

THE MEANING OF THE FLORA AND FAUNA MOTIFS ON MALAY TRADITIONAL CANNONS

(*MAKNA DI SEBALIK MOTIF FLORA DAN FAUNA DI MERIAM
TRADISIONAL MELAYU*)

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Abstract

The use of ornaments and motifs on cultural objects, such as houses, boats and weapons is a must in the Malay culture. While the main purpose of ornamentation is to beautify an object through aesthetics, the motifs used also contains specific connotations and philosophy. Accordingly, the ornaments are also present on traditional Malay cannons. Interestingly, these ornaments are similar with the ones used to beautify homes, mosques, vessels, textiles and so on. This study uses methods in the field of fine art by way of achieving images of cannon motifs through sketching techniques. Analysis was performed on each motif obtained from the field study in which each motif was photographed and sketched using Adobe Illustrator software. Among the motifs used in the ornaments of the cannon consists of flora and fauna motif, such as *pucuk rebung*, *bunga teratai*, *tampok manggis*, *naga*, *kuda laut* and *ikan lumba-lumba* to name a few. Therefore, each particular motif used to beautify the cannons has an intrinsic meaning that corresponds to the goal of the gunners. For instance, the *pucuk rebung* symbolizes patience, *tampok manggis* symbolizes politeness and good manner, while *kuda laut* and *ikan lumba-lumba* symbolizes persistence, steadfastness, agility, intelligence and so forth. Hence, the use of these motif were not simply aesthetics, but as a form of communication between the engraver with the user of the cannon, in which the motif or symbols carries valuable messages which also serves as a form of guidance, motivation or advice in the battlefield.

Keywords: Malay cannon; motif; meaning; flora; fauna

Abstrak

Penggunaan seni ragam bias dan motif pada objek budaya, seperti rumah, kapal dan senjata adalah suatu keharusan dalam budaya orang Melayu. Walaupun tujuan utama suatu seni ragam bias adalah untuk memperindah objek melalui estetika, motif yang digunakan juga mengandungi konotasi dan falsafah tertentu. Oleh itu, seni ragam bias juga terdapat pada meriam tradisional Melayu. Menariknya, seni ragam bias ini serupa dengan yang digunakan untuk memperindah rumah, masjid, kapal, tekstil dan sebagainya. Kajian ini menggunakan kaedah dalam bidang seni dengan cara mencapai imej motif meriam melalui teknik lakaran. Analisis dilakukan terhadap setiap motif yang diperolehi dari kajian lapangan yang mana setiap motif difotokan dan dilakar dengan menggunakan perisian Adobe Illustrator. Antara motif yang digunakan untuk menghibasi meriam terdiri daripada motif flora dan fauna, seperti *pucuk rebung*, *bunga teratai*, *tampok manggis*, *naga*, *kuda laut* dan *ikan lumba-lumba*. Oleh itu, setiap motif tertentu yang digunakan untuk memperindah meriam

mempunyai makna intrinsik yang sesuai dan selari dengan tujuan penembak. Sebagai contoh, pucuk rebung melambangkan kesabaran, manakala tampok manggis melambangkan kesopanan dan sikap baik, sementara kuda laut dan ikan lumba-lumba melambangkan kegigihan, ketabahan, ketangkasan, kecerdasan dan sebagainya. Oleh itu, penggunaan motif-motif terpilih sebagai seni ragam bias meriam bukan hanya sekadar untuk estetika, tetapi sebagai bentuk komunikasi antara pengukir dengan pengguna meriam, di mana motif atau simbol tersebut membawa mesej berharga yang juga berfungsi sebagai panduan, motivasi atau nasihat yang berguna di medan perang

Kata kunci: Meriam Melayu; motif; makna; flora; fauna

INTRODUCTION

The cannon is one of the main firearm weapon used by the Malays in the battlefield. However, it is also used in other activities, such as official ceremonies and festivals which also functions as a communication tool in the Malay society. This proves that the cannons play a very important role and well respected in the Malay culture, both as a weapon and a symbol of power and status (Hasanuddin et al. 2019). In the process of making cannons, the makers would ensure that they are adorned with a variety of beautiful motifs, especially those of flora and fauna. This shows that the decorative arts and the act of beautifying objects are of an importance in the Malay culture. The art of carving or engraving ornamental motifs on buildings and objects, namely houses, mosques, vessel, weapons, firearms, games equipment, and furniture, has become the most important aspect of the Malay culture (Haziyah et al. 2012; Mohd Rohaizat et al. 2014; Fakhrur & Basitah 2019; Daeng Haliza & Zuliskandar 2021). In fact, every day and religious related objects such as the Malay traditional boat in Kelantan and the Quran illumination of the 19th century Al-Qurans found in the east coast of the Malay Peninsula are considered the most beautiful, rarest and most limited of collections (Mohd Rohaizat & Zuliskandar 2020; Ros Mahwati & Zuliskandar 2018). In addition to this, the earliest Malay motifs were detected to have existed in the Malay Kingdom of Langkasuka as early as the 2nd century AD (Sabariah Ahmad Khan 2016). The advent of Islam also brought about major changes in the philosophy of life, thought, and spirit of the Malay society. It also cultivated change in the patterns of decorative arts, which bore Islamic elements. Hence, it is believed that Islam became the primary influence and inspiration in the Malay artwork at the time (Idris 2012).

Therefore, the decorative Malay arts were also applied on Malay traditional cannons. According to Zakaria Ali (1989), there are six principles of Malay decorations, such as refinement (*prinsip halus*), usefulness (*prinsip berguna*), unity (*prinsip bersatu*), symbolism (*prinsip berlambang*), contradiction (*prinsip berlawanan*), and meaningfulness (*prinsip bermakna*). In addition to this, Siti Hawa (2007) also mentioned that there are five important elements in the Malay decorative arts, which are flora, fauna, the cosmos, geometry, and calligraphy (or Islamic epigraphy). These five elements are closely related to the daily lives of the Malay community, in which they live in a lush natural environment, as well as living a life based on the Islamic values and principles. Hence, this brought about the cultivation of the Minangkabau proverb that states "*alam berkembang menjadi guru*", which translates as "nature develops to become a teacher". In addition to this, there is another Minang adage that goes: "*adat bersendi syarak, syarak bersendi kitabullah*", which means "cultures shall be based on Islamic laws, and Islamic laws shall be based on the Quran" (Resky Annisa Damayanti 2017, Hasanuddin et al. 2021, Muhammad Uzair et al. 2021). Hence, these five elements were also applied into the decorations of the Malay traditional cannon.

Although the main function of ornaments and motifs is intended for beauty, they also bear meaningful messages and philosophies. For example, the lotus motif is a symbol of piety to Allah, ants moving in a single file (*semut beriring*) symbolizes harmony and obedience, the scorpion motif symbolizes wisdom, the dragon motif symbolizes power and heroism, whereas the lily motif symbolizes love (Juliana and Hetty Zaharani 2019). Thus, in the tradition of the Malays, the purposes of applying ornaments and motifs on objects is to beautify the object through aesthetic while at the same time conveying the hidden messages, be it in the form of advice, guidance or warning. Therefore, in order to interpret the meaning and philosophy contained in the ornaments and motifs

of the Malay traditional cannons, Erwin Panofsky's theory of iconography would be applied together with other sources, such as the notes on Malay arts that had been written by previous researchers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous research regarding the Malay traditional cannon has not received much attention – particularly on the motifs and ornaments – compared to the *Kris*, which is also a traditional weapon of the Malay's and identical with the Malay society. Although there are several international and local researchers, such as Newbold (1839) and Gardner (1936), Othman Yatim and Zamberi Malik (1994), Bantong Antaran (1989), Ahmad Safwan (2012) and Haji Salleh (1996); who studied the ornaments and motif found on the traditional Malay cannons, these studies however did not interpret the symbolical meaning or connotation of the motifs.

Among them, Othman Yatim and Zamberi Malik (1994) were pioneers among the modern local researchers who conducted the study of Malay traditional cannon, where they published a study titled *Meriam Dalam Sejarah dan Kebudayaan Melayu Nusantara* (Cannon in the History and Malay Culture). In the study, Othman Yatim and Zamberi Malik (1994) had focused on the cannon found in the Malay Peninsula, starting from Senggora (Songkhla) in the south of Thailand to Johor. However, Othman Yatim and Zamberi Malik (1994) did not limit their studies solely on the Malay traditional cannon as they had also studied the western colonial cannon found in the Malay Peninsula. In addition to this, they had also analysed the motifs and ornamentations used on the cannons, although the results were rather elementary. This is due to the reason that their analysis had only provided information regarding the motif without providing explanation or interpretation of the motif found on the cannons.

In addition to this, there are also other researchers who studied the ornamental motifs on the traditional Malay cannons, such as Bantong Antaran (1989) and Ahmad Safwan (2012) where they examined the motifs and ornaments on several cannons found in Brunei. However, Bantong Antaran (1989) and Ahmad Safwan (2012) also did not provide information nor interpretation of the meaning behind the motifs used on cannons. The same form of analysis was also followed by another local researcher, Haji Salleh (1996) who studied the motifs found on 72 old cannons around Kota Bharu, Kelantan which also included several British cannons found in the same area. Unfortunately, interpretation as to what the motif symbolizes in terms of meaning was never elucidated.

Other than local researchers, the Malay traditional cannons were also subjected to study by western researcher. However, their analysis had disregarded the artistic dimensions of the Malay traditional cannons in terms of motifs and ornaments. For example, Newbold (1839) had only collected brief information about the Malay traditional cannon as he was more interested in identifying the location where the cannon and gunpowder were manufactured in the Malay world. While Gardner (1936) only collected and recorded information about the different types of Malay traditional cannon. In conclusion, with reference to the previous studies mentioned, there is still a big gap in the research pertaining to the Malay traditional cannons, particularly in interpreting the meaning of the motif and ornaments used to adorn the cannons.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is conducted to analyze the motifs and decorations used on the traditional Malay cannons found in various places in the Malay Peninsula, such as Sumatera, Java and Kalimantan. In order to analyze and interpret the meaning, photographs of the ornaments and motif found on the cannons were documented using a high resolution digital single-lens reflex (DSLR) camera. The motifs and decoration would then be traced from the photos using the Adobe Illustrator programme in order to get a precise and clearer visualization of the motif based on the outline. Furthermore, Panofsky's (1955) theory of iconography is applied in this study to analyze and interpret the meaning of the flora and fauna motifs used on the cannons. In addition to this, Panofsky (1955) also stated that in order to interpret the meaning borne in certain images, drawings, photos, or symbols, the instinct, synthetic thinking based from psychological condition and *weltanschauung* must be applied with a cross-reference

to information gathered from various sources, such as books, articles, as well as interpretation of historians, anthropologists, sociologists, or art experts.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

FLORA MOTIFS

The Malay traditional cannons bears a wide variety of flora motifs. In fact, the flora motifs are the most favoured motif in the traditional Malay culture and mainly used by the Malay people due to several reasons: 1) flora was highly associated with beauty; 2) the Malay world itself was – and still is – geographically rich in various breeds and species of flora; 3) flora motifs are particularly preferred in the Islamic decorative art (Nursuriani and Ismail 2013).

Pucuk rebung

Pucuk rebung which is translated to bamboo shoots is the most preferred decorative motif that is often used in the decorative art of the Malay traditional cannons. They are also the easiest motifs to be identified and found on the traditional cannons. In general, the bamboo shoot motif is shaped like a triangle. However, there are various types of bamboo shoot motifs, namely the *pucuk rebung kuntum mambang*, *pucuk rebung kuntum dewa*, and *pucuk rebung kuntum paku* (Mulyeti Marzal 2015). According to Sasya Lestari and Menul Teguh Riyanti (2017), the bamboo shoot motif symbolizes patience. While Safial Aqbar Zakaria et. al. (2018) mentioned that the bamboo shoot motif symbolizes wisdom, ingenuity, and sensitivity. Thus, patience, wisdom and sensitivity are deemed as the most important qualities that should be present, especially in every member of the military who would participate in war. Figure 1 and Figure 2 shows the *pucuk rebung* motif on *cetbang* and *lela* type cannon.

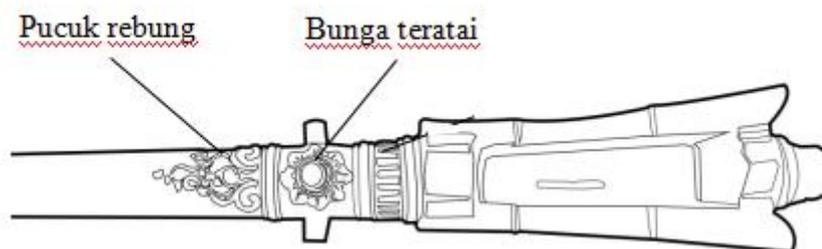


Figure 1. Sketch of *pucuk rebung* (bamboo shoot) and *teratai* (lotus) motifs on a *cetbang* (Malay breach-loading cannon) stored in the Kota Tinggi Museum, Johor.

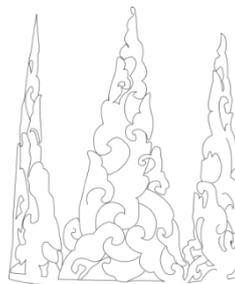


Figure 2. Sketch of *pucuk rebung sekuntum* (a type of bamboo shoot) motif on a *lela* (Malay swivel cannon) located in the Perak Museum, Taiping.

Buluh

Buluh refers to a motif that is based from a bamboo plant. Bamboo has been an important plant in the Malay world since prehistoric times as it was used to build homes, means of transportation (such as rafts and boats), bridges, fish traps, spears, blowpipes, food containers, and drinking cups (Nik Hassan Shuhaimi et al. 2012). Due to its multiple uses, the bamboo was considered as a beneficial plant. Due to this, the bamboo motifs can be found on several cannons, particularly on the barrel which is designed based on the shape and characteristics of the bamboo (see Figure 3). In addition to this, the meaning behind the bamboo motif is encouragement, in which every individual in encourage to learn and hone many abilities and life skills. Furthermore, every individual must be a person of quality and could contribute to the community. Hence, it is not surprising that the bamboo motif was used to adorn the cannon, as such qualities were considered very important for a soldier, especially during war and battle.

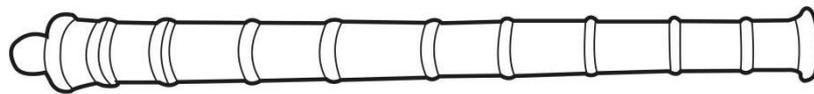


Figure 3. Sketch of a piece of a *rentaka* (small Malay swivel cannon) with bamboo motif which is stored at the Shah Alam Museum, Shah Alam.

Tampok Manggis

Tampok manggis is the term used to describe the calyx motif modelled on the mangosteen fruit. *Tampok manggis* is also one of the most favoured motifs used to adorn Malay cannons. Generally, the *tampok manggis* motif would be placed in the middle part of the cannon barrel, hence being the first design to appear in the sight of anyone who looked at it. According to Tenas Effendy (1994), *tampok manggis* or the mangosteen fruit calyx motif symbolizes politeness and good manners. These personal qualities were deemed highly, especially to soldiers at the battlefield. Displaying politeness and good manners – even towards enemies – was regarded as a noble act according to Islam and the Malay culture. Figure 4 show the example of *tampok manggis* motif on a piece of *cetbang* that is stored at the Talaga Manggung Museum, Majalengka

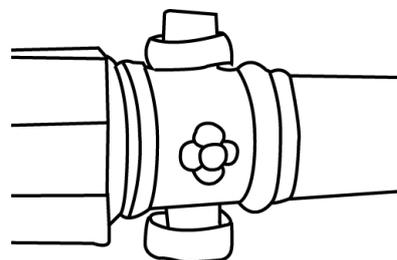


Figure 4. Sketch of *tampok manggis* motif on a piece of *cetbang*

Teratai

In the Malay language, *teratai* refers to the lotus plant. According to Abdullah bin Mohamed Nakula (1997), the lotus symbol or motif has long been used in the Malay World since the era of Srivijaya, namely the pre-Islamic era. Abdullah Nakula further stated that the lotus motif is a manifestation of one's faith to God. Although the lotus motif was widely used during the Hindu-Buddha period – as

the lotus was the favourite plant in the Orient – this motif has since been maintained as an important decoration after the arrival of Islam to the Malay world. Hence, in the Islamic context, the lotus motif symbolizes the pure faith and obedience to Allah SWT, as well as in the Islamic belief and Malay tradition. Above all, it was already established by the Malay community at the time that the faith to Allah SWT is the most important quality, which was deemed necessary to be adapted by every person, especially those involved in the army. Consequently, it was also believed that every battle or *jihad* would be meaningless if it was not conducted in the name of Allah SWT. Figure 5 and Figure 6 shows the *teratai* or lotus motif on a piece of *rentaka* located and stored at the National Museum, Kuala Lumpur and Siak Palace, Riau, Indonesia.

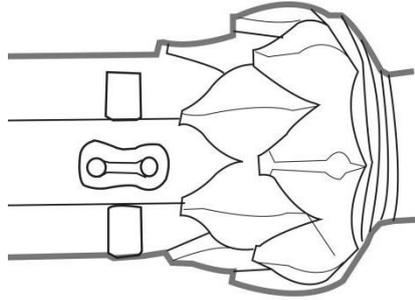


Figure 5. Sketch of *teratai* or lotus motif on a piece of *rentaka* that is located at the National Museum, Kuala Lumpur.

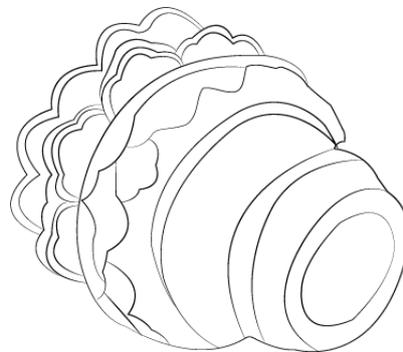


Figure 6. Sketch of *teratai* or lotus motif on a piece of *rentaka* which stored in the Siak Palace, Riau.

Daun Keladi

Daun keladi refers to any artistic motif that is modelled based on the yam leaf. This motif was widely used in batik textile decorations. But there are also several Malay traditional cannons that bore the motif of the yam leaf as it symbolizes durability and resilience. The motif is based on the nature of the yam plant itself, which is very durable and easy to grow, especially in swampy areas. In addition to this, yam also has high medicinal value. Due to this, it is still used as a main ingredient in Malay traditional medicine. Therefore, the meaning behind the yam leaf motif is that the sense of resilience must be present in every soldier, especially when he is at battle. Figure 7 show the motif of *daun keladi* on a piece of *rentaka* that is located at the National Museum, Kuala Lumpur

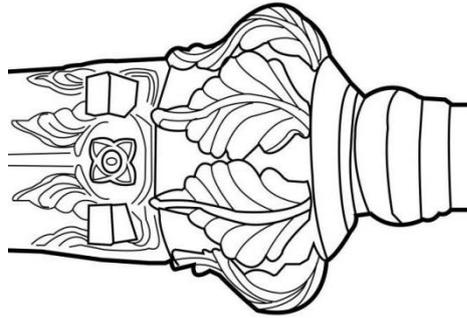


Figure 7. Sketch of *daun keladi* or yam leaf motif on a piece of *rentaka*.

Susun Sirih Sekawan

Susun sirih sekawan means that the motif was made based on an arrangement of betel leaves. This motif symbolizes the qualities of being affable and courteous (Juliana and Hetty Zaharani 2019). In the Malay tradition, offering an arrangement of betel leaves to a guest is a symbol of respect or the act of receiving guests in the most welcoming manner. Therefore, the attitude of courtesy and mutual respect was deemed very important to an army, where there should be a display of mutual respect between superior officers and their subordinates. According to Herry Nur Hidayat (2018) *susun sirih sekawan* motif also symbolizes a joyful and happy life. The attitude of respecting and accepting others with an open heart is indeed a factor to happiness in life. Figure 8 show motif of *susun sirih sekawan* or the arrangement of betel leaves motif on a piece of *rentaka* that is stored at the Alam Shah Museum, Shah Alam.

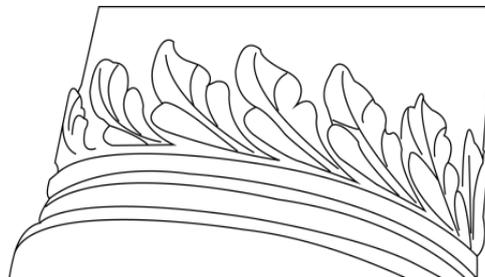


Figure 8. Sketch of *susun sirih sekawan* or the arrangement of betel leaves motif on a piece of *rentaka*

Kalok Pakis

Kalok pakis means a type of fern leaf that grows in the Malay Archipelago. The *kalok pakis* motif was commonly used in Malay artwork, including in the carvings on Malay traditional cannons. According to Purwo Prihatin (2007) the *kalok pakis* is a motif that is formed or stylized by spreading and arranging the leaf motif in an elongated or horizontal form. It is then adapted to the shape and characteristic of the fern plants that creeps, elongate and form dynamic rolls. Purwo Prihatin (2007) also stated that in the Malay tradition, the *kalok pakis* motif means the journey of human life that must be done in adherence to the will of Allah SWT. The rolls of fern leaves that creeps up to form a circle reflect the various stages of the human life, namely the realm of the spirit, the realm of the present world, the realm of *barzakh* (or the realm of the grave), and eventually the realm of the hereafter, which comprises heaven and hell. Figure 9 show the motif of *kalok pakis* motif on a piece of *rentaka* that is located at the National Museum, Kuala Lumpur.

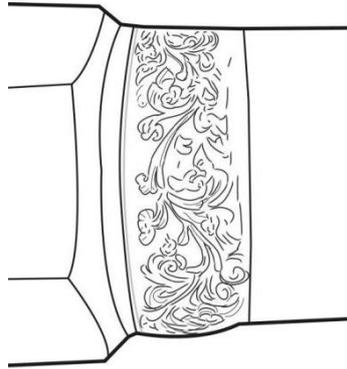


Figure 9. Sketch of *kalok pakis* motif on a piece of *rentaka*

Sulur Bayung

Sulur bayung or otherwise known as *selembayung* means a combination of different types of plants in the same creep (Purwo Prihatin 2007). Therefore, the *sulur bayung* motif reflects the meaning of a life of peace and harmony in diversity. It is also a symbol of tolerance and openness to others. Accordingly, the *sulur bayung* motif is applied on the Malay traditional cannons as it serves as a reminder or an advice to the gunner or army to be open and accepting of diversity, especially when they are in contact with comrades-in-arms. Figure 10 show the motif of *sulur bayung* motif on a piece of *lela* that is located at the National Museum, Jakarta.

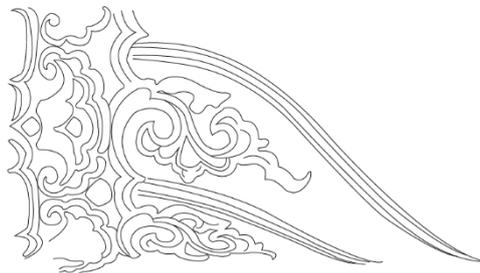


Figure 10. Sketch of *sulur bayung* motif on a piece of *lela*

FAUNA MOTIFS

Generally, the Malay Muslim society rarely uses fauna or animal motifs on buildings, textiles, household items and particularly houses of worship, such as mosques. This is because Islam forbids carving shapes or forms of living creatures (namely of humans or animals) to avoid any chances of turning them into idols or other objects of worship. Therefore, if in some cases the animal motifs are to be applied, the carver or engraver would render them incomplete or turn them into allusive images, in which the animal image is converted into another form. Despite of this, the animal or fauna motifs are still considered as an important motif in the Malay culture at the time. This is due to the reason that the flora motifs were said to have limitations in delivering certain messages or interpretations, especially in expressing the qualities of a warrior, such as bravery, courage, tenacity, and aggression. Therefore, the fauna motifs were considered just as important and should maintain its application to adorn the cannons. This is because the cannon's primary function in warfare should bear the messages of courage, might, power, and heroism. Consequently, these qualities are difficult to describe through the use of plant or flora motifs.

Naga

Naga literally translates as ‘dragon’, the famous mythical animal or creature in the Orient. The *naga* motif is particularly prevalent in Asian cultures (including Indian, Chinese, Korean and Japanese) and it is also considered as an important motif in the Malay tradition. According to Syaimak et al. (2013) the dragon (*naga*) is a symbol of greatness in the Malay tradition. In addition, there is a difference between eastern and western societies on the perception towards myths relating to the dragon. Eastern cultures never regarded dragons as a horrible and frightening animals; however, they are portrayed as an evil and vicious creatures in the Western counterpart. Whereas, Mohd Rohaizat et al. (2014) stated that in the mythical Malay culture, dragon is a creature that dwells in water, but does not fly, which is contrary to the Western belief about the creature. The motif or symbol represented by the dragon in the Malay culture is that of guard, security, and Earth’s fertility. Accordingly, there are many dragon motifs that have been applied on Malay traditional cannons to symbolize greatness and power. Figure 11 and Figure 12 shows the motif of a dragon on a piece of *lela* that is located at the yard of the Surya Negara Palace, Sanggau, Kalimantan Barat and on a piece of *rentaka* that is stored at the Malay Technology Museum, Bandar Seri Begawan.

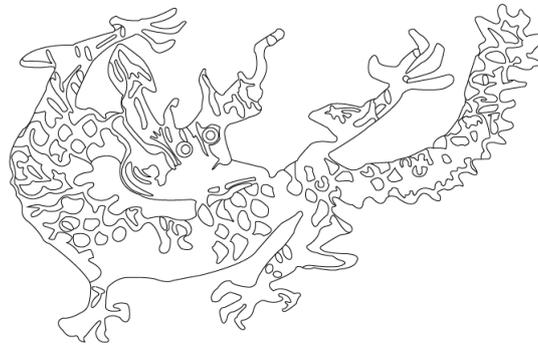


Figure 11. Sketch of dragon motif on a piece of *lela* that is located at the yard of the Surya Negara Palace, Sanggau, Kalimantan Barat.

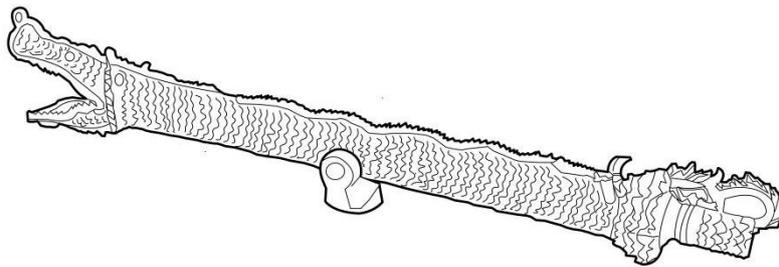


Figure 12. Sketch of dragon motif on a piece of *rentaka* that is stored at the Malay Technology Museum, Bandar Seri Begawan.

Kuda Laut

Kuda laut means ‘seahorse’, which refers to the small marine animal whose head resembles that of a horse. By nature, seahorses are slow in movement but firm in demeanour. Therefore, the motif of seahorse bear the meaning of persistence and steadfastness. Both of these qualities are very important to every soldier, especially in the battlefield. The seahorse motif also symbolizes the challenges at sea, due to its strong waves and current. This is especially prevalent in the Malay Archipelago, where its

sea and ocean became the main battlefield; hence, every Malay soldier must be strong and courageous while battling at sea. Normally, the seahorse motif would be attached onto the *lela* as a pair of *kancing* (or carrying handles). However, these motifs were also engraved on cannon muzzles. According to Hamdzun Haron et al. (2014), while the seahorse motif conveys the meaning of safeguarding oneself from betrayal, it also symbolizes or can be interpreted as a sign of honesty, gentleness and courtesy. Figure 13 and Figure 14 shows the motif of seahorse on a *kancing* or carrying handle of a *lela* that is located at the National Museum, Kuala Lumpur and at the front sight of a *rentaka* that is located at the National Museum, Kuala Lumpur.

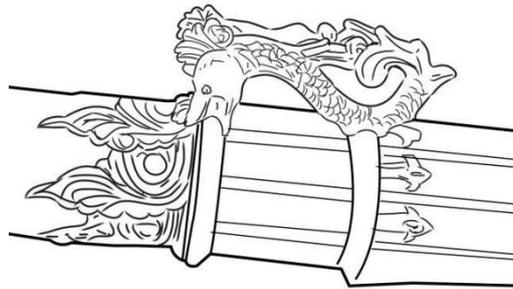


Figure 13. Sketch of seahorse motif on a *kancing* or carrying handle of a *lela*

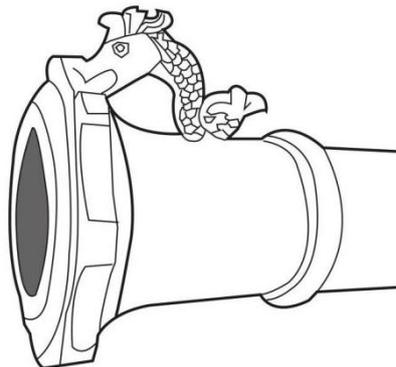


Figure 14. Sketch of seahorse motif at the front sight of a *rentaka*

Ikan lumba-lumba

Ikan lumba-lumba refers to the dolphin, a marine animal. The seas in the Malay Archipelago once became the natural habitat for dolphins, especially in the Celebes Sea, the Moluccas Sea, the Banda Sea, the Java Sea, and the South China Sea. Thus, dolphins are easily found and spotted in these areas. These animals would often be associated with their agility and intelligent nature. Therefore, the use of the dolphin motif on Malay traditional cannons means agility and intelligence at sea are essential qualities that a soldiers must possess. Usually, the dolphin motif is shown at the *kancing* (or carrying handles) of a *lela* (apart from the choice motif of seahorses). Figure 15 show motif of dolphin made for the *kancing* or carrying handle of *lela* which located at the yard of the Surya Negara Palace, Sanggau, Kalimantan Barat.

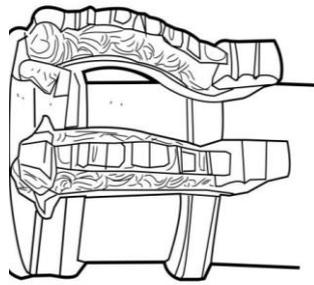


Figure 15. Sketch of dolphin motif made for the *kancing* or carrying handle of *lela*

Buaya

Buaya is literally translated as ‘crocodile’, a semiaquatic reptile that can be found easily in tropical waters. It is a reptile known for its wild and vicious behavior both in water and on land, which earns itself the reputation of a strong and agile being. In reference to this, the crocodile motifs were clearly used to symbolize the nature of strength when fighting in wars on land or at sea. Therefore, the crocodile motif became the choice of Malay traditional cannon makers or engravers as decorations on cannons. Figure 16 and Figure 17 shows the shape of crocodile head engraved on the cannon stored inside the Surya Negara Palace, Sanggau, Kalimantan Barat and crocodile motif on a piece of *rentaka* that is stored at the National Museum, Kuala Lumpur.



Figure 16. Sketch of crocodile motif cannon stored inside the Surya Negara Palace, Sanggau, Kalimantan Barat.

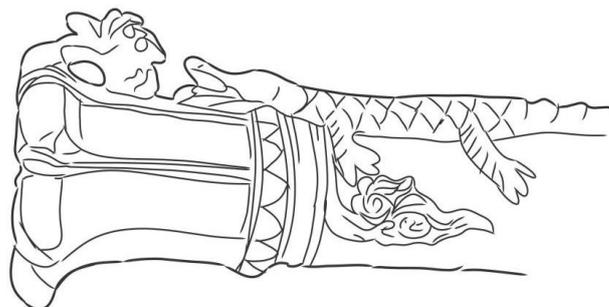


Figure 17. Sketch of crocodile motif on a piece of *rentaka* that is stored at the National Museum, Kuala Lumpur.

Harimau

Harimau (tiger) is an animal that dwells largely in the forests of the Malay Archipelago and exists in various types and breeds. Due to this, the tiger has become an animal that is closely associated to the Malayan forest. Among the famous tigers in the Malay Archipelago are the Malayan, Sumatran, and the Javanese tigers. In the tradition of the Malay world, the tiger is known as the king of animals in the jungle as it is known for being a cunning and vicious predator. Thus, the tiger motif symbolizes strength, bravery, might, fierceness, gallantry, and heroism – all of which are qualities expected in a soldier. Figure 18 and Figure 19 shows a tiger motif on a *lela* that is stored inside a traditional house in Marawi City, Mindanao and on a *rentaka* stored in the Alam Shah Museum, Shah Alam.

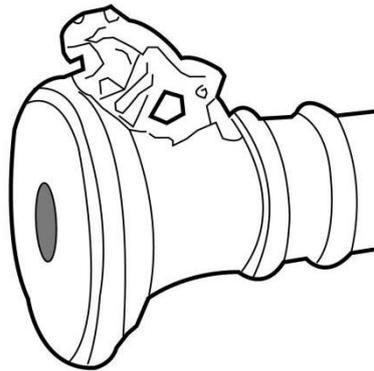


Figure 18. Sketch of tiger motif on a *lela* that is stored inside a traditional house in Marawi City, Mindanao.

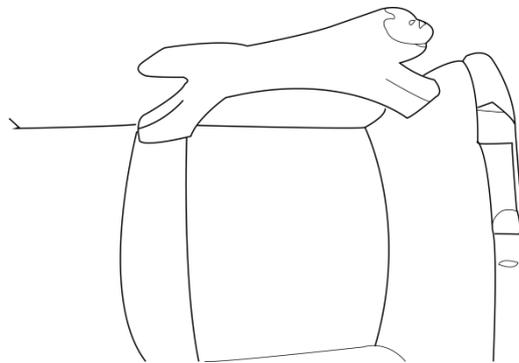


Figure 19. Sketch of tiger motif on a *rentaka* stored in the Alam Shah Museum, Shah Alam.

Katak

Katak (frog) is an amphibian creature that inhabits in both water and land. There are various types of frogs in the Malay Archipelago rainforest, such as toad, banana frog, green frog, bull frog, mountain litter frog, and the Malayan flying frog. In the Malay tradition, the frog is often associated with agility due to its ability to hop and leap in distances that are much farther than its length, as well as for its ability to quickly trap preys with its tongue for food. Therefore, the use of frog motif on Malay traditional cannons symbolizes agility and nimbleness. As a warrior or a soldier, being agile and nimble are key qualities to have while fighting enemies at the battlefield. Figure 20 show the frog motif on a *rentaka* stored in the Alam Shah Museum, Shah Alam.

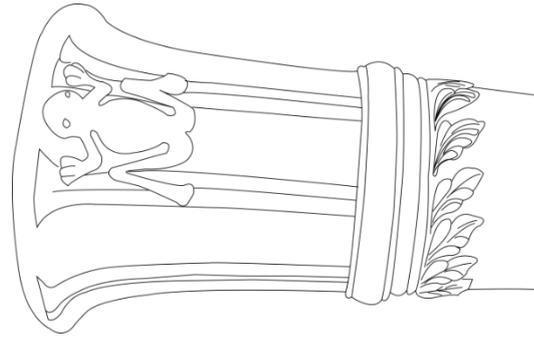


Figure 20. Sketch of frog motif on a *rentaka* stored in the Alam Shah Museum, Shah Alam.

Penyu

Penyu (turtle) is an animal which motif was modelled on to be engraved on the Malay traditional cannons. By nature, turtles inhabit the coastlines and seas in the Malay Archipelago. The hot and warm climate in this equatorial area is suitable for turtles to breed, as they need high-temperature sand to incubate their eggs. There are various types of turtles that are present in the coastlines of the Malay Archipelago, such as the Hawksbill, Green, Leatherback, and Olive Ridley turtles. Besides that, turtles are known as reptiles that could survive in both land and water. Upon hatching, the offspring would emerge from their nests only at night, and would continue to crawl to the sea following the moonlight. Normally, the turtle motif on Malay traditional cannons is often found as a group of turtles in line, never as a single turtle. This is due to the reason that turtles swim and crawl in a group. The in-line crawling turtle motif represents an orderly life, good ethics, and discipline, which resemble turtles' natural habits. Therefore, a successful armed force is expected to be monitored and administered systematically at all the times, be it on land or at sea.

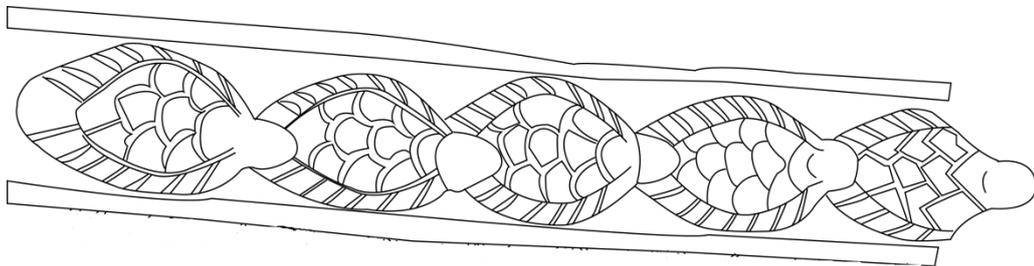


Figure 21. Sketch of an in-line turtle motif on a *rentaka* stored in the Malay Technology Museum, Bandar Seri Begawan.

Semut Beriring

Semut beriring translates as 'ants walking in a line', which is also a favoured motif in the olden Malay culture. This motif is commonly displayed on buildings at the time, such as mosques, houses, furniture, and household items. Therefore, it is not uncommon to find the *semut beriring* motif used on many Malay traditional cannons. This motif is categorized as an allusive or abstract motif, in which the shape or physical form of the ant is not clearly visible, but it takes the shape of a twisted rope. The meaning behind the *semut beriring* motif highlights the importance of teamwork and obedience to the leader (Juliana and Hetty Zaharani 2019). This is because ants that walk in a line are inherently obeying the leader, as written in the verses of the al-Qur'an, "At length, when they came to a (lowly) valley of ants, one of the ants said: "O ye ants get into your habitations, lest Solomon and his hosts crush you (under foot) without knowing it." (*Al-Naml: 18*)

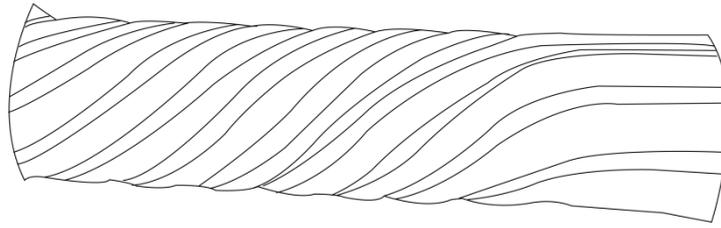


Figure 22. Sketch of *semut beriring* or ants walking in line motif on a *rentaka* located in the yard of the Siak Palace, Ria

Lebah Bergantung

Lebah bergantung refers to a motif based on hanging bees. The *Lebah bergantung* is also one of the famous motifs used widely in the Malay culture. This motif is also created as an allusive motif, much like the *semut beriring* motif, where the real image of the bees is not visible and would instead resemble more like a leaf. As mentioned earlier in this study, Islam forbids the engraving or recreating the image of living animals. Hence, an abstract image of the bees was applied for this motif. According to Juliana and Hetty Zaharani (2019), the *lebah bergantung* motif represents a person's purity of heart and his commitment to serving and helping others. This is due to the nature of bees as creatures that are beneficial to mankind, especially for their honey that are most sought after for its benefits for health and medicinal properties.

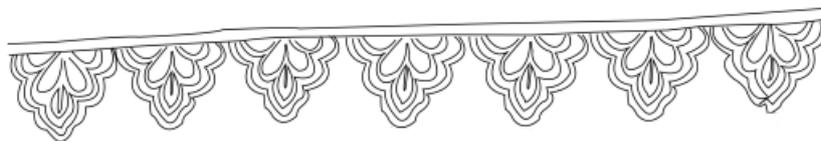


Figure 23. Sketch of *lebah bergantung* or hanging bee's motif on a *rentaka* as located in the Malay Technology Museum, Bandar Seri Begawan.

Itik Sekawan

Itik sekawan literally means 'a flock of ducks'. It is considered as one of the most used motifs in the Malay culture. In the Malay tradition, ducks are regarded as important pets, as they provide sustenance from their eggs and meat. Therefore, the application of the duck motif was a preference in the olden Malay art and decoration. According to Purwo Prihatin (2007), the *itik sekawan* motif would be engraved in longitudinal flock of ducks, which also appeared in the form of an abstract image of the ducks. As a result, this motif would appear more as a flower rather than a duck itself. The head and bill of the duck would take the form of a flower. Whereas, the body and wings of the duck would look like flower petals. Moreover, Purwo Prihatin (2007) stated that the *itik sekawan* motif symbolizes cooperation, togetherness, family, and team work. Above all, these qualities were of great importance to soldiers and should be adopted by those in the army.

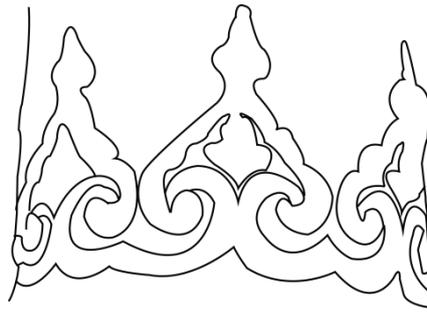


Figure 24. Sketch of *itik sekawan* or a flock of duck's motif on a *lela* that is located at the yard of the Ubudiah Mosque, Kuala Kangsar.

DISCUSSIONS

Iconography is the science of identification, description, classification, and interpretation of symbols, themes, and subject matter in the visual arts. Panofsky's (1955) theory of iconography is applied in this study to analyse and interpret the meaning of the flora and fauna motifs used on the cannons. In addition to this, Panofsky (1955) also stated that in order to interpret the meaning borne in certain images, drawings, photos, or symbols, the instinct, synthetic thinking based from psychological condition and *weltanschauung* must be applied. The use of motifs on artifacts and materials culture in the Malay World had begun since the prehistoric times when many of potteries used by Neolithic culture community have flora and geometric motifs carved on the pottery surface (Zuriadah & Zuliskandar 2018). During megalithic culture, there are many evidences of flora, fauna and geometric motifs used as a decoration on the megalithic stone such as menhir (Romi 2011). During protohistoric era, the diversity of motifs used by Malay which had influenced from India, China and Arab-Persian has further highlighted the policy of the Malay community in the use of motifs to further beautify the goods or craftsmanship produced as well as the implied meaning in producing the art.

Based on the analysis of the diversity of the use of motifs or types of decoration found on cannons in the Malay world, it shows that there are two main motifs used, namely flora and fauna motifs. This motif also has a certain meaning and is related to the Malay philosophy of thought at that time.

CONCLUSION

The exhibition of ornaments and motifs are a very important element in the tradition of making Malay traditional cannons. In the Malay culture of arts, decorations and motifs were not simply valued based on the aesthetic aspect solely, but also as a form of communication between the maker and engraver with the users of the cannons. The motifs that were carved on Malay traditional cannons – apart from its aesthetic value – carries important messages in forms of symbols which contains advice or guidance from the engraver to the users of these cannons, especially for soldiers who fought in battlefields. These messages or meanings contained in these motifs could be a form guidance, motivation or advice for the soldiers if they comprehend and understand the message. For example, if a soldier suffered from the loss of motivation and enthusiasm to fight his enemies at the battlefield, he could regain his enthusiasm and motivation upon looking at the tiger motif displayed on his cannon, as the tiger motif means one has to be a strong and brave person. Therefore, the practice of engraving motifs and decorations in the Malay culture remains important.

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