chie is a deep space where he places a female figure with his child as well as objects such as soap containers and a washing board in the foreground, a bucket and basin as the middle ground, and the wall as a background of artwork.

Intrinsic Meaning or Content – Artist Tan Tee Chie is a famous printmaking artist in Singapore's art scene. He was also a prominent figure in the printmaking woodcut art movement. Among his notable printmaking artworks is an artwork entitled 'Beggars', which was produced in the same year as the year of artwork entitled 'Washing Cloth', which was in 1953. 'Beggars' artwork is said to describe the fate and distress of the underprivileged in Singapore after the war took effect (*A Beggar*, n.d.). However, even though his artworks carried the social theme of Malaysian society at that time, he still adapted elements of Malaysian culture as part of the identity of his work. Among the elements of Malaysian culture that have been identified are:

Norm- In this 'Washing Cloth' artwork, cultural characteristics such as custom have been identified by looking at the way the adult female figures are portrayed. The clothes worn look almost the same as the character of 'Baju Kurung', which is also a traditional dress for Malay women. The clothes worn by the women figure also matched with batik cloth as well as confirming the existence of traditional elements in this artwork. The women's figure also symbolizes Malaysian culture, where the style of the body position reflects the usual habits of Malaysians when doing any activity on the floor.

Social Structure- In this artwork, the artist Tan Tee Chie clearly illustrates the lifestyle of the middle-class family by the placement of the composition of the figures as well as their association with the objects found in this work. The figure of a woman who is washing clothes on the floor is quite a reflection of a simple lifestyle. In addition, this artwork depicts the daily activity which is common for the middle-class community such as the villagers. Another symbolism of the social structure of Malaysian society in this work is the image of the shirtless child. Apart from being a symbol of the lifestyle of the local community, it also symbolizes the level of the social structure of the women and children in a community.

Clothing and Outfit- In this work, the cloth or outfit is not visualized much and is highlighted in visual form. However, the existence of batik cloth strengthens the elements of Malaysian culture in the production of this work. In addition, Batik cloth, Pelikat cloth, and Dhoti cloths are part of the everyday outfit of Malaysian society that has been inherited from generation to generation. The Batik cloth is not only worn by the Malays but also used by other races, such as the Chinese and the Indians.

Social Institution- One of the most significant cultural elements that are trying to be highlighted in this 'Washing Cloth' artwork is the element of social institution, namely the family institution. As explained at the beginning of this research, the figure of an adult woman and child reflects the symbol of the relationship between mother and child. The position of the child's character is visualized closely with the figure of the adult woman hence symbolizing how close the relationship is and the interdependence between each other. This element has become the strength of this work.

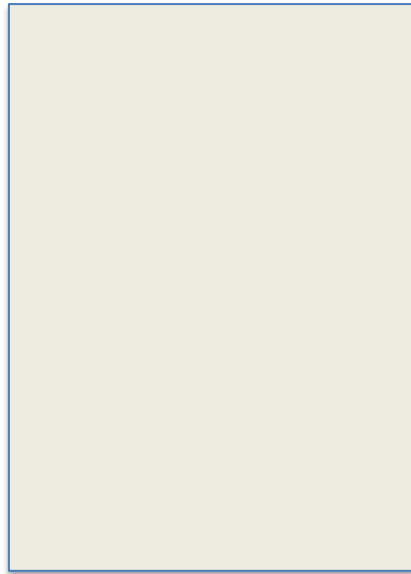


Figure 23: Tan Tee Chie, Newspaper Boy, Woodcut print on paper, 22cm x 16cm, 1953
Source: (*The Single Leaf: Woodblock Printmaking*, 2012) (This artwork won't be completely visualised in this study in order to protect the artist's copyright.)

Pre-Iconographical Description - Tan Tee Chie's printmaking artwork entitled 'Newspaper Boy' is produced using a woodcut printmaking technique in a size of 22 cm x 16 cm. The artwork, which was produced also produced in 1953, depicted subjects such as figures of two individuals, fully clothed. Other things include newspapers and objects that resemble a black bag. This printmaking artwork portrays the atmosphere of the side of the road. This is because there is an object which looks like a signboard in the Chinese language depicted as the background of the work.



Figures 24, 25, and 26: A Man in the background, a man in the foreground, and a pants



Figures 27, 28, and 29: A Man's shirt, a man is wearing a suit and a pattern as background



Figures 30, 31, and 32: A Newspaper, and a sandal,

Iconographical Analysis – This artwork depicts two figures with a masculine character, with Figure 1 on the back completely clothed in modern and neat attire and Figure 2 on the front wearing a short-sleeved t-shirt and shorts. At that time, shorts were a common way of attire in the Chinese community. Figure 2 is also pictured holding newspapers, enough to tell about his work as a newspaper seller. Two distinct lifestyles are subtly described by the visual of two different dressing methods. Figure 2's facial expressions include a yelling expression as well. Indirectly, it portrays the methods used by newspaper vendors, who would call people who wish to purchase a newspaper. If observed, the language on the signboard and at the head of the newspaper is written in the Chinese language. This is due to the fact that the Chinese are also part of the Malaysian community, including the Malays and the Indians. Overall, the composition of each image is not complicated, and the presentation of the narrative is very clear. The images depicted successfully illustrate the narrative of the daily life of the Malaysian community at that time.

Based on the elements and principles of art, just like the two artworks that have been explained above, the lines and shapes are built resulting from the carving skills that the artist implements. The use of such minimal colors as black and white does not interfere with the presentation of the narrative of this artwork. In fact, the overall composition of the artwork is seen as a result of a significant approach to the construction of deep space. The space in this printmaking artwork is built with the placement of Figure 2 on the front as a foreground, Figure 1 on the back as a middle ground, and other objects such as signage and walls as a background, thus creating a balance in the entire work. The unity in this work is generated when all the subjects present in an artwork play a role in shaping storytelling.

Intrinsic Meaning or Content – As explained in the description of the artwork, Artist Tan Tee Chie's artwork titled 'Newspaper Boy' is one of the works that was produced in 1953. Just like the works 'Beggars' and 'Washing cloths', the printmaking artwork titled 'Newspaper Boy' also raised social issues in Malaysian society. The theme also presented images of the daily routine of Malaysian people at that time. Among the cultural elements that are visualized through this printmaking artwork include:

Norms- As seen in this artwork, there are images which that visualize the simple lifestyle of Malaysians at that time. There is an image of Figure 2 selling newspapers on the side of the road with a facial expression suggesting that the figure is calling customers, hence supported by Figure 1 at the back, which is depicted dressed and walking leisurely. It clearly shows that the people of Malaysia at that time were busy carrying out their lives in their own way.

Symbols and Languages- Symbols that can be seen in this artwork are the symbols of Chinese words, which are visualized through the image of signage. It directly tells about the Malaysian environment, which includes Chinese races other than Malays and Indians. As we know, the Chinese are also among the races active in the business field. The visualization of the signage in Chinese does strengthen the statement that the Chinese have also contributed to the growth of the Malaysian economy. In addition, the Chinese symbol is also seen on the head of the newspaper, indicating that the newspaper is only for the reading of people who speak Chinese and are able to read in Chinese. It also suggested that there is a printing business that also contributes to local economic growth.

Social Structure- Although there are only two types of figures being illustrated in this printmaking artwork, it is enough to explain the position of the social structure of the two figures in a community. This is because looking at the way the figures are being composed clearly shows the difference in terms of employment and status. Figure 2 is portrayed as a simple character with a small job, while Figure 1 is drawn with a neat-looking character hence reflecting a different status compared to Figure 2. It is

generally known that rank and status have existed in a Malaysian community for a long time. In each country, status and position are different according to the lifestyle in a community.

Social Institution- Referring to the element of social structure, the title of this artwork has indirectly described the economic growth through the visual of process business activities. The activity of selling newspapers was part of the evidence in stressing the local community's economic situation at that time. As explained in the description of the work 'Washing Cloth', the artist Tan Tee Chie often addressed the life of the underprivileged in most of his artworks. Based on this notion, through 'Newspaper Boy' artwork, it is clear that the involvement of middle-class people in small-scale economies, such as newspaper businesses and small shops businesses, has also been a Malaysian culture.

Clothing and Outfit- Referring to the explanation of norms and social structures, how these two figures are dressed plays an important role in interpreting this 'Newspaper Boy' printmaking artwork. There is the influence of modern clothing imposed by both figures, thus bringing the perception that the atmosphere depicted is an atmosphere around the city rather than in a village surrounding. The image of Figure 2 wearing a short-sleeved shirt with shorts and the image of Figure 1 wearing a complete suit highlighted the element of modernity in this work.

Overall, although the way these figures are portrayed is somewhat different from the traditional elements conveyed in the artwork titled 'Washing Cloth', artist Tan Tee Chie still applies the essence of Malaysian culture through the embodiment of Chinese calligraphy on the signage and the head of the newspapers. Elements of Malaysian culture are still outstanding through the selection of objects and the placement of the subject's composition.

5. RESEARCH LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The limitations of this research are limited to some samples of printmaking artworks that were produced in 1950. There is little evidence of printmaking artworks produced in that era, whether in book searches or online sources. Therefore, in order to develop more detailed research on cultural elements in visual arts, several samples of 1950s artworks are needed so that analysis of other cultural characteristics can be executed. For future studies, researchers can use several samples of printmaking artworks from different years or eras so that the change in the concept of Malaysian cultural elements visualized in visual form can be identified and the patterns of change can be analyzed.

6. CONCLUSION

The exploration of cultural visual representation in printmaking artwork was selected as one method of understanding Malaysian cultural features because it is an unwritten proof of culture that is conveyed in the form of images or symbols. Generally, previous literature analyses solely covered cultural aspects in writing; nevertheless, visual evidence such as visual representations in artwork might either confirm or refute the beliefs about Malaysian cultural aspects. It turns out that there are more aspects of Malaysian culture than what Deraman (2001), Md Nor (2009), and Kim (2009) have explained after this research analyzing the aforementioned printmaking artworks.

Through this research, it can be concluded that elements of Malaysian culture consist of non-material cultures, namely norms, symbols, knowledge, ceremonies, festivals, language, social structure, social institutions, and material cultures, which consist of art, architecture, artifacts, clothing, pastimes, and foods.

This identification of Malaysian cultural elements is crucial because it added more elements to Deraman, (2001a), analysis of culture, in which he stated there are two main types of culture present in Malaysian society: material culture, or the culture of objects like houses, boats, and weapons, and non-material culture made up of laws, traditions, and beliefs. Also, Md Nor (2009) analysis of culture, stated that cultural elements consist of four important things namely norms, values, institutions, and artifacts. Plus, Kim (2009), explained the diversity of the Malaysian race includes all forms of political, economic, religious, social, and educational activities. This research demonstrates that there are several

Malaysian cultural components that have not been investigated and clarified in writings or artworks and that many questions need to be resolved, particularly with regard to the elements, features, or characteristics that describe Malaysian culture.

Overall, printmaking artworks that were produced in 1950 have indirectly highlighted the elements of Malaysian culture that influenced the development of Malaysia, especially in the field of visual arts. These artworks are naturally seen as evidence of the development of national ideology and a reflection of Malaysian history. Although in 1950, the National Culture Policy ceased to exist, the sense of preserving Malaysian culture has become part of the artist's goals in the making of their artworks. Throughout the beginning of time, intangible and tangible aspects of Malaysian culture have served as a representation of the Malaysian national identity.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

All of the researchers that participated in this research made contributions at various points during the investigation. The process of data collecting, the establishment of the research framework, the structuring of the study methodologies, and the discussion in the formulation of the conclusions of the study are all areas in which each member makes a contribution.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No Conflict of Interest

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Tarikh : 20 Januari 2023

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Saya yang menjalankan amanah,

Setuju.

27.1.2023

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