

Article Info:

Received Date: 06 January 2021

Accepted Date: 15 April 2021

Published Date: 01 June 2021

Corresponding Author: faizsabri@uitm.edu.my

The Applicability of Awan Larat Motif on Contemporary Building Design

Muhammad Faiz Sabri¹, Norhazila Mohd Rafien², Muhammad Uzair Ismail³, Mohd Mihilael Afiq⁴, Safa Fekri Taher⁵, Mohamad 'Abi Safwan⁶

¹ Department of Art and Design Education, Faculty of Education, Universiti Teknologi Mara
Kampus Puncak Alam, Malaysia

^{2,3,4,5} Department of Art and Design, Faculty of Art and Design, Universiti Teknologi Mara
Kampus Puncak Alam, Malaysia

⁶ Department of Communication, Faculty of Communication and Creative Industries, Tunku
Abdul Rahman University Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

To cite this article (APA): Sabri, M. F., Mohd Rafien, N., Ismail, M. U., Afiq, M. M., Taher, S. F., & Safwan, M. 'Abi. (2021). The Applicability of Awan Larat Motif on Contemporary Building Design. *KUPAS SENI: Jurnal Seni Dan Pendidikan Seni*, 9(1), 81-92. <https://doi.org/10.37134/kupasseni.vol9.1.8.2021>

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.37134/kupasseni.vol9.1.8.2021>

ABSTRACT

After the coming of Islam in the 14th century, the artistic craft development of the Malay society has shifted more on the concept of Tawhid which is to achieve the understanding of the oneness of God. As a result, one of the Malay traditional ornaments which are called 'awan larat' serves as a symbol that was decorated in most traditional Malay houses to portray the significance relationship between man, the universe and its Creator. However, due to the modernization these days, this traditional form of the motif is slowly being neglected and refuse to apply to contemporary buildings due to technological advancement as well as lack of interest and appreciation among Malay society. Therefore, this study aims to understand in depth the significance of applying this motif to the contemporary building as a matter to increase the level of awareness among Malay society regarding the values of the Malay Cultural Heritage. Experts and scholars from the background of Malay cultural studies were chosen to gain various significance perspectives of 'awan larat' and its appropriateness to be applied on contemporary buildings. Results and findings from this study found that time, cost and personal preferences of patrons were the factors that influenced the lack of appreciation in implementing 'awan larat' as a decoration on contemporary buildings. It can be established that awan larat has a unique character, which allows versatility for it to be used in various forms and purposes which have its own values and uniqueness to be uplifted. Hence, it is important to ensure that this area of study needs to be revised and uplifted in order to sustain its spirits in subsequent years.

Keywords: Awan larat, traditional Malay houses, contemporary buildings, Malay woodcarvings, sustainability.

INTRODUCTION

'Awan larat' is considered as a portion of ornament that usually found in the architecture of traditional Malay houses in Peninsular Malaysia. It is amongst the noticeable craft and decoration that have been made by the Malay craftsmen in illustrating their perception of attractiveness skilled and aesthetic towards the surrounding environment. The adoration to show the magnificence is a piece of the commitment of Malay craftsmanship to the Creator and as a blessing to his fellowmen (Mohd Taib Osman, 1997). Since the coming of Islam to the Malay world in the 14th century, the influence of Hinduism in the lives of the Malay people had slowly diminished. Islam came as an attempt to

describe the teachings of the religion as a whole and the philosophy of Islam is important as to defend the doctrine of the religion through rational arguments (Yunizar Ramadhani, 2020). Islam had influenced all aspects of life in Malay society (Andaya, 1982). One of the aspects is the Malay traditional motif which called 'awan larat' that was produced concentrating on the concept of Islamic teachings. As a result, Islamic values began to be embedded in these ornaments. Motifs of living things that had previously been important began to change to plant motifs in stylized forms (Abdul Halim Nasir, 1986). Philosophically, motifs created in awan larat are composed in the form of plants leaf in stylized form due to the reason that Islam prohibited designs that are based on the depiction of living things such as man and animals (Lamy, 1985). Awan larat motif serves as decorations, and some of the motifs with the translucent technique have their own functions, namely as a vent. Because of a lack of awareness about the motif among Malaysian society, it is now left unappreciated, and this leads toward the extinction of awan larat.

Awan larat is one of the important elements in the traditional Malay motif which is used in decorating traditional Malay houses (Abdul Halim Nasir, 1986). The uniqueness and beauty of the traditional Malay motif often get multiple reactions towards the Malay community either with appreciation, respect, preservation, or documentation (Mohammed Badaruddin et al., 2019). However, most people nowadays no longer apply awan larat in the development of the building because they do not appreciate the aesthetics and cultural value in the motif. On top of that, observing to the construction building including houses that constructed in recent years, it has increasingly developed from time to time. However, a large amount of construction waste was generated during construction, which seriously affected the quality of the ecological environment (Lili Peng & Shiqing Huang., 2021). The space in the structure of the Malay houses nowadays have become more complex and thus the identification and naming of semantic elements could not be handled properly (Maisarah Ali et al., 2020). According to Che Husna Azhari (personal communication, April 25, 2016), the usage of the Malay traditional ornaments such as awan larat in designing a contemporary building is lack due to the reason that the Malay society has influenced by modernization. Most traditional Malay houses today do not reflect the original vernacular house in which it has turned into a design that has a mix of modern design elements (Yasmin Yaman & Rohaslinda Ramele & Nor Ariff., 2021). This factor somehow contributes toward less interest and less awareness about the aesthetic value of the motif itself. According to Utaberta and Sojak (2013), they claimed that altered perception lead the newer generation to gradually abandon their interest in the decorative art, thus leaving the arts and ornamentation slowly being forget and unappreciated. Therefore, this research is conducted as an effort to raise awareness among Malay society regarding the values and aesthetics of this motif simultaneously to understand in depth the significance of applying this motif to the contemporary building. All these actions were taken to sustain the values of the Malay Cultural Heritage while preserving this motif for future reference.

This study is important since the findings would help to reintroduce the significant of awan larat motif and its beauty as it is slowly being forgotten, especially by the younger Malay generations. Therefore, it is vital to preserving the motif because it represents the traditional Malay cultural identity through its ornamentations. On top of that, this research is significant for academician and researcher to develop a new framework or guideline of knowledge by gaining the information needed to sustain the awan larat motif. This study would also serve as future references for researchers in filling the gap of the common research problems. It will also be useful in educating the public, especially youth generations regarding awan larat motif with its ornaments and decoration in contemporary buildings design, at the same time sustaining the motif as a highly aesthetic art form.

OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

In order to achieve the aim of this research, several objectives were outlined as mentioned below:

- 1) To identify the motif of awan larat in selected contemporary building design.
- 2) To examine the function and the uniqueness of awan larat motif in selected contemporary building design.
- 3) To analyze the relevancy of implementing awan larat motif on contemporary building design.

Research Questions

As to meet the research objectives, three research questions were proposed as followed:

- 1) What are the elements of awan larat motif found in selected contemporary building design?
- 2) To what extent the functions of awan larat motif will contribute towards enhancing the beauty of contemporary building design?
- 3) What is the significance of using awan larat motif on contemporary buildings?

The study only covers awan larat motif, particularly flora and its application on contemporary buildings. This study is also delimited on the philosophy, function and placement of awan larat motif on the selected contemporary buildings namely Royale Chulan and Malay traditional house. The study found that awan larat has a unique character which is versatile and can be used in various forms and purposes. However, the motif is commonly used for aesthetic purpose only. Despite the finding, it is still necessary for awan larat to be used in contemporary building design to sustain the cultural value that can be displayed through the motif. Results from this study would aid in the effort to resuscitate the motif as an aesthetic creation that symbolizes Malaysian identity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Philosophically, motifs created in awan larat are composed in the form of plants leaf in stylized form due to the reason that Islam prohibited any designs that are based on the depiction of living things such as man and animals. Since the coming of Islam, a motif of nature or arabesque was a style that is often used in Malay traditional ornaments. The motifs of awan larat that were being projected in Malay traditional houses has its own function, which is to express the concept of tauhid; thus it can develop a relationship between man and his creator in an abstract form (Ismail Said & Ahmad Saifudin Abdullah, 2001). Malay architecture reflects a person's gratitude towards his environment, and it devours spiritual, ethical and cultural values. This can be seen in the embellishments that can still be found in traditional houses, namely carvings. These embellishments do not exaggerate and follow the concept of tauhid, as well as the concept of respect to the mother, which considered as the guardian of a family, in the Malay world. According to Syed Ahmad Jamal (1994), he stated that the function of the carving is used in Malay houses as to enhance their beauty with controlled patterns, which are kept within bounds. This as an effort to make a design of a building stands out clearly. Thus, these carvings play their role as contributors to the overall appearance or as supporting elements for the form.

The basic principle design that rules Malay carving is called awan larat. The term awan larat can be directly translated as 'stretching clouds. It is a metaphor for the movement of dancers' hands, about life and nature as well as a mirror of Islamic philosophy (Haziyah Hussin, Zawiyah Baba & Aminuddin Hassan, 2012). According to Wan Mustapha, Norhaiza, Latif, Abas and Abdul Raman (as cited in Kamarudin & Said, 2010), the motif of awan larat typically symbolizes an emerging plant from a flower, a vase, plant seed or root. There are four rules that control awan larat; (1) the spaces must be alike where elements in the carvings must be equally spread over the arrangement, (2) the

spaces between the elements in the arrangement have to be just about the same size as the carved components. This is in line with the laws of Islamic art, which states that images appear in the composition must be balanced with its hidden character (void), and both require emphasis to appear balanced and well-adjusted, (3) the elements in the carvings must be plants, as traditional Malay woodcarvings do not usually depict presentation of human or animals to meet the general accepted Islamic view about the form of a representational image. The motif of plants is essential to Islamic art, (4) there is a central motif usually called 'ibu', typically in the form of a flower, vase, leaf or branch and the design must be repetitive around it. Wan Mustaffa Wan Su (as cited in Kamarudin & Said, 2010) claimed that the repeated design around ibu that is generally used in the awan larat motifs are leaves, flowers or buds that creep and spiral and extended.

Wan Su Othman (as cited in Kamarudin & Said, 2010) stated that awan larat depicts that in this world, there are things that we could not tell the beginning while we know it exists, but as a human, our sense is not capable of retrieving the answer. This can be seen in awan larat motif, we can see the elements creep around each other, but we could not tell which element is the beginning. Wan Mustaffa Wan Su (as cited in Kamarudin & Said, 2010) stated that every flow of the awan larat carvings has compositional meaning. For example, the motif 'Kepala Kala' symbolizes the beginning of the world. All events that happen in the world begin with a date, for instance, birth, death and marriage. This differs from the nature of Allah, who does not have the beginning and is time immemorial. According to Wan Mustaffa Wan Su (as cited in Kamarudin & Said, 2010), kepala kala represents the life of human in this world that has the beginning and ending, while the carvings that the kepala kala could not be retrieved, it signifies Allah's oneness. Wan Mustaffa Wan Su was also famous with another form of awan larat which is Awan Larat Beribu. This form of carving fills all the area of carving space. It is usually carved in the center where the space is still empty. The philosophy behind this type of carving is the level and characteristic of mother (ibu) which is a person who controls all space. By the statements claimed by Wan Mustaffa Wan Su, it can be concluded that awan larat motif mostly speaks about religion and spirituality.

Contemporary ideology of building design nowadays has given a new paradigm to most of the developers as well as the owner of the house or building. Due to global climate change and sustainable green development concerns, the emerging trends in the past few years focusing on the development of buildings have been highlighted. To reduce high consumption costs in the development of structures, the suitable design and materials of the structure remains an ongoing challenge (Shah, R., Pandit, R. & Gaur, M., 2021). When it comes to the sustainability of the building itself, it merely focusing on the current trends and future needs. It influences the design in which it is aimed to create a highly flexible plan that allows the building to sustain for a long time. A flexible plan of the design is meant where the structure of the building can be used longer and could prevent the negative impact which could harm the building. Therefore, most developers and people prefer to use durable materials in designing their houses and buildings. Hence, this study has taken into considerations whether the selection of the traditional motif design such as awan larat could be applied and suitable to be used on contemporary building design nowadays.

Placement of Awan Larat Motif

Local values embedded in the Malay decoration is a reflection of the values of faith (iman) towards Allah, harmony, wisdom, love, fertility, self-knowledge, and responsibility (Juliana J. & Hetty Zaharani., 2019). According to Ismail Said and Zumairah Kamaruddin (2010), the motif and woodcarvings usually signify the identity of the region. There are distinct placements of the ornamentation in traditional Kelantan and Terengganu houses. In a typical traditional Terengganu house, the carving panels of awan larat were usually arranged vertically, creating a pattern on the walls of the rumah ibu, giving them a distinctive look and separates them from the traditional Kelantan house. The awan larat also create visual interest in the traditional Terengganu houses. Other than the walls of the rumah ibu, in the study done by Ismail Said and Zumairah Kamaruddin (2010), it was revealed that the most common component of the traditional houses that usually fits the carvings

of awan larat was the ventilation panels of windows, door, railings on verandah and staircases, wall panels, leaves of doors and gates, the roof eaves, brackets and gables.

The placements of where the carvings were located in the house also provide a different function. Ismail Said and Zumairah Kamaruddin (2010) stated that the awan larat carvings usually provide natural ventilations, namely natural lighting and air ventilation. These ventilation panels of awan larat carvings are usually located on the upper section of the wall, windows and door panels. The carvings of awan larat can also be found on the traditional room divider, which is called 'pamidang'. Pamidang works as space, area or room separator in a traditional house. Other than functioning as a ventilation device, the awan larat carvings were also used for privacy. Ismail Said and Zumairah Kamaruddin (2010) stated that the awan larat carvings on the serambi or verandah (balcony), create a form of barrier from the outside world. This shares common function with the pamidang. The intricate detailing of the carving allows the tenant of the home to have visibility from inside the house without having the need to go out and at the same time, people from the outside were unable to see through the carvings.

METHODOLOGY

The research design used for this study is exploratory, which is mainly qualitative in collecting primary data. Exploratory is suitable because this study addresses a topic with a high level of uncertainty and ignorance or when the problem is not very well understood. For instance, this study addresses the subject of awan larat motifs which is not familiar and understood by everyone in general (Ismail Said and Zumairah Kamaruddin, 2010).

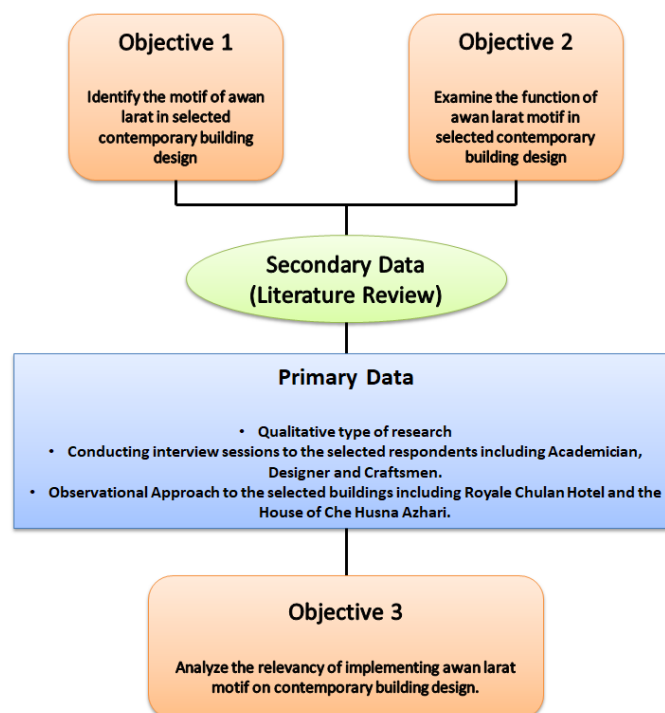


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework.

Sample and Procedure

Due to the qualitative nature of this study, the primary data is collected by conducting a series of interview sessions with selected respondents. As a result, four samples were selected using the purposive sampling method. Purposive sampling can be defined as a process whereby the researcher

selects a sample based on the experience and knowledge of the selected respondents (Hajimia, 2014). Therefore, the respondents involved an academician from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi, an interior designer from Kuala Lumpur, a property agent from Shah Alam and a craftsman who is practising awan larat design from Besut, Terengganu. These respondents have been chosen as it shows the relevancy in answering the objective of this study as well as could contribute towards strengthening the knowledge pertaining to the awan larat. Personal interview sessions were conducted by asking them nine semi-structured questions in order to encourage them to talk freely and more in-depth (Harwell, 2011). Findings from the interview sessions were then combined with visual research and analysis of selected buildings decorated with awan larat ornamentations namely Royale Chulan Hotel and The House of Che Husna Azhari. The visuals were analyzed by adapting the visual semiotic model introduced by Roland Barthes (1977), which consists of a denotation and connotation (Chandler, D, 2014). This was done in order to observe and understand the philosophy, motif, functions and placements if it were to be applied to contemporary buildings.

On the other hand, secondary data is gathered from multiple written sources such as journals and publications, collected from other researcher's primary data (Hox & Boeije, 2010). Secondary data were used as a source of additional information to analyze the previous study that was conducted on the same topic. Therefore, this study mainly used written documentary sources such as publications, journals and websites that can be retrieved efficiently from subscribed library databases and online journal publications (Hox & Boeije, 2010).

Measures

The interview questions can be separated into three categories: philosophy and motifs of the awan larat, function and placement, as well as practice and application on contemporary building design. Based on the findings gathered from the interview sessions and visual analysis, four main variables were analyzed. These variables are 1) philosophy and motifs of awan larat, 2) placement of awan larat, 3) function of awan larat as well as 4) application of the awan larat motifs on contemporary buildings. The data from the interview sessions were analyzed and transcribed using the reading and annotating theory by Ian Dey (1993). As for the visual analysis, the visual semiotic model introduced by Roland Barthes (1977) was applied. The denotation is used to analyze and identify the motif, placement and function of the awan larat. On the other hand, the connotation is used to understand its philosophy, significance and application on contemporary building design.

RESULTS

Visual analysis: The usage of Awan Larat motif in contemporary Hotel

Researchers had selected two types of contemporary building to study on how the awan larat motifs were used. The buildings selected were Royal Chulan Hotel in Kuala Lumpur and a modern house that still uses awan larat as decorations as parts of the house. From the observation, these different types of buildings were used for different purposes. There are several prominent functions of the motifs applied in the buildings. One of the most prominent functions of the awan larat motifs is as decorative elements. The hotel possessed a traditional theme; therefore, the usage of traditional motifs, especially the awan larat motifs can be seen throughout the hotel as decorative elements. The location of these motifs can be found mainly at the main lobby, the façade of the hotel as well as in the restaurant.

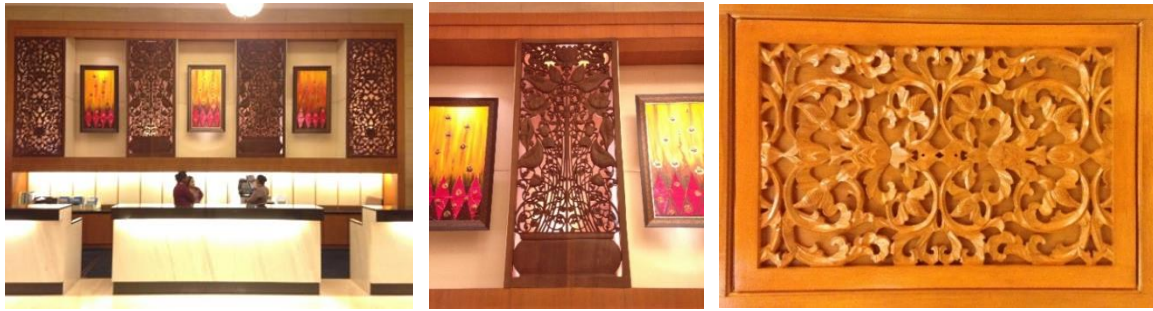


Figure 2. Decorative elements found throughout the hotel lobby.

Figure 2 shows awan larat motifs that were used as decorative elements found throughout the Royal Chulan Hotel in Kuala Lumpur. Picture (a) and (b) display the hotel lobby that use wooden panels with awan larat motifs as the wall decorations. These panels clearly shows the concept of Awan Larat Beribu, which the vase acts like the ‘ibu’ or ‘punca’ (source) of the emerging plants. According to Hamdzun Haron, Nor Afian Yusof, Mohamad Taha and Narimah Abdul Mutalib (2014), “There were several reasons for this, among them was due to its role in Malay’s life as decorative plants to beautify the house’s surrounding such as bougainvillea, orchid, hibiscus, sunflower, chrysanthemum, amaryllis, gardenias and sida. Some also function to flourish and scented the garden such as rose, jasmine, ylang-ylang, frangipani and Spanish cherry. Usually, these plants were planted on the ground or in a flower pot.” The other two panels on the upper wall display another type of awan larat, ‘Awan Larat Jawi’ which uses the ‘teknik tembus’ (translucency technique) on the carvings. The panels with holes were placed on top of a lamp and act like a lampshade that casts beautiful shadows when the lights are turned on. Picture (c) is a decorative panel found on the wall of the hotel lobby. The awan larat motif carved on the wooden panel is ‘motif bunga semangat’. “Bunga semangat and lotus applied as a motif in handicraft came from the influence of Hinduism” (Hamdzun Haron et al., 2014, p. 174).

Another function of the awan larat motif is privacy. In the restaurant inside the Royal Chulan Hotel, the awan larat motifs on the wooden panel serve as a decoration as well as to provide privacy. The motifs provide privacy for diners inside the restaurant from the outside, similar to the usage of the awan larat motifs on ‘pemandang’ in the traditional Malay houses. Figure 3 below shows a picture of a private dining area in the hotel restaurant. The motif used is similar to the decorative panels on the hotel lobby, which is the Awan Larat Jawi that were carved using the ‘teknik tembus’.

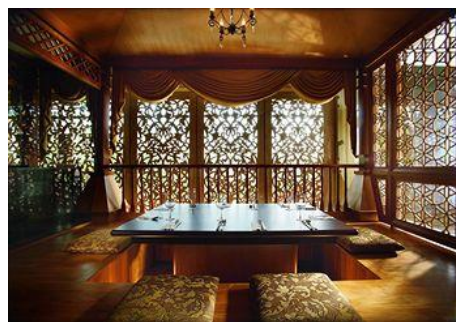


Figure 3. The usage of awan larat as a privacy device as well as a decoration.
(Source: <http://bh.cleartrip.com/hotels/info/the-royale-chulan-kuala-lumpur-341559>)

The awan larat motifs were also used for weather protection for the building. Awan larat motifs were carved on the roof eaves on the building not just to beautify the façade of the building, but also prevent the splattering of the rain when it is raining at the same time providing shade from the sun during the day. It is quite essential in almost every structure in the traditional Malay houses where it is based on the priority functions such as the climate, the environment and local culture that trigger the use of decoration (Othman Nor et al., 2021) In figure 4, motif used on the eaves share common

characteristics with other wooden decorative panels inside the hotel namely Awan Larat Jawi that were carved using the technique ‘tebuk tidak silat’. ‘Awan larat tebuk tidak silat’ can clearly be seen on the ‘sesiku keluang’ on the hotel eaves.



Figure 4. The usage of Awan Larat motif as weather protection device.

Visual analysis: The usage of Awan Larat motif in contemporary House

For this category of building, the house of Che Husna Azhari was chosen for the purpose of this study. Unlike the hotel, a house is more intimate and personal therefore, the usage of awan larat is a little bit different compared to the usage of the motif in the hotel. Generally, Malay houses can be recognized from the shape, structure, roof and decorative finials. It is also enriched with ornaments and carved panels with their philosophy and meaning (Gun Faisal & Yohannes Firzal., 2020). Owner of the house used the awan larat motif as an enhancement at the entrance of the home. The awan larat motifs were carved at the main entrance of the house, making it more prominent and has a focal point.



Figure 5. The usage of the Awan Larat motif as an enhancement for the entrance house.

Figure 5 shows the implementation of awan larat motif on the main entrance of the house, which also called ‘*pintu gerbang*’ in Malay. The carvings displayed on the body of *pintu gerbang* and ‘*gunungan*’ (upper panel of the *pintu gerbang*) are ‘*ketam guri*’ motif. It is one of the most famous motif of awan larat but hardly known by younger generations. “Bunga ator, kerak nasi, gedong, ketamguri, asam batu, sarung cekak and cabit are among the plants less known by today’s generation but very popular and useful to Malays of the past.” (Hamdzun Haron et al., 2014, p. 179). This is one of the many ways’ Malay people used to appreciate the beauty of God’s creation. Hamdzun Haron et al. (2014) stated that is Malays of the past speciality in respecting natures and displaying their sensitivity towards environment created by God.

The awan larat motif was also displayed as a piece of artwork or wall decoration in this house. The wooden panels consisting of awan larat motif were used as an artwork at the feature wall to symbolize the heritage of the homeowner, which is the Malay traditional culture. According to

Sabrizaa Rashid et al. (2021), as to beautify the decoration of the house, it is also has constructed to metaphor spiritual factors such as religion, cultural values, and way of life. Figure 6 shows a wooden panel used as a decoration on the interior wall that visibly displays ‘sulus bayung’ pattern. This awan larat motif shows the fineness of human’s character while the curvy leaves represent Malay’s politeness. The motif also symbolizes Allah nature that has no beginning or end (Hamdzun Haron et al., 2014).



Figure 6. Wooden panel a wall decorations

Another function of the awan larat motif that can be seen in this house is the ‘pemidang’ that functions as an area or space separator. The awan larat motifs were carved into a series of panels, which were then used as a space separator to create different spaces within the same area. Pemidang is not permanently mounted; therefore, it is flexible to be moved around to be used in different spaces for different occasions. Figure 7 below shows a picture of pemidang or space separator used in a contemporary house. The awan larat motif carved on the panels used the ‘ketam guri’ flower motif that symbolizes spirit (semangat). Sumardiashah Silah, Ruzaika Omar Basaree, Badrul Isaa and Raiha Shahanaz Redzuana (2013) stated that “The structure must be balanced and harmonious with the whole structure. Based on the characteristics of the motif, it is arranged proportionately to be framed or in boundary during the first phase. The main structure line should move in parallel and interlay with the flower and leaf motif in order to make the eye focus on the internal area of the motif.”



Figure 7. Awan Larat motif decorated on the panels which called as *Pemidang*.

Interviews

The significant value of awan larat in Malaysia has shown a deep impact in the past, but as years go on until the current generation era, the art form practices of awan larat have decreased tremendously. For instance, according to all four interviewees' feedbacks being recorded, most of them stated that the practice of awan larat had been practised within a small group of artists and craftsmen, which can

be seen mostly in Kelantan and Terengganu only. Interviewee C (personal communication, May 21, 2016) claimed that due to the fact that only a small group practised awan larat, the aesthetic value of it is not well known in all places; causing no new generations to continue the art practices of the motif. On the other hand, besides gaining information on awan larat's practices, functions in traditional architecture and applications in contemporary designs were achieved as well. Interviewee A (personal communication, May 11, 2016) and Interviewee B (personal communication, May 17, 2016) claimed that the functions of creating and applying awan larat on traditional houses are basically the purpose of providing natural ventilation such as air and light to enter the house. This function is similarly to the function of the motifs in the traditional Malay houses, as stated by Ismail Said and Zumairah Kamaruddin (2010). The other interviewee mentioned that awan larat found in pemidang that is used to separate sections in houses, functions to indicate and develop spaces for people to earn shelter and comfort value, as well as create dramatic emotions on the panels. Even though awan larat has beneficial functions in the form of traditional Malay architecture design, the applications of awan larat on contemporary designs were mostly used for aesthetic purposes unlike the tremendous usage and functions of the motifs in the traditional architecture (Interviewee D, personal communication, May 22, 2016).

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Based on the interviewees' responses, the production of awan larat has costs time, effort and a huge amount of expenses. The price of applying awan larat is extremely high and will take some time to finish up the process due to the lack of numbers of craftsmen to complete the carvings. The cost of making awan larat will exceed RM5,000 to RM10,000 depending on the design and the measurement of the motif. This is because awan larat motif usually being carved originally from the high quality of handmade skills of the craftsmen. Therefore, people prefer to use alternative ways which could cost cheaper than handmade. Some people may appreciate and consider applying this motif in designing their home, but some of them might not due to less of interest. On the other hand, not many people appreciate the value of awan larat because everyone has their own taste in designing their contemporary houses and building designs. Another factor that makes the awan larat motifs so expensive is the cost of the materials and the workmanship of the art form. The use of wood and hiring skill craftsmen highly requires money and time to apply awan larat on contemporary designs, explaining the root cause of limitation of having awan larat on the contemporary house and building designs.

Based on the observations done at the Royale Chulan Hotel, Kuala Lumpur, the awan larat was used throughout the building and served different purposes. In the Bunga Emas Restaurant inside the hotel, the awan larat motifs were used to provide natural light and air ventilation as well as to provide privacy, creating a social atmosphere for the guest to enjoy their meal. According to Ismail Said and Zumairah Kamaruddin (2010), the awan larat motifs were commonly used in the traditional Malay houses to provide natural air and light ventilation. These practices of the motifs were practical to be still implemented in the contemporary design as proven by the usage of the motifs in the restaurant. The motifs were also used throughout the main lobby serving as an aesthetic purpose. The elements decorated the main spaces of the hotel such as the façade, the lobby, the restaurants and the elevator lobby.

The uniqueness of applying awan larat as a decorative element also creates enhancements of beautification on walls in all kinds of locations. The awan larat motif comes in various types of designs and applying on walls revealed the attractiveness of traditional Malay architecture on guests and tourists. Awan larat motifs were also carved on the wooden roof eaves that provide weather protection from the rain as well as the sun. The motif can also be considered as a decorative element where guests and tourists can see the aesthetics of awan larat from outside Royal Chulan hotel rather than going inside instead. The findings of the observation done in a contemporary house also discovered many usages of the motifs. Based on the discourse done with the interviewees and

observation, awan larat motif can be implemented on other mediums such as metal, ceramics or porcelain to reduce the cost of production, while sustaining the awan larat as part of Malaysian cultural identity. Study about awan larat on other mediums can be carried out by future researchers.

CONCLUSION

The study found that awan larat motif possessed unique qualities that made the motifs versatile and flexible to be used in various forms and purposes. The variety of usage allows the motifs to be practically implemented in contemporary designs. However, the motif is not well established among the public due to the lack of understanding of the philosophy as well as the diversity in the usage of the motifs itself. The findings of this research had proven that the motif of awan larat is still relevant to be implemented in contemporary designs. However, there are still some limitations preventing the implementation in contemporary designs, but this could be easily overcome. Therefore, it is important to withstand the usage of the awan larat motifs in contemporary designs in order to sustain the cultural value displayed through the motifs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Awan larat has been practiced tremendously in the past, but the aesthetic value of having awan larat in the modern world has significantly shown that its value is decreasing dramatically because of less appreciation, time, cost and effort. Contemporary houses mostly consisted of concretes and rather than focusing on creating awan larat on wood materials, it is necessary to apply and carved them on modern walls instead. Believing that its value should be on wood, it can be applied in any kinds of places within a house or building in order to maintain the awan larat value. The drawback of achieving awan larat carvings on contemporary designs is the high price of expenses and the long amount of time to carve awan larat. This matter is caused due to the little number of craftsmen and sculptors and the philosophy and cultural value of awan larat should be increased so the Malaysian society can be exposed to the knowledge about the richness of the awan larat motives' art value.

The use of awan larat in contemporary buildings design should be applied accordingly so that this element of Malay identity could be sustained. Another way of integrating the motifs in contemporary designs is through the alterations of the building material and the method of producing the motifs. Unlike the traditional method where the carvings were hand-produced, with the technology available nowadays, faster ways of producing the motifs could be applied such as 3d printing, or even making a cast of the carving and mass-produce the motifs. This way, the cost of producing the motifs could be significantly be reduced, thus allowing the applications to be implemented in contemporary designs.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Firstly, we wish to send our gratitude for allowing us to complete this research and writing. Other than that, appreciation goes to our colleagues namely Norhazila Mohd Rafien, Muhammad Uzair Ismail, Mohd Mihilael Afiq, Safa Fekri Taher and Mohamad 'Abi Safwan for their thought, support, ideas, and cooperation in assisting me to complete this research. Finally, with our deepest condolences, we dedicate this research to our colleague Mohd Mihilael Afiq for his point of view and effort while completing this research together. This piece of work is dedicated to you.

REFERENCES

- Abdul Halim Nasir. (1986). *Ukiran kayu Melayu tradisi*. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
- Andaya, B.W., & Andaya, L.Y. (1982). *A History of Malaysia*, London: macmillan Press Ltd.
- Barthes, R. (1977). Rhetoric of the image. In Heath, S. (Ed.) *Image, music, text*, pp. 32–51. London: Fontana
- Chandler, D. (2014). *Semiotics the basics*. New York: Routledge
- Che Husna Azhari. (2016, April 25). Personal communication.
- Gun Faisal., & Yohannes Firzal. (2020). Chinese-Malay wood carving: the Kapitan house at Bagansiapiapi. *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science*. 452. 012059. 10.1088/1755-1315/452/1/012059.
- Hajimia, H. (2014). Research method – sampling. Retrieved from <https://www.slideshare.net/hafizahhajimia/research-method-sampling>
- Hamdzun Haron., Nor Afian Yusof., Mohamad Taha., & Narimah Abdul Mutalib. (2014). Motifs of Nature in Malay Traditional Craft. *Middle-East Journal of Scientific Research*, 21(1), 169-180.
- Harwell, R. M. (2011). Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods: Pursuing ideas as the keystone of exemplary inquir. *Educational Psychology*.
- Haziyah Hussin, Zawiyah Baba., & Aminuddin Hassan. (2012). The philosophy in the creation of traditional Malay carving motifs in Peninsula Malaysia. *Geografia: Malaysian Journal of Society and Space*, 8(7), 88-95.
- Hox, Joop., & Boeije, Hennie. (2010). Data collection, primary versus secondary.. *Encyclopedia of Social Measurement*. 1. 10.1016/B0-12-369398-5/00041-4.
- Ian Dey. (1993). *Qualitative Data Analysis: A User-Friendly Guide*. Routledge, USA.
- Ismail Said., & Ahmad Saifudin Abdullah. (2001). *Spesis-spesis kayu dalam seni ukiran Melayu*. Johor Bahru: Penerbit UTM.
- Ismail Said., & Zumairah Kamarudin. (2010). Carving motifs in timber house of Kelantan and Terengganu: Sustaining Malay architectural identity [PDF Document]. retrieved from <http://fab.utm.my/ismail/files/2014/12/carving-motifs-in-timber-houses-of-kelantan-and-terengganu.pdf>
- Juliana J., & Hetty Zaharani. (2019). The Philosophical Revitalization of Malay Motif Ornament in the Design of Woven Gedebong (Catri N Art, Rimbang Sekampung Village). 10.18502/kss.v3i19.4868.
- Lamy, L. F. (1985). *Islam and art*. National Hijra Council. Islamabad: Pakistan.
- Lili Peng., & Shiqing Huang. (2021). Application of Building Informationization in Green Building Design. 10.1007/978-3-030-74814-2_48.
- Maisarah Ali., Puteri Shireen Jahn Kassim., Abu Dzar Samsudin., & Tengku Anis Qariah Raja Abdul Kadir. (2020). The Three Layerings of Malay Aristocratic Ornamentations: Survival of Semantic Categories Amidst Stylistic Changes.
- Mohammed Badaruddin., Simon Soon., Luqman Lee., Zaimie Sahibil., & Muhammad Luqman Mohd Saad. (2019). Theories and Methods in Analysing Traditional Malay Motif Designs: An Overview Comparison. *International Journal of Heritage, Art and Multimedia*. 56-71. 10.35631/ijham.25005.
- Mohd Taib Osman. (1997). *Islamic civilization in the Malay world*. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
- Othman Nor., Nordin Misnat., Haryati Isa., & Norashikin Karim. (2021). Space Organization in Perak Malay Traditional House. *Malaysian Journal of Sustainable Environment*. 8. 103. 10.24191/myse.v8i1.12663.
- Sabrizaa Rashid., Mohd Nurfaizal Baharuddin., & Kartina Alauddin. (2021). The History and Transformation Of Perak Malay Traditional House. *Malaysian Journal of Sustainable Environment*. 8. 71. 10.24191/myse.v8i1.12661.
- Shah, R., Pandit, R., & Gaur, M. (2021). Role of Building Design in Sustainable Green Development: A Review. 10.1007/978-3-030-61891-9_4.
- Sojak, S. D. B. M., & Utaberta, N. (2013). Typological Study of Traditional Mosque Ornamentation in Malaysia-Comparison Between Traditional and Modern Mosque. *World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology*, 67, 624-631.
- Sumardianshah Silah., Ruzaika Omar Basaree., Badrul Isaa., & Raiha Shahanaz Redzuan. (2013). Tradition and transformation: the structure of Malay woodcarving motifs in craft education. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 90, 823-831.
- Syed Ahmad Jamal. (1994). *Form & soul*. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
- Yasmin Yaman., Rohaslinda Ramele., & Nor Ariff. (2021). Modernization of Traditional Malay House in Heritage Village of Malacca. *Built Environment Journal*. 18. 23. 10.24191/bej.v18i1.11415.
- Yunizar Ramadhani. (2020). The Beginning of Islamic Philosophy. *Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Ushuluddin*. 19. 19. 10.18592/jiui.v19i2.3888.