

MALAY AND ISLAMIC TRADITIONS ELEMENTS THROUGH THE PAINTINGS OF MASTURA ABDUL RAHMAN, RUZAIKA OMAR BASAREEE AND HARON MOKHTAR

***(ELEMEN TRADISI KEISLAMAN DAN MELAYU MELALUI SENI CATAN
MASTURA ABDUL RAHMAN, RUZAIKA OMAR BASAREE DAN
HARON MOKHTAR)***

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Abstract

This study will highlight the elements of Islamic values and Malay traditions in the artworks of 20th and 21st-century Malaysian artists, namely Mastura Abdul Rahman, Haron Mokhtar, and Ruzaika Omar Basaree by discussing the elements of Malay values and Islamic traditions in respect of their artworks. The analyses focused on the artworks from 1980 to 2014, specifically Haron Mokhtar's "Zahir Mosque", Ruzaika Omar Basaree's "Siri Dungun" and Mastura Abdul Rahman's "House of Harmony" and "Interior No. 29". These artists' works were delivered according to the manifestation of the National Cultural Policy 1971, which highlighted the Islamic and local identity as the main idea and theme of the artworks of local artists. This study has used qualitative methods, which are interviews and observations of each work in the artists' catalogue as a process of collecting primary data. Meanwhile, secondary data were gathered through referencing academic works like books, journals, and magazines on Islamic values and Malay traditions in visual arts paintings. The analyses found that these works used Islamic art elements, like the "Thuluth" khat in "Zahir Mosque", as well as the combination of colour and flora motifs on "Siri Dungun". At the same time, they feature cultural elements, such as "congkak" and "Labu sayong" and traditional Malay ornamental design, which represent the Malay culture and philosophies.

Keywords: Expression of Malay and Islamic traditions, paintings, Haron Mokhtar, Mastura Abdul Rahman, Ruzaika Omar Basaree

Abstrak

Kajian ini menerangkan elemen nilai Islam dan Melayu tradisi terhadap karya seni catan pada abad ke-20 dan ke-21 iaitu artis yang bernama Mastura Abdul Rahman, Haron Mokhtar dan Ruzaika Omar Basaree yang membincangkan elemen-elemen nilai Melayu dan juga tradisi Islam pada karya seni mereka. Analisis ini berfokus pada karya-karya seni 1980 sehingga 2014. Terutamanya Haron Mokhtar dengan karya "Zahir Mosque", Ruzaika Omar Basaree dengan "Siri Dungun" dan juga Mastura Abdul Rahman dengan "Interior No.29". Kesemua artis ini telah menyampaikan idea utama seperti nilai Islam dan identiti tempatan sebagai tema dalam karya seni catan mereka mengikut manifestasi Polisi

Kebudayaan Kebangsaan pada tahun 1971 yang menekankan identiti tempatan dan Islam sebagai tema karya-karya artis-artis tempatan ini. Kajian ini menggunakan kaedah kualitatif, yang mana temu bual dan pemerhatian langsung setiap karya dalam katalog dan juga pengumpulan data secara primari. Sementara itu, kaedah kedua menggunakan data merujuk kepada buku-buku, jurnal, majalah ilmiah pada nilai Islam dan tradisi Melayu dalam visual seni catan. Analisis telah menemukan karya-karya elemen seni Islam seperti seni khat "Thuluth" terhadap karya "Zahir Mosque" dan juga kombinasi warna dan motif flora pada karya "Siri Dungun". Pada masa yang sama, ciri-ciri kebudayaan seperti congkak dan labu sayong dan reka corak ornamen sebagai tradisi Melayu yang menunjukkan budaya dan falsafah Melayu.

Kata kunci: *Ekspresi tradisi Islam dan Melayu, seni catan, Haron Mokhtar, Mastura Abdul Rahman, Ruzaiika Omar Basaree*

INTRODUCTION

The Malay-Islamic social image is an image featured in human expressions and culture and reflects the specialty of local craftsmen. The image of Malay culture is also found in local craft works (Noh 2013). As such, the image of Malay-Islamic culture is highlighted in the artists' works. It is inferred that craftsmanship acts as the moderator of the message and its significance. Artworks could also be used to illustrate the way of life, which is characterized as conviction, customs, standards, and as well as, the workmanship of a specific culture (Ismail 1986). This shows the Malay – Islam elements have become the convention and way of life of the locals. It reflects the significance of the Malay Islamic culture in influencing the social Norms practiced every day, including common respect, mingling as warranted by Islamic law (Idris et al. 2016). In this regard, arts help remind Malay-Muslim individuals of these cultural conventions and religious laws so that they can live according to them.

The Malays should follow the Malay Islamic culture as it presents a guideline everyday living and stays as a custom for the public. Ismail (2014) explained the Malay-Muslims also practice crafts and arts, including paintings for leisure and to generate income. While some produce crafts to fill their free time, many craftsmen, have used their artworks a source of income. The creation of these painstaking artworks, including paintings is an element that upholds the Malay-Islamic culture. These paintings artworks have an aesthetic legacy that must be protected for people in the future (Abdullah et al. 2020). The craftsmanship in these works reflects the significance of the Malay-Islamic culture, which represents the identity of the Malays, and Malaysia as a country.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the intrinsic and extrinsic meaning of the Malay traditions and Islamic values in the artworks by Mastura Abdul Rahman, Ruzaiika Omar Basaree, and Haron Mokhtar?
2. What is the subject of ideas and philosophies contained in the artworks by Mastura Abdul Rahman, Ruzaiika Omar Basaree and Haron Mokhtar?

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To identify the intrinsic and extrinsic meaning of Malay traditions and the Islamic value in the artworks by Mastura Abdul Rahman, Ruzaiika Omar Basaree, and Haron Mokhtar.
2. To examine the subject of ideas and philosophies contained in the artworks by Mastura Abdul Rahman, Ruzaiika Omar Basaree, and Haron Mokhtar.

LITERATURE REVIEW

As indicated by (Mohamed et al. 2019), the expression of ideas is local artworks in highly influenced by the local culture and societal norms in the country. In this regard, Islam plays a significant component in receiving the way of life and societal norms. As a result, Malay and Islamic culture have become inter-dependent and non-distinct elements in local artists' expressions of human experiences. Islam recognises Allah as the magnificent and only God. This belief dictates the way or procedure to introduce the truth. Thus, 'greatness' in Islam reflects the qualities of Allah. This notion opposes the ideas of 'greatness' in the West (Abdul Kadir et al. 2018). Aside from the standards and reasoning of Tauhid in the craftsmanship of Malay fine arts, this study will dissect the themes of Malay-Muslim culture to examine how artwork could be used to spread and maintain the Islamic belief. As indicated by (Al-Jafari & Ahmad 2015), Islamic themes incorporate elements of flora that have gone through an innovative cycle. This implies the way to plan thoughts that incorporate Islamic craftsmanship with artistic worth.

Workmanship highlights the significance of framing and presenting the magnificence of the artwork (Khairuddin & Wan Yusoff 2006). An artwork should not only contain stylistic elements in theory, it also should attract people's appreciation of the artwork, which are dependent on their acceptance and perspectives. The workmanship is as important in arts, just as structures are important in engineering. It presents compelling artwork and designs that illustrate the craftsmen's innovativeness (Daud et al. 2012). In the Malay culture, workmanship reflects its cultural craftsmanship and serves as a fundamental aspect in the presentation of a "non-verbal" and three-dimensional topic.

METHODOLOGY

This paper presents a descriptive qualitative study where interviews were conducted with selected academicians, artists, and artists. Moreover, the researchers also referred to journals, painter's works catalogues, books, and articles related to topic of this study. The researcher also referred to the National Art Gallery catalogues to observe these artworks through the visual method of recording. The artworks were then analysed based on their subject, design, and meaning. Empirical data were collected during the fieldwork. Apart from that, the curator and artists were interviewed on their involvement with artworks that have Malay traditions and Islamic value themes. There were 10 questions posted the informants. The interviews also involved to experts of local customs who were probe about their knowledge and exposure to Malay cultural arts. Data were also done through observation in the painters' studio. The study also focused on Muslim arts as well as Malay tradition. Hence, the researcher has referenced journals and books to study the Malay culture and Islamic traditions in the artworks of three local Malay artists in this modern Era. A field survey was prepared and series of interviews with experts of eastern traditional culture, and Islamic art tradition were conducted.

THEORICAL BACKGROUNDS

Table 1. The comparisons between Western and Islamic art philosophy are shown as follows

| | Basic Western Art Theory (Art Appreciation)Erwin Panofsky |
|-------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Physical aspects and externally (Formalistic) | First - Main objects and subject of ideas Expressions, factual, motifs Second or conventional object of the topic of Ideas and narration |
| Aspect of Meaning (<i>Content & context</i>) | Intrinsic meaning or content, symbolism of the world Theory of Aesthetical Values by Imam Al-Ghazali |

| | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Physical aspects and Externa | <p>External Beauty (dharir) or <i>extrinsic values</i>)</p> <p>Details of the artists, titles, materials, etc.</p> <p>How the subject is depicted (artistic elements)?</p> <p>How subjects are structured (design principles).</p> |
| Aspect meaning | <p>The Meaning of internal beauty</p> <p>Intrinsic values moral work.</p> <p>Implied, meaning, interpretation.</p> <p>The context of deeper understanding-introduction of Zikir, Nur, al-khalik,</p> <p>Tauhid, the hereafter and so on.</p> <p>Appreciation of the meaning and higher knowledge or Islamic Philosophy-Sufi, Tasawuf, and others.</p> |

Table 1 indicates according to Imam Al-Ghazali's theory of Aesthetical Values; the values of Malay culture and Islam are intertwined with one another in the production of these artworks. As described by (Dasuki et al. 2017), the thoughts of Imam Al-Ghazali are inherited by many thinkers, activists, and scholars of modern and contemporary arts such as Nakula, Sulaiman Esa, and Zakaria Ali. According to this theory, the values of beauty are directly related to the concept of Allah as the creator and the most beautiful. Imam Al-Ghazali's theory focuses on two aspects of aesthetics; the value of external beauty (*luaran*), which refers to the physical works of arts and the second is the meaning of inner beauty (*dalam*) that refers to the morals in arts production.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

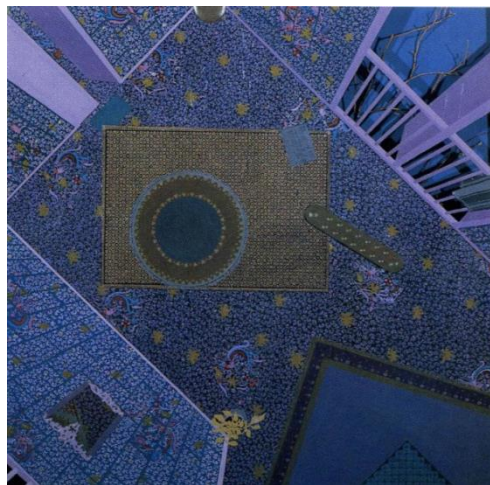


Figure 1. Mastura Abdul Rahman, "Interior No. 29" (1987), Mixed Media, 115 cm x 115 cm
 Source: https://mancala.fandom.com/wiki/Interior_No._29

Congkak is a traditional game who has elements of Malayness in *congkak* game of the 21st century that has been essential in the lives of youths in the olden days. Apart from being a recreational activity, it also serves a platform to teach life skills to youths. *Congkak* is also popular activity among the Malay ladies at that time where it tests the players' ability to think and deduce across interesting theme and plan (Kechot 2008). This traditional game has also gone through various changes over the years.

Mastura Abdul Rahman depicts a *congkak* board (Figure 1). *Congkak* boards are normally old and heavy, which are too enormous to be carried by the player, particularly children. The *congkak* has been given another breath, particularly in the drawing of young players and hues used. As

indicated by the composition (Maizan 2018), the colour of the *congkak* board material has been adjusted to change its appearance. Previously, *congkak* has been attractive among youngsters yet these days, *congkak* boards have been designed creatively based on the modern structure to fit the trends and demands *congkak* players in this modern time (Sulaiman et al. 2019). The shade of the *congkak* board has given new varieties and more opportunity to light shading and change the shade of the players.

Undeniably, the dominance of western influence has negatively affected traditional Malay games. Furthermore, it leads to social conflicts between cultural practices and modern life. In this painting, the artist attempts to convey a message that the round of *congkak* has gone through numerous progressions in safeguarding the legacy of *congkak* as a traditional game. In this regard, it highlights that the youths have lost interest to participate in traditional games today. The Table 2 below shows the stated theory that consists is of two scholars understanding.

Table 2. Physical aspects and Meaning of the work of Interior 29 by Mastura Abdul Rahman

| | Theories of physical and external aspects | Aspects of internal meaning |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Imam Al-Ghazali of Theory | The beams and walls are painted pink, which is commonly used in houses of aristocrats. Bright Colour | The value of the interior design of the Malay tradition House |
| Erwin Panofsky of Theory | Ornamental design of the carpet Floor and wall patterns | Traditional heritage of the <i>Congkak</i> traditional game. Beauty of decorative Art in <i>Bangsawan</i> (aristocrats) Malay House |



Figure 2. Mastura Abdul Rahman, *House of Flowers, House of Harmony*, 1999
Mixed Media, 83 cm X 276 cm

Source: <https://mancala.fandom.com>

Table 3. The value of the physical aspect and the meaning in House of Flowers, House of Harmony by Mastura Abdul Rahman

| | Theories of physical and external aspects | Aspects of internal meaning |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Imam Al-Ghazali of Theory | Have a finesse and detailed motive | The value of cultural materials, such as <i>Labu Sayong</i> . Islamic value as reflected by the <i>Surah Yassin</i> and prayer Mats |
| Erwin Panofsky of Theory | Colourful colour on design carpet motifs | To apply elements of motherhood, i.e. the baby swing. The use of traditional Malay game, specifically <i>Congkak</i> |
| | The use of basic Colours | Emphasis on religious values, such as prayer mats and <i>Surah Yassin</i> |

Labu sayong is a type of stoneware with rich and novel conventional qualities. It is frequently depicted through different structures and shapes that are inspired by characteristics different flora. Each *labu sayong* (Figure 2) features its own significance and reasoning through the consideration of different structures and theme. In this light, each *labu sayong* has explicit natural and extraneous implications inside the setting of the Malay imaginativeness.

Based on its significance in the Malay culture, the *labu sayong* fine art by Mastura Abdul Rahman highlights several components of flora theme. It incorporates several components, including bamboo shoots (*pucuk rebung*), *siku kluang*, and *potong wajik*. There are many comparable works and comparative themes utilised over the years by Malay aesthetics specialists across peninsular Malaysia.

Dried pumpkins are the inspiration for the making of *labu sayong* in the traditional Malay society. Dried pumpkins were used as drink containers across communities in all states in peninsular Malaysia. Different imagination has contributed to the different types of *labu sayong*. A common inspiration is the head pumpkin (*kepala labu*) or otherwise called *labu air*, *labu gelugur*, and *labu panai*, while others have largely been ignored or just made upon request. As indicated by (Ayob 2019), the Malay people, general, value their ability to create highly attractive crafts. For example, several craftsmen used the puchung fowls (*burung puchung*) as the inspiration of *labu sayong*, as shown on its front. Meanwhile, the sides of the *labu sayong* resemble a water pumpkin (*labu air*). This demonstrates the careful and sharp perception put by the Malay craftsmen in adjusting the structures and shapes of the *labu sayong*.

The elements of Islam are also depicted in the expressions of Mastura's subject matter through the *surah Yaasin* (Table 3) which is normally recited by Muslims daily, particularly on Friday evenings. This was unmistakably clarified by (Idris et al. 2019), where the Malay-Muslims emphasise the social components in line with Islam, just as the community-based Islamic activities, including *Maulidur rasul*, *Isra' Mi'raj*, and congregational recitation of *surah Yaasin*. Moreover, Mastura illustrated the convention of Islamic decoration, which is illustrated by the structure of mosques and smaller than usual artistic creations.

Such angle unmistakably demonstrates Mastura's propensity on the issues of Islam, as the basic premise in the lives of the Malays with culture as its facilitator (Ismail 2014). The Malays position Islam at its legitimate position. Islam fulfils the basic determinant of their knowledge and social qualities which influence their exceptional social personality. Along these lines, the Malays constantly need to remind themselves that their activities should not oppose the accepted way of

life, convention, and above all, their religion. This is in line with the believe that convention should depends on the *syara'* and *Quran*.

Obedience to the religion has been a conspicuous aspect that frames the centre of the Malay character. Such commitment envelops the parts of faith, love, '*muamalah*', '*muasyarah*', and ethics. This is significant as religion influence the lifestyle that leads to the salvation the world and in the hereafter. This is exemplified in the Malay saying "*biar mati anak, jangan mati adat*" which implies that the way of life, custom, and convention can never be abused as they are framed by the Islamic laws and stated in the Quran.

As shown in Mastura's mixed media artworks, the *sejadah*, or the prayer mat, has a great significance to the Islamic faith. The prayer mat is portrayed as a warm, caring element in her fine art to reflect the significance of religion in her life. Furthermore, it also indicates Muslims protecting their modesty and respecting Allah by abstaining from setting a prayer mat at a dirty spot. Mastura presented the prayer mat as a rectangular mat with unmistakable Islamic emblems, especially at the top of the mat, where one will place their head during prayers. This represents an inherently important part of the prayer.

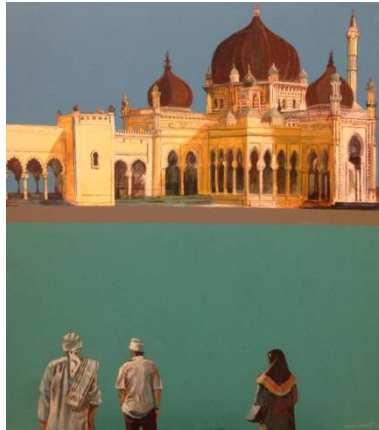


Figure 3. Haron Mokhtar, 'Zahir Mosque', Acrylic painting on canvas, 2014, 81cm x 91 cm.
Source: <http://alamartsandcrafts.blogspot.com>



Figure 4. Frontal views of Actual Zahir Mosque
Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zahir_Mosque

Table 4. The physical aspects and meaning in the artworks of the Zahir mosque by Haron Mokhtar

| | Theories of physical and external aspects | Aspects of internal meaning |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Imam Al-Ghazali of theory | Realistic looking mosque. Colourful Blue colour on the sky reflects Allah as the creator Cosmos motifs The use of the Thuluth Calligraphy | Islamic Activities held by the community Humble value of a servant |
| Erwin Panofsky of Theory | More realistic appearance in the clothing Not revealing the faces of the subject The use of Khat Thuluth and geometric lines on the wall of the mosque. | Communal activities and religious lectures Place of Islamic <i>da'wah</i> activities and matters |

Haron Mokhtar propelled Islamic thoughts in his work of art and highlighted Zahir mosque, which is the most known mosque in the state of Kedah. Haron used iconography to presents Islamic values through painting a man wearing robe, a man wearing a Kopiah (Figure 3) (skullcap) and a lady wearing the scarf who are looking at the mosque from the back. In this work, he focused on the structural elements by featuring three individuals who are dressed in an Islamic way. Aside from that, the painting features several other Islamic elements specifically calligraphy and cosmos elements, specifically stars as shown in Figure 4 above.

Haron also featured the themes of the mosque and Islamic calligraphy in this work, specifically the Thuluth (Figure 4) (Hussin et al. 2017). It is a lively and dynamic style of composition. This form of calligraphy is mostly geometric and flexible. It gained popularity when it was introduced between the seventh and ninth century (Bakar 2012). Thuluth calligraphy is normally used on small surface, for example, books, calfskin books, magazines, and to write stanzas of the Quran in the olden days. Thuluth Jali is typically utilized as an embellishment in the inside of houses and mosques. It is also used in Masjid al-Haram. Highlighting calligraphy arts helps promote Jawi, which is part of the Islamic teaching throughout the Nusantara. (Ismail et al. 2016) expressed that Islam forbids the statute of creating special arts in contention to Islam. In this regard the Islamic art of calligraphy is displayed in holy places like Mosque to be appreciated by individuals as they pray to Allah. Islamic craftsmanship, like calligraphy are presented as arabesque and mathematical. Calligraphy is featured in mosques to illustrate Quran verses as expressed by Allah SWT.

Islamic craftsmanship features the evolution of Islamic knowledge from the past to the present. Present arts are not as elaborate as arts in previous ages that are profound enough to present magnificence of Allah through calligraphy. This art forms has also been used for a long time to illustrate the grandeur of the bygone age. In general, the painting features “Muhamad SAW” name to represent the prophet. In this regard, Islamic scholars, specifically Imam Maliki, Imam Hambali and Imam Ghazali, mentioned the significance of Prophet Muhammad SAW in the calligraphy featured in mosques.

Masjid Zahir as Part of Islamic Activities Among The Islamic Community

Haron's works underline the significance of his specialty, where the subject of mosques and Islamic images are inseparable in the depiction of Malay Muslims' everyday lives in the state of Kedah

(Musa & Adzaman 2020). The congregation in Kedah state Mosque is an essential element for the mosque's Islamic activities and as a way to spread Islam (Table 4). The mosque is viewed as the main site for spreading Islamic messages as the mosque is the main location spot to actualize da'wah exercises (Hanafiah 2019).

The place of the mosque as a da'wah platform could not be denied. During the days of the prophet, the role of mosque in Islam is clear (Ismail 2014). However, as indicated by (Daud et al. 2012), the position of mosques among the Islamic community has become insignificant specifically after the fall of the Islamic empire as the community sees mosques as is a type of a ceremonial building to adore, rather than a place for communal activities. Thus, the Muslim community needs to start organising more communal activities to re-establish its place in the community. The capacities and functions of the mosque need to be diversified so that it can be inviting to the general population (Basri 2002). Mosques are the place to actualise the physical and otherworldly obligations of Islam and to fortify Muslims' faith towards Islam. In this light, any communal activities that could strengthen the Muslim community should conduct in mosques or their compound. A mosque is not just a spot to spread religion knowledge, it could also be a place to show non-Muslims the excellence of the Muslim community. Haron used his work to highlight Islamic arts and spread Islamic teaching by demonstrating the mosque's position for Muslim unity as well as a place to spread information on Islam. It highlights the need to expand the role of mosques among the modern Muslim community. Haron's artwork uphold the role of mosques in Islam. Henceforth, mosques especially in Kedah and Malaysia need to continuously retain their place as a place of da'wah and a symbol of Islamic unity.



Figure 5. Ruzaika Omar Basaree, *Siri Dungun* (1981), Mixed media (170.8cmx76c)

Source: <https://www.academia.edu>

Table 5. Exhibit external physical aspects and meanings of Ruzaika Omar Basaree's artworks

| | Theories of physical and external aspects | Aspects of internal meaning |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Imam Al-Ghazali of Theory | <p>Features the <i>awan Larat</i> motifs.</p> <p>Uses geometric motifs and element.</p> <p>Repetitions of elements, specifically hand circle motifs indicating Eastern influence.</p> | <p>The use of '<i>Bunga Lavang</i>' (star anies) which is inspired by traditional Malay cuisines.</p> |

| | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Erwin Panfosky of Theory | Application of harmonious colours. Usage of cool colours like Green. Use of symmetrical motifs in wood carving. | Design patterns used are related to the nature of life and the Malay-Islamic culture. |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Ruzaika Omar Basaree's artworks heavily featured the *awan larat* woodcarving which is common found in the state of Terengganu. Malay woodcarving is typically interconnected with the principles of Islamic craftsmanship, in view the Islamic 'Tauhid' which largely influenced the Islamic art style (Figure 5). Ruzaika's works attempt to stress the Malay way of thinking and the idea of Tauhid on the grounds that the Malay lifestyle and Islamic teachings should not be isolated from one another. As indicated by (Ali 1989), the workmanship delivered by Ruzaika's "Siri Dungun" includes intricate and complex artworks as shown above. It presents the artistry featuring common social cultural activities in the Malay community. These elements could be identified with the accentuation of Malay carvings. Zakaria Ali described these elements as valuable, intertwined, converse, and edgy.

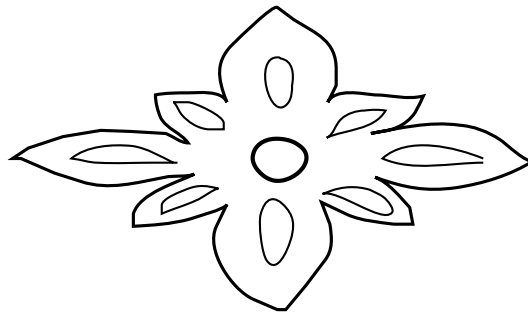


Figure 6. *Bunga lawang* motif expressed using the Adobe Illustrator software. *Bunga Lawang* Motif as a Symbol of the Malay Heritage
Source: Researcher's collection

As shown in Table 5, the artwork is based on flora and natural theme. It features the *bunga lawang* (star anise), which was heavily used to represent the Malay customs in 'Siri Dungun'. As indicated by the composition (Sulaiman & Husain 2019), Ruzaika Omar's works are inspired by nature. In this regard, the *bunga lawang* is revered in Malay culture due to its many benefits. Siri Dungun attempts to highlight *bunga lawang* which is a common ingredient in traditional Malay food (Table 5). The use of *bunga Lawang* (Figure 6) in traditional cooking makes it inseparable of the life of the Malays as it is a highly sought-after condiment in Malay cooking.

The artwork use flora as the theme in accordance Islamic teaching that forbids the use of animal or human forms. This work highlights the significance of flora and plants in the everyday lives of the Malay community as well as the Malays' appreciation of Allah's creations. The use of plants is related to the prohibition of using animals and human forms as arts. In this light, the Islamic influence inspires the Malays to value Allah's creations.

Geometric Motif of Bamboo Shoots representing the Islamic Concept of *Tauhid*

The '*awan Larat*' motif presents a conventional workmanship corresponding to Islamic way of thinking and the Malay traditions. The *bunga Lawang* motif featured by Ruzaika Omar Basaree presents shapes of the genuine *bunga Lawang* despite its impractical look. The Islamic values in the work (lesson of significant worth) can be found through various qualities that can be distinguished in Islamic fine arts. The inspiration comes from the appreciation of the artist to nature and to Allah, as its creator (Hamat & Yusoff 2020). This characteristic impacts the regular life of the Malays and inspired the creatively and innovativeness within the Malay the community since the olden time

(Yatim 1989). Islamic workmanship presented in this artworks embrace the Malay culture and philosophies that influence the Malay-Islamic way of thinking, as reflected by the *awan Larat* motif which features inspirations of flora and calligraphy that do not resemble any animals or human forms.

Regarding the composition (Dasuki et al. 2017), it highlights the traditional customary expressions which are largely inspired by nature. In this regard, the inspiration is isolated from any western influence. In their portrayals, the artists acknowledge and consider the Islamic workmanship component (Abdullah & Samin 2020). Consequently, the ideas and treatment of themes or 'content' are presented through geometric shapes such as polygons, triangles, rectangles and pentagons. This highlights the use geometry and angles in Islamic visual craftsmanship (Zakaria 2012). These geometric elements are infused with Islamic arts components, for example, Jawi scripts or calligraphy in accordance to Islamic laws.

The cultural theme creates a character and intricacies to the works of Ruzaika Omar Basaree. It presents the significance of the Malay culture in shaping the themes. The works feature an assortment of elements to represent Allah, human lives, and nature, such as the bamboo shoot. This is on the grounds that God as the creator has created fascinating flora that should be valued and appreciated by all humans. For instance, the scattered Bamboo shoots structure design emphasises the different imaginative themes particularly in the craftsmanship demonstrated by markers of batik, songket, wood carvings, fine metal workmanship, and custom home designs.

Recommendation

The artworks analysed in this study uses the cultural themes of Malay and Islamic traditions. They are able to highlight art patterns that still maintain the traditional and Islamic values but are based on the current trends. Relation to this, art trends and awareness play an important role in increasing exposure to Islamic traditional art and Islam as well as the appreciation of these artworks. Islamic religious values are emphasised as an important element in the national culture. At the same time, the influence of other cultures is also acknowledged, as long as they do not oppose the Islamic culture. It is hereby significant that the artists, academics, and researchers work together to maintain the traditional culture so that it can be ingrained among Malaysians.

CONCLUSION

Malay and Islamic arts have long existed since ancient times as an expression of people's adoration of Allah creation. This artforms presents a clear limit that leads to the betterment of faith and keeps Muslims away from any harm. Artists like Mastura Abdul Rahman, Ruzaika Omar Basaree and Haron Mokhtar presented artworks that are inspired by the cultural characteristics of Malay and Islamic traditions and changed the trends of modern. The establishment of the National Cultural Congress in 1971 has given a positive impact to Malay artists. It has highlighted of the work of these artists, which are inspired by cultural art and the Islamic world. This study has analysed the beauty of these artworks from the Islamic perspective. These artworks have featured Malay traditions and adapted the Malay cultural values and philosophy.

The use of Jawi scripts, calligraphy, *awan Larat* carving, and traditional games of *Congkak* has helped beautify the images in the artists' treatment of the subject. This has provided a positive impact to the country and the local arts industry in presenting the Malay-Muslim identity and traditions. Thus, these artworks are local art treasures that need to be preserved. While there are some influences of Western and foreign cultures are, they are not stressed in these artworks. This is because local artists have undergone changes in thoughts and influence where they strive to preserve the value of Malay traditions and philosophy so they can be cherished by the future generation.

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