

## Motifs of Nature in Malay Traditional Craft

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**Abstract:** The traditional craft experts have creatively utilising the elements of environment to create craft masterpieces. They have meticulously studying and choosing each of the environmental elements to make sure that it goes hand in hand with a particular handicraft they are trying to make. This effort helped to obtain a perfect craft designs. Natural objects from environment are chosen to create motives that serve as the main elements in the variations of decoration. It resulted as handicraft masterpieces that possess the aesthetic values. One thing that we have to realize is the elements from natural environment are the most important elements in making the traditional Malay handicraft. Malay traditional crafted goods are not alien to Malaysians. In Malay society, various kinds of crafted goods have been made by their ancestors such as weave, batik (wax printed patterned cloth), pottery or ceramic, sculpture or woodcarving, tekat or embroidery and songket (a kind of embroidery of gold or silver thread). The discovery of primitive ceramic object in Ulu Tembeling Pahang proved that craft industry existed since the ancient time. The other various kinds of crafted works existed with their own histories. The motives are taken mostly from natural environment that become the basic motives in decorating the surface of the crafted goods. The environmental motives are not only making the particular crafted goods beautiful but they have their own philosophy behind it. It is consisted of visual moral teaching to the society at that time. This study proved that objects from environment have been exploited in traditional craft designs. These can be seen by the existence of flora and fauna motives in the various handicraft related to the life of Malay traditional society that cannot be separated from environment. The major parts of vegetations such as flowers, shoots, fruits, seeds, roots and calyxes became the basic motives to create patterns. The selection of fauna motives and cosmos motives are also popular among traditional craft experts. The selection of the motives usually based on the close relationship between Malay people and their environment. They treat the environment as their basic needs in their lives for food, medicine, culture and customs, arts, clothes, education, agriculture, merchandise and even belief.

**Key words:** Motifs • Malay traditional craft • Floral • Fauna • Cosmic

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### INTRODUCTION

The existence of Malay traditional craft products using natural materials in Malaysia had been traced since primitive age. This is proven by the discovery of pottery products such as in Gua Cha (Kelantan), Bukit Tengku Lembu (Perlis) and in Ulu Tembeling (Pahang). Most of the surface decoration on the potsherd is mediocre in nature. Apart from that, it was spontaneously produced by the pottery experts so the roots of a tree pattern can be seen. This was the turning point for the existence of decorative technology production on craft's surface using motifs from objects of nature in the beginning. However, do we realize that there are meanings behind

each of the patterns? There are three types of motifs used for the craft products namely floral, fauna and cosmic motifs. These motifs not only beautiful on the outside but there are other inner meanings involving morals and animism elements inside. The content of the inner and outer perceptions plays as a visual education tools indirectly from generation to generation, other than nurturing love and appreciation towards Malay heritage [1].

**Malay Traditional Art Crafts:** Malaysia is a unique country. The racial diversity living harmoniously is the root for the country's development to achieve the dream of becoming a developed country in 2020 as set by our

former Prime Minister. In forwarding towards the dream, Malaysia's society never forget the ancestor's heritage, especially in art field that has been the symbol of ethnic heritage. The aesthetics of Malaysia's society is divided into several fields such as dance, clothing and jewelry, martial arts, architecture, music, weapon, games and crafts [2-3].

Malay is one of the races that are rich in works of art especially in handicraft. Malay handicraft portrays the gentleness of soul that can be seen through the finesse of craft products produced by Malay traditional craftspeople. Crafts can also show the ethic and behaviour of Malay who is patient, diligence, meticulous and wholeheartedly in doing something, thus it reflects the civilization achieved by our ancestors. Malay's civilization can be seen through the diversity of craftworks based on the natural resources created by their creative and innovative thinking. In the beginning, craftworks were being used as utilitarian items but it became the major economy source in the end. Nowadays, only a few in Malay society use craftworks as the source of income to make a living because craftwork is not the main choice for daily use. This is mainly because at present, people are more comfortable using utilitarian items that are modern, simple, reasonably priced and easy to find in ordinary shops [4].

The fact is Malay crafts people's thinking formed by the environmental influence which in turn cultivates various motifs in surface decoration for handicrafts. The variety of motifs consists of floral, fauna and cosmic that beautifies the Malay traditional crafts is indirectly saying that the Malay craft is deeply connected with natural environment which plays the most important element in their life [5].

**Malay Traditional Art Crafts and Nature:** The term craft originated from German word 'kraft' means strong, sound and efficient. Craft's definition by Kamus Dewan is work of art produced by the skill of hands whereas the word traditional means a hereditary habitual practice. Generally, traditional crafts produced by all races in Malaysia are based on natural materials. The earliest usage of basic material from natural resources was clay for producing pottery. Other natural resource materials were leaves for weaving, metal like gold, copper and silver for jewellery, thread for woven fabric and embroidery, cloth for batik, wood for carving and there was a combination of two materials using wood and metal for 'keris' [6].

In a multi-racial country, the handicraft product has its own uniqueness following the race. Each craft produced will represent the culture and tradition of each race. For example, Bumiputera produced more art crafts based on nature that are being used for accessories, utilitarian or for religious purpose. Likewise the Chinese, the motifs and design of art crafts gets influenced by the culture from China. They focused more on ceramics by inventing religious ceremonial tools, home decorative items and Chinese calligraphy art. Indians focused more on pottery art by producing clay pots

Malay traditional art crafts existed since the Neolithic Age. As we know, the original placements of Malays were near the edge of the forests and along the riverbanks where they get the material from natural resources which was the key ingredient used to produce the traditional craft [7]. Therefore through this research, we can see how floral, fauna and cosmic motifs were stylized to be the main motif in producing design patterns on Malay traditional crafts. Once, crafts were designed for daily use such as in a feast that used weaved mat for floor cover. It was considered rude if the host leave the guests seating on a naked floor. Potteries were used as flower vase, pots, water cooler or crockery [8]. Wood carving functioned to decorate the house and as air ventilator (cut out carvings). Batik used for the birth, the death, or as everyday clothes. Songket and fabric embroidery were set apart for wedding and celebrations. Apart from that, Keris that was created using a combination of silver and copper was used as part of Malay man clothing accessory. While for aristocracy, product of silver and copper was used for house décor or Tepak Sirih (container for betel leaf) while gold on the other hand used as self adornment for women.

After Malay was being introduced to regional trade system, craftworks had become the major trading products and economic resource. Great competition occurred between local craft with craft from foreign traders especially from Southeast Asia, China, Arab, Persian and Indian [9]. Art craft products from foreign traders were said as more intriguing to locals because the design and pattern based on motifs of nature was diversified and more colourful. To overcome this problem, local craft inventors had taken motif's inspiration from foreign countries but modified it according to Malay's taste, culture and belief. They also had begun to create colour in craft works by using natural materials such as yellow from turmeric, orange and red from Bixa Orellana (Kesumba Keling), black from Damson Plum (Jambu

Arang), noni leaf to produce blue and Donax Grandis (Bemban) leaf to get green. To get brighter color, they added slaked lime. For labu sayong, rice husk was used to get the blackened surface [10-12].

Parallel to modernisation, today's craftworks production is different from the yesteryears because most are using electric machines and modern dyes to increase productivity. For example, if long ago a production of labu sayong was limited to five pieces a day, nowadays, by using mould from plaster of Paris, it can be produced up to 20 pieces a day. New form is introduced to suit current taste such as songket for a clutch bag, belt, picture frame, wall ornament etc. yet still retaining the original design pattern [13]. Nevertheless, to ensure that the skill of Malay's craftspeople never dies, government has constituted Perbadanan Kemajuan Kraftangan Malaysia (PKKM) that is responsible to educate and train new generation to produce handicraft both in traditional or modern ways and to market and promote local art crafts product locally or abroad.

**The Earliest Creation of Malay Traditional Art Craft Based on Motifs of Nature:** Human being is Allah's creation who always thinks to produce something to be used in daily life. This has been proven since prehistoric age. Ancient people at that time created fire to grill food, to warm up body, to light up the darkness or to prevent attack from wildlife. Prehistoric age is divided into three categories that are Palaeolithic (35000-8000 BC), Mesolithic (8000-3500 BC) and Neolithic (6000-1500 BC) and history has proven that human being at that period had begun to create daily essentials as in the discovery of stone axes used to cut trees [14].

This phenomenon also occurs in Malay world since Neolithic age around 2000 BC to 1500 BC. Malays at that time were living like a nomad, make weapons for hunting, created tools for self-protection and daily essentials like house, clothes, cooking utensils (clay pots), moving vehicle like sampan and not forgetting the creation of self-adornment accessories. Relationship between Malay with the forest had existed since 20,000 years ago when materials from the forests were being used for accommodation, food source and daily essentials. This relationship had caused Malays of the past applying natural resource as motif in their handicrafts (Siti Zainon, 1986).

The discovery of a high legged pottery plate from Neolithic age in Gua Cha, Hulu Kelantan is a proof that Malays had begun to create handicrafts without motifs using clay as the material from nature resource [Picture 1].



Pic. 1: Neolithic Age non-decorative pottery found at Gua Cha, Kelantan

Malay's consciousness on daily essential items had developed to facilitate and to fulfil their life then. From the creation of pots and pans, crockery from clay, they began to create other crafts such as twill weave (pandan and screw pine leaf) and rattan wicker basket. From observation, we can clearly see that the materials from nature easily obtained in their surroundings became the basic item to create handicrafts that were modestly designed [15].

It is natural for human to always think of creating something to facilitate one's life. From the creation of a clay urn that they can carry one at a time to firing site, they think about how to carry more. They get the idea of binding the green urn with rattan to make it portable and from here a decoration technique for crafts was unintentionally found because the burnt rattan gave a tactile quality on the pottery surface. From then on, the process of smoothing the pottery surface was not only using hands but hard objects from nature such as wood and stone which could produce a textured surface. The development of pottery surface decoration became a necessity because not only it beautify the pottery but it also roughen the surface so it was not slippery when carried [Diagram 2].

The development of crafts with surface decoration continued until Malays get influenced by Dong-Son culture. The culture gets the name from where the bronze was found in Tongkin and North Annam. The culture was written by Haji Buyong Adil in Pahang History book, of which Malaya accepted the Bronze Age under the power of Funan Empire around 300 BC until the coming of century (Siti Zainon, 1986).

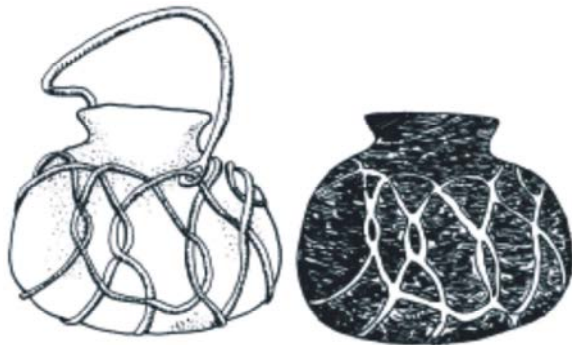


Diagram 2: Pottery natural decoration technique

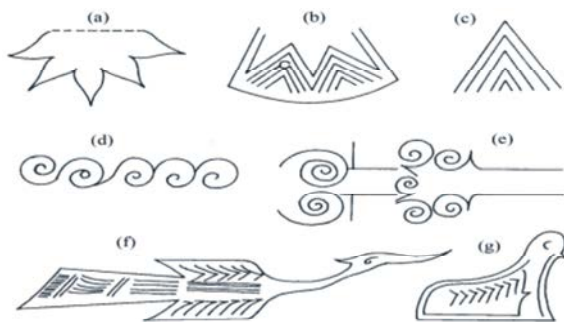


Diagram 3: Dong Son Decoration

- (a) Star-shaped motif (b) Star and Pucuk Rebung  
 (c) Pucuk Rebung/cone (d) Multiple spiral 'S'  
 (e) 'S' and line composition (f) Bird (g) Animal

The aesthetics of Dong-Son bronze shows the motif usage from nature such as cosmic (environment), floral (plants) and fauna (animals) [Diagram 3]. The discovery of a drum with surface decoration using Dong-Son motifs found at Kelang (1964) is enough to prove the turning point of idea transition in craft surface decoration towards using motifs of nature that was more complex and organized. Dong-Son influence not only existed in pottery and art of weaving but also in other crafts materials such as wood, bamboo and textile. Dong-Son influence had also added further interest on decoration to craftspeople for their goods. The idea of creating decoration motifs gets much influence by Malay's life that was surrounded by natural resources at that time [16-20].

**Definition and Philosophy in Motifs of Nature:** Motif is defined as an image or feature used for a base or pattern in some visual art works. In other word, a motif will be repeated or combined with various motifs to generate pattern. While nature in art context on the other hand is material from nature created by Allah and not manmade, formed through biological process according to its nature state; likewise a human existence being born from the

seed of a man and a woman. Motif is the most important art element in producing pattern on Malay traditional craft surface. In Malay traditional craft, motif acts as a messenger to deliver the thinking of the artisan because the motif itself contains inner meaning, the use and philosophy which can benefit, give a lesson and reminder to Malay society. At that time, the lesson and reminder to children was delivered by two methods, orally and visually. Oral delivery is like advices, pantun (Malay poetic form), poetry and moral story whereas in visual delivery, there were few handicraft motifs especially in wood carving that can convey the lesson in form and specific carving terms that can be used as a reminder to people when they see it [21-23].

Generally in artistic work, motifs were created in various ways such as carving, chiselling, dyeing, printing, block printing, moulding, weaving, drawing and sewing. All techniques to produce the motifs depend on the material used by the craftspeople. Technique suitability, equipment and material used are important to ensure a perfect, fine and high quality works. For example, to produce motifs in the art of carving, the skill of drawing, carving and chiselling are required to get a perfect design pattern. A perfect artistic craft work also requires crafts people's personal strength as the root to produce high quality art craft. Personal strength means patience, diligence, meticulous, imaginative and possesses efficient handicraft skills. These traits are important to enable craftspeople focusing on arranging the motifs of nature which is organic in nature.

As such, motif is a messenger delivering the thinking of the artisan to spectators in abstract form that has inner meaning behind the curled and twisted motifs. Malays of the past believed that the motif of nature has its own magical power. This belief is called animism that existed and inherited by ancient Malays before the arrival of Islam to Malaya. This magical power can hinder the disturbance of spirit or witchcraft. The invisible spirit can bring disaster to mankind. To overcome this problem, they organized a worship ceremony to expel the evil creature.

Apart from that, they used certain symbols to scare the spirit away such as using 'Kepala Cicak' motif [Diagram 4] in wood carving. Lizard's head form was stylized and simplified before nailed to the corner of the house's roof. It functions just like a warrior taking care and guarding the house from thief. The lizard head's eye area was carved in large cut outs. It was believed as if there is a sleepless creature in the house with big and watchful eyes to scare the spirit away. Other motif



Diagram 4: Kepala Cicak

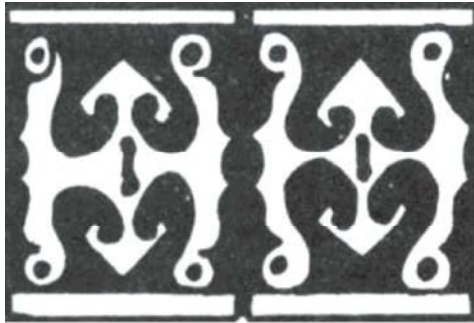


Diagram 5: Kuda Laut

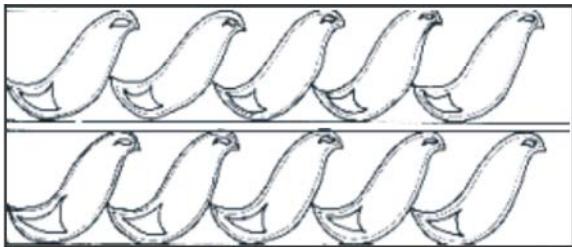


Diagram 6: Itik pulang petang



Diagram 7: Badak mudik

believed to have similar magical power with lizard's head was 'Kuda Laut' motif [Diagram 5] on wood carving and songket.

Dried seahorse hung at the base of the door was believed to avoid the owner of the house from betrayed by others. Seahorse motif in wood carving was suitable to use as fence at the porch area and it functions just like the lizard's head motif.

The delivery of moral values can be seen in Malay traditional craft motifs. Honourable manners, gentle and politeness are the behaviours emphasized largely within Malay society. These behaviours are important to ensure one can live in Malay society which is practicing a lifestyle that respects elders and leader, cooperative, tolerate and considerate to neighbours. The moral teaching was presented in art craft using motifs of fauna or animal that had been stylized from its original shape as demanded in Islamic religious teachings which banned the portrayal of Allah's creation. This animal motif was chosen to remind people that sometimes it is all right to use a particular animal's behaviour for a lesson in daily life.

Animal motifs were often used at Malay traditional houses for this purpose such as 'Itik Pulang Petang' motif [Diagram 6]. Motif engraved is similar to a row of walking ducks portraying the nature of the animals that usually walk in line behind their leader. The moral value that the artisan wish to deliver is we should follow and be loyal to the king and leader, not arrogant and not be ahead of the people in front of you to ensure peace and safety in the society. It suits much with the ideology of Malay society that is substantial in loyalty to the king and leader which is becoming the core of life. The loyalty can be viewed on Malay expression like 'Pantang anak Melayu menderhaka' (Malay prohibits rebels) which means it is a huge offence for Malay to disobey the king because it can bring consequences in future life. Disloyalty to the king or leader means society will be disorganized and in chaos.

The 'Kucing Lalok' motif or a sleeping cat has moral value saying that a lazy person won't get a good life (Abdul Halim, 1987). The title of the carving suits the nature of a cat that sleeps in daylight and stays awake at night. Those who are lazy to work and always sleep aren't likely get a livelihood because normally during daylight, people are working thus slackers won't be successful in life. 'Badak Mudik' motif was specially dedicated to men who are the pillar or a chief in the family. A hippo was the source of inspiration because it suits its physical being that is big, thick skinned, watchful and always protect the offspring's from being attacked by other animals. 'Mudik' or moving upstream means intention or effort with a purpose. Therefore, the motif shows that a man must be hard working for the sake of the family without neglecting his responsibility towards the society and the religion [Diagram 7].

Family Harmony is crucial to ensure a safe and sound life. A family dispute can make a family in topsy-turvy and lessen the mutual respect among each other. For Malay



Diagram 8: Ayam Berlaga

society, a good ethic comes from upbringing which in turn affects the peacefulness of the society. To educate the children about mutual respect among each other, the 'Ayam Belaga' motif or a cockfight was used as the main decoration at the step of the house so it can be seen at any time. This motif was a reminder to the children as not to fight with each other and all problems can be solved with discussion and a compromise [Diagram 8]. As a human being, we can't be a cock that uses strength for a fight to determine the strongest.

These craft's motifs not only reflect animism and lesson in moral values, it also contains symbolic elements related to people's spiritual life. Symbol defined as something which represents other thing. Symbolism aims to mark a special something socially and motivate people to follow and learn about the values needed for them to live together (Othman Yatim, 1989). In Malay traditional craft, a symbolic motif comprises mainly fauna and cosmic believed to provide a peace of mind, happiness in life and as a reminder to the greatness of God that created the universe. The most popular 'Bunga Tanjung' (Spanish Cherry) motif in Malay traditional craft is a symbol to welcome guest. A lotus motif means a symbol of strong self-confidence, purity, peace and believes to what Allah plan for each human being. Blossoming flower petals symbolize the glow and happiness that shines through the flower itself. Most round shape flower motif symbolizes universe. '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. 'Sulur Bayung' motif represents the centralization of a high and mighty force.

**Source for Motifs of Nature in Malay Traditional Craft:**

There are three sources for motifs of nature in Malay traditional craft applied on the craft surface namely floral (plant), fauna (animal) and cosmic (universe). Floral and fauna motif was obtained from the forest area that was a habitat of both sources. Therefore, it is parallel to Malays of the past earliest placement that was on the edge of the forest and along the riverbank; plants and animals were chosen as a motif source in craft.

At that time, forest plays an important role as the main source of livelihood to supply cane, woods and animals from hunting activity, and also served as a place for animal to live in. Forest also supplied necessities of life such as local vegetables, seasoning, herbs, traditional medicaments and also fruits. Apart from that, the universe had been given attention by the people of the past. Observation to clouds provided a guidance to undergo daily activity, such as in weather forecast.

Below is the table that list plants for floral motif in Malay traditional handicrafts:

**The Role of Floral Motif in Malay Society's Life:** As we know, plants play an important role in daily life and it has implication towards Malay society's socio culture. These plants had been used at large in particular event such as in marriage, birth and death. Hence, this close relationship inspired Malay craftspeople to apply stylized floral forms in craft motifs so that the image of the plants stays with them, indoor or outdoor. Based on the table above, a few plants section became a basic motif such as flower part, leaf / shoot, fruit, seeds, stems and root.

Why were plants chosen as floral motif in craft? There were several reasons for this, among them was due to its role in Malay's life as decorative plant to beautify the house's surrounding such as bougainvillea, orchid, hibiscus, sunflower, chrysanthemum, amaryllis, gardenias and sida. Some also functions 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 flower pot. Apart from that, decorative plant categorised as aquatic plant such as lotus, water lily and pistia can be found in swamp and lake area. Nevertheless, 'bunga semangat' and lotus applied as motif in handicraft came from the influence of Hinduism.

Traditional medication as a way to solve health related problems was not a foreign matter for Malays of the past. To date, even though modern medication exists, some Malays still apply traditional medication they said more effective and the content is said purer because it comprises raw materials from nature. Most of the traditional medicinal plants are wild plants in forest or grown in house's surrounding. Traditional medicinal plant motif used in handicraft is like hibiscus motif. Apart from serving as a decorative plant, it could also cure headache and promote hair growth. The method for curing headache is by drinking the boiled hibiscus leaf water, while to promote hair growth is by lathering the head using the hibiscus leaf extracts. Similar to jasmine which functions to cure headache, the method is by making a poultice for the head from the boiled jasmine leaf. Turmeric and betel

Table 1: Flower

| Flower Motif   | Batik | Weaving | Pottery | Carving | Songket | Tekat |
|----------------|-------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-------|
| Air Mata Kasih | ✓     |         |         |         |         |       |
| Anggerik       | ✓     |         | ✓       | ✓       |         | ✓     |
| Berbaling      | ✓     |         |         |         |         |       |
| Buluh          | ✓     |         |         |         |         |       |
| Cempaka        | ✓     | ✓       |         | ✓       | ✓       | ✓     |
| Kaca Piring    | ✓     |         |         |         |         |       |
| Kenanga        | ✓     |         |         |         |         | ✓     |
| Kerak Nasi     | ✓     |         |         |         | ✓       | ✓     |
| Kerawang       | ✓     |         |         |         |         |       |
| Mawar          | ✓     |         | ✓       |         | ✓       | ✓     |
| Raya           | ✓     |         | ✓       | ✓       | ✓       | ✓     |
| Bogan          | ✓     | ✓       |         |         |         |       |
| Pala           | ✓     |         |         |         |         |       |
| Ator           |       | ✓       |         |         |         |       |
| Berembang      |       | ✓       |         |         |         |       |
| Cengkeh        |       | ✓       | ✓       | ✓       | ✓       | ✓     |
| Mangga         | ✓     |         |         |         |         |       |
| Cina           |       | ✓       | ✓       |         | ✓       |       |
| Durian         |       | ✓       |         |         |         |       |
| Gedong         |       | ✓       |         |         |         |       |
| Melur          |       | ✓       |         | ✓       | ✓       |       |
| Tanjung        |       | ✓       | ✓       | ✓       | ✓       |       |
| Mempelas       |       | ✓       |         |         |         |       |
| Lawang         | ✓     |         | ✓       | ✓       | ✓       |       |
| Ketamguri      |       |         |         | ✓       |         |       |
| Ketumbit       |       |         |         | ✓       |         |       |
| Kecubung       |       |         | ✓       | ✓       |         |       |
| Tahi Ayam      |       |         |         | ✓       |         |       |
| Matahari       |       |         |         | ✓       |         |       |
| Kunyit         |       |         |         |         | ✓       |       |
| Kemuncup       |       |         |         |         | ✓       |       |
| Kertas         |       |         |         |         | ✓       |       |
| Asam Batu      |       |         |         |         |         | ✓     |
| Semangat       |       |         |         | ✓       | ✓       | ✓     |
| Bakung         |       |         |         |         |         | ✓     |
| Kemboja        |       |         |         |         |         | ✓     |
| Kekwa          |       |         |         |         |         | ✓     |
| Kelabut        |       | ✓       |         |         |         |       |
| Kedudut        |       |         | ✓       |         |         |       |
| Sarung Celak   |       |         |         |         | ✓       |       |
| Cermai         |       |         |         |         | ✓       | ✓     |
| Cabit          |       |         |         |         |         | ✓     |

Table 2: Leaf

| Leaf Motif   | Batik | Weaving | Pottery | Carving | Songket | Tekat |
|--------------|-------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-------|
| Berjalar     | ✓     |         |         |         |         |       |
| Keladi       | ✓     |         |         | ✓       | ✓       | ✓     |
| Puding       | ✓     |         |         |         |         |       |
| Sirih        | ✓     |         |         |         |         |       |
| Susur Kelapa |       |         | ✓       |         |         |       |
| Bayam        |       |         | ✓       |         |         |       |
| Setulang     |       |         |         | ✓       |         |       |
| Lontar       |       |         |         | ✓       |         |       |
| Pandan       |       |         |         |         | ✓       |       |
| Peria        |       |         |         |         |         | ✓     |

Table 3: Tree

| <i>Tree Motif</i> | <i>Batik</i> | <i>Weaving</i> | <i>Pottery</i> | <i>Carving</i> | <i>Songket</i> | <i>Tekat</i> |
|-------------------|--------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|
| <i>Kacang</i>     |              |                |                | ✓              |                |              |
| <i>Kerak Nasi</i> |              |                |                | ✓              |                |              |
| <i>Ara</i>        | ✓            |                |                |                |                |              |

Table 4: Tampuk

| <i>Tampuk Motif</i> | <i>Batik</i> | <i>Weaving</i> | <i>Pottery</i> | <i>Carving</i> | <i>Songket</i> | <i>Tekat</i> |
|---------------------|--------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|
| <i>Manggis</i>      | ✓            | ✓              | ✓              | ✓              | ✓              |              |
| <i>Pinang</i>       |              | ✓              |                |                |                |              |
| <i>Kesemak</i>      |              | ✓              |                |                | ✓              |              |
| <i>Jantung</i>      |              | ✓              |                |                |                |              |

Table 5: Stems

| <i>Stems Motif</i> | <i>Batik</i> | <i>Weaving</i> | <i>Pottery</i> | <i>Carving</i> | <i>Songket</i> | <i>Tekat</i> |
|--------------------|--------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|
| <i>Bakung</i>      |              |                | ✓              | ✓              |                |              |
| <i>Bayung</i>      |              |                | ✓              | ✓              |                |              |
| <i>Kacang</i>      |              |                |                | ✓              |                |              |

Table 6: Aquatic plant

| <i>Aquatic Plant Motif</i> | <i>Batik</i> | <i>Weaving</i> | <i>Pottery</i> | <i>Carving</i> | <i>Songket</i> | <i>Tekat</i> |
|----------------------------|--------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|
| <i>Kiambang</i>            | ✓            |                |                | ✓              |                |              |
| <i>Telepuk</i>             | ✓            |                |                |                | ✓              |              |
| <i>Teratai</i>             | ✓            |                |                | ✓              | ✓              |              |

Table 7: Shoot

| <i>Shoot Motif</i> | <i>Batik</i> | <i>Weaving</i> | <i>Pottery</i> | <i>Carving</i> | <i>Songket</i> | <i>Tekat</i> |
|--------------------|--------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|
| <i>Rebung</i>      | ✓            | ✓              | ✓              | ✓              | ✓              | ✓            |
| <i>Jaja</i>        |              |                |                | ✓              |                |              |
| <i>Macang</i>      |              |                |                | ✓              |                |              |
| <i>Paku</i>        |              |                |                |                |                | ✓            |

Table 8: Root

| <i>Root Motif</i> | <i>Batik</i> | <i>Weaving</i> | <i>Pottery</i> | <i>Carving</i> | <i>Songket</i> | <i>Tekat</i> |
|-------------------|--------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|
| <i>Menjalar</i>   | ✓            |                |                |                |                |              |
| <i>Berakar</i>    | ✓            |                |                |                |                |              |

Table 9: Fruits/Seeds

| <i>Fruits/Seeds Motif</i> | <i>Batik</i> | <i>Weaving</i> | <i>Pottery</i> | <i>Carving</i> | <i>Songket</i> | <i>Tekat</i> |
|---------------------------|--------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|
| <i>Pala</i>               | ✓            |                |                |                |                |              |
| <i>Padi</i>               |              | ✓              | ✓              |                |                | ✓            |
| <i>Anggur</i>             |              |                |                |                | ✓              |              |
| <i>Nona</i>               |              |                |                |                | ✓              |              |
| <i>Zaitun</i>             |              |                |                |                | ✓              |              |
| <i>Delima</i>             |              |                |                |                |                | ✓            |

Table 10: Bird

| <i>Bird Motif</i> | <i>Batik</i> | <i>Weaving</i> | <i>Pottery</i> | <i>Carving</i> | <i>Songket</i> | <i>Tekat</i> |
|-------------------|--------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|
| <i>Ayam</i>       | ✓            |                | ✓              | ✓              | ✓              | ✓            |
| <i>Burung</i>     | ✓            | ✓              |                | ✓              | ✓              | ✓            |
| <i>Keluang</i>    |              | ✓              | ✓              | ✓              | ✓              |              |
| <i>Itik</i>       |              |                |                | ✓              | ✓              |              |
| <i>Bangau</i>     |              |                |                | ✓              |                |              |
| <i>Geroda</i>     | ✓            |                |                |                |                |              |
| <i>Kala</i>       | ✓            |                |                |                |                | ✓            |
| <i>Kupu-kupu</i>  | ✓            |                |                |                |                | ✓            |
| <i>Siput</i>      | ✓            | ✓              |                |                | ✓              |              |
| <i>Belalang</i>   |              | ✓              | ✓              |                | ✓              |              |
| <i>Lalat</i>      |              | ✓              |                |                |                |              |
| <i>Cicak</i>      |              |                |                | ✓              |                |              |
| <i>Kumbang</i>    |              |                |                | ✓              |                |              |
| <i>Lebah</i>      |              |                |                | ✓              |                |              |
| <i>Lipan</i>      |              |                |                |                | ✓              |              |



Table 11: Aquatic

| Aquatic Motif         | Batik | Anyaman | Tembikar | Ukiran | Songket | Tekat |
|-----------------------|-------|---------|----------|--------|---------|-------|
| <i>Tapak sulaiman</i> |       |         |          | ✓      |         |       |
| <i>Ikan</i>           |       | ✓       | ✓        | ✓      | ✓       |       |
| <i>Kuda laut</i>      |       |         |          |        | ✓       |       |
| <i>Yu</i>             |       | ✓       |          |        | ✓       |       |
| <i>Belut</i>          |       | ✓       |          |        |         |       |
| <i>Udang</i>          |       |         | ✓        |        |         |       |
| <i>Naga</i>           |       |         |          | ✓      |         |       |

Table 12: Wildlives

| Wildlives Motif | Batik | Weaving | Pottery | Carving | Songket | Tekat |
|-----------------|-------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-------|
| <i>Gajah</i>    |       | ✓       |         |         |         |       |
| <i>Harimau</i>  |       | ✓       |         |         |         |       |
| <i>Anjing</i>   |       | ✓       |         |         |         |       |
| <i>Badak</i>    |       |         |         | ✓       |         |       |
| <i>Pelanduk</i> |       |         | ✓       |         |         |       |
| <i>Kucing</i>   |       |         |         | ✓       |         |       |

leaf on the other hand are useful to expel wind, restore the energy and to shrink the uterus in women's postnatal care. Meanwhile, the popular handicraft motif of yam leaves on the other hand functions to increase libido. It can be done by drinking the boiled tuber water or eaten with betel nut and leaves.

Malay emphasized much on seasoning which can produce nice aroma to their cooking and to make it tastier. Star anise and clove frequently used in Malay cooking is a common plant motif used in handicraft. Pandan (*Pandanus*) motif used in songket is natural green colorant and commonly used as a fragrant for the cooking. Fruit motif also became main choice for craftspeople and comprises mainly from seasonal fruits at certain places or those not easily obtained like custard apple, olive, ruby, star gooseberry, betel nut, persimmon and nutmeg. Craftspeople were interested to make these fruits as motif based on the uniqueness of the colour, the shape and the internal part of the fruits. Mangosteen and durian on the other hand are seasonal local fruits that can be obtained easily. Those fruits are usually eaten raw, being made sambal or tempoyak (fermented durian), pickle or juice.

There were also motifs of nature based on plant frequently used in custom or ritual ceremony with a specific purpose such as coconut leaves fanned firmly in front of a girl to be circumcised was said could make the pain go away. Woman who just gave birth were prohibited from passing under star gooseberry tree because it said can make her sick. Betel leaf is a nutritional plant believed to cure various types of illnesses caused by human, used as the main symbol in Malay custom such as in proposal ceremony and marriage and also used as natural red color for lips.

Amaranthus, bean, fern shoot, bitter gourd, bamboo shoot and yam are classified as vegetable plant. These local vegetables usually cooked in stir fried, with coconut

milk, boiled with tamarind juice, salad (kerabu) or boiled simply with water. Fern shoot, bamboo shoot and yam are vegetables which grew wild in forest, swamp or bush areas. Bamboo shoot from bamboo plant that grew mostly near the edge of the forest is the most popular motif used in all type of handicrafts. This is due to its triangular shape that is suitable to be used as head or foot pattern for batik, songket and embroidery.

Cereal crop motif such as paddy was also used. It was the main economic activity for a family and mostly operated at the hill areas or a valley. Craftspeople not only choosing this rice motif based on the beautiful form but based on Malay belief towards the spirit of the paddy that were looked after by a benevolent spirit which can guarantee good crops. If this spirit sulks, it will affect the paddy production. Therefore to conserve a good state, rice motifs were used in daily craft such as mats, pottery and embroidery.

Below is the table that list animals for fauna motif in Malay traditional handicrafts:

**The Role of Fauna Motif in Malay Society's Life:** Living animals on earth are part of nature's element with its own distinctive habitat inland or in the waters. Stylized animal forms is called fauna motif and it has a special feature when used as a motif in handicraft. Craftspeople chose certain animals based on their observation to the animal's characteristics which can be used as a lesson and reminder to their posterity. For example, a duck motif based on duck nature that walk in line following the leader was to remind people to obey the leader, strong and hard skinned hippo was specially dedicated to men as a reminder to be responsible to the family, a sleeping cat was said to waste time and cockfight to portray barbarous nature that should be avoided for the sake of a peaceful society.

Table 13: Cosmic

| Cosmic Motif | Batik | Weaving | Pottery | Carving | Songket | Tekat |
|--------------|-------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-------|
| Hujan        | ✓     |         |         |         |         |       |
| Bulan        |       | ✓       | ✓       |         |         |       |
| Bintang      |       |         | ✓       |         |         |       |
| Awan         |       |         | ✓       | ✓       | ✓       |       |
| Matahari     |       |         | ✓       |         |         |       |

Animals were also used as motifs in handicraft for their beautiful natural characteristics in terms of shapes or colours. Peacock, butterfly, centipede, scorpion, cock and hen with its various gestures or actions and the beautiful colors and pattern on fur or on the body also immortalized as motif in handicraft. There were also craftspeople using stylized specific body parts they considered as unique with its own distinctive spirit as a simple motif such as snail shell, fish scale, siku keluang, animal's paw namely tiger and dog and animal's finger such as plover and crocodile.

Malay of the past also believed there were some animals which have the power to chase the spirits or evil away from disturbing them. Therefore, craftspeople chose a few types of animals based on the physical characteristics to be made a motif in craft and placed in certain parts of the house, indoor or outdoors for that purpose, for example the lizard's head motif that can scare the spirit away.

Dragon and eagle motifs on the other hand were originated from myths that usually told about how strong and huge the animal is without proving the truth. The shape and form of these animals were being told by 'Tok Dalang' or storyteller orally. From the story, craftspeople through their imagination will visualize the scale of the dragon and 'garuda' (a giant bird) which can be seen in wood carving and batik. Nevertheless, the fauna motif was actually an addition to floral motif as a complement to show the perfect universe.

Below is the chart of cosmic forms used in Malay traditional handicrafts:

**The Role of Cosmic Motif in Malay Society's Life:**

Cosmic motif is a motif related to universe that much applied in wood carving. This motif usually placed on gable, rooftop and roof part to suit the true position in universe system (at the top). There are various cloud motif names such as awan telipuk, awan boyan, awan semayang, awan selipat, awan jawa and awan larat. It is believed that these motives were from the crafts people's observation to the moving cloud in the sky. These clouds move slowly blown by the wind until various beautiful cloud masses were formed.

**CONCLUSION**

The above discussion had explained that the motifs creation in Malay handicraft had been much influenced by object from natures. This key factor happened because of Malay's way of life at the edge of the forest and along the riverbank. In fact, the exploitation of material from nature does not only focused on motif but also in the early creation of craft that used basic material, colorant, tools, cleaning and firing materials for craft production. Experiences achieved by craftspeople made a remarkable development to handicraft creation, originally in simple forms to more complex ones, each with its own specialty.

The creativity in producing crafts was detected since Neolithic Age where it emphasized more on daily use items only. Accidental experience in pottery firing process resulted in Malays creating decorative pattern using natural materials such as cane. After that, influence from Dong-Son motif caused Malay handicraft becoming more decorative. This was the turning point of decoration method on craft surface until elements of floral, fauna and cosmic were made the main motif in each handicraft decoration.

This study also found that traditional craft motifs not only displaying the natural beauty solely but it also intermingling education and animism beliefs inside. Traditional education for Malays of the past was being spread orally by old folks. Educational function at that time enabled particular people to arrange the way of life by practicing noble values to produce a peaceful society. Craftspeople of wood carving applied moral education visually using carving motif based on animal characteristics that can imply a lesson of good and bad. A completed carving will be placed in strategic place for a reminder to everybody in the house.

Other than education concept moulded in motif according to natures, motif from this source also believed can protect a family from being disturbed by spirit. Motifs such as lizard's head was considered a warrior that can chase the spirit away, other than organizing ceremonies for the same purpose to drive away disaster or practicing taboo to avoid the anger of the said spirit.

Among various motifs of nature in Malay handicraft, floral is the most popular motif used. Study found the similarity in floral used as motif but form, style and its colour is different following the material and technique used. Among floral motifs much applied at almost any type of craft was bunga cempaka, raya, cengkeh, tanjung, lawang, daun keladi, tampuk manggis and pucuk rebung, while fauna motif were a cock motif, bird, bat, fish, and snail and for cosmic motif was cloud.

That is Malays of the past specialty in appreciating natures and displaying their sensitivity towards environment created by God. Various flower names, animals and cosmos were composed in forms to suit as motifs in craft. It is obvious that Malays of the past have a rich knowledge in flower names in their surroundings. They were not only close with environment but understand the usage of those objects of nature which could benefit them. 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.

The result of this survey about the source for motifs of nature in Malay traditional craft found that craftspeople get the source of inspiration from three primary motifs based on plants, animal and universe forms around them. Floral motif was from decorative plants, food, agriculture, ritual and everyday medication they saw in their surroundings. When they want to create a motif, only then they took the particular parts of the floral element to be composed as a motif that suits the craft basic material. Likewise the adaptation of fauna and cosmic motif; all were the result of their close relationship with environment. Therefore, it is even more accurate to say that Malays of the past were practicing the environmentally friendly lifestyle compared to today's societies that are less attentive to environmental conservation.

It is very lucky for human being to be awarded by Allah the privilege of creating artistic work. In producing motifs, it is in fact a small scale imitation by craftspeople to Allah's creation. Allah has created environment, while craftspeople created something that already existed and changed it to become another form. With thoughts and feelings, craftspeople are able to produce unique motifs. Based on Allah's creation of nature, human being should be thankful to all good fortune Allah bestowed on us and take the best care possible for the earth.

The disclosure of motif features in Malay handicraft in details related to historical development, the original creation of craft motifs and its application on crafts

should be made known to younger generation. From researcher's acknowledgement throughout the study, it can be said that only serious appreciation can produce new generation that can enliven and appreciate the Malays of the past's ingenuity in creating art crafts which in turn will increase the awareness of love towards the original traditional handicrafts. This awareness is important so that Malay traditional art craft won't become exhibition material without a feeling of appreciation towards what were being created by earlier ancestors. It is crucial to ensure the acceptance of next generation so it won't be lost in modernization.

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