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# Influence of culture on ornament of the traditional architecture in Medan (Malay Deli Sultanate)

**M Nawawiy Loebis, Nurlisa Ginting, Haryanto Simanjuntak and Fattah Jamaluddin**

Departement of Architecture, Faculty of Engineering, Universitas Sumatera Utara, Medan, Indonesia

**Abstract.** During the Dutch colonialism, Malay Deli Sultanate was dominant and big which now their superiority was destroyed by Social Revolution. At that time, Malay people live in the peak of glory and civilization resulting in their growing culture. The purpose of research is to find the influence of culture in Malay Deli ornaments as a part of Architecture. Data obtained with literatures study and observation. The data was analysed using qualitative method to describe the phenomenon occur between variables. The aim of this research is identifying any culture influences ornaments in architecture. Such as Islam influences Malay ornament on the building and ornament division between the noble and people. The research result is the culture such as language, religion have influence on ornaments in Malay Deli architecture.

E-mail: m.nawawiy@usu.ac.id , haryanto\_simanjuntak@students.usu.ac.id and fattahjamaluddin@students.usu.ac.id

## 1. Introduction

Indonesia is a country that has various ethnicities and cultures that diverse. This diversity causes the traditional buildings are very diverse as well. Each traditional building has its own characteristics in accordance with the culture of each tribe. In North Sumatra, there is an empire that was born in 1632 named Malay Deli Sultanate. Malay Deli lived in North Sumatra for centuries. During the Dutch Colonialism, Deli Sultanate grew rapidly because of the plantation business especially tobacco.

According to Chun et al. (2006), there is an important need to develop new appropriate design. Linkages with the urban past and relevant to the present. A coexisting awareness by the local architects and the planners towards the historical and cultural context of place and its architectural priorities will provide a firmer basis in the pursuit to relate new designs with the locality and time. Firzal (2015) noted that require further exploration in order to frame the changes and development of Malay culture in the future, and these are particularly related to architecture and socio-cultural change. The research aspects is in-depth research into the transformation of Malay architecture. In this way, any transition, transmitting, and changing of the architecture can be traced and linked to, as well as become the basis of architectural development.

In this research, the researcher is not exploring Malay Deli architecture, but rather leads to the explanation of Malay Deli culture, resulting in buildings that are Malay architecture characteristics. In addition, traditional houses in Indonesia are closely related to beliefs, as well as Malay houses.

## 2. Theoretical

According to Rapoport (1969), house form is not simply the result of physical forces or any single causal factor, but is the consequence of a whole range of socio-cultural factors seen in their broadest terms. Koentjaraningrat explains that the culture is the whole system of ideas, actions and the work of human beings in the framework of the life of society which is made humankind by learning. There is 3



forms of culture by Koentjaraningrat (1979). The first form of culture is ideas, values, and norms. The second form of culture is activities or patterns of human action in society. The third form of culture is objects of human works. Seven elements of culture are language, art, religion, technology, livelihood, social organization and science. These seven elements of culture are referred to as elements of universal culture because it is always present in every societies. Dovey (2008) explains the objectification of culture can be seen in the capacity to choose and consume something such as buildings.

In this research, researcher discuss the influence of language and religion in traditional architecture ornament. A language consists of symbols that convey meaning, plus rules for combining those symbols, that can be used to generate an infinite variety of messages (Weiten, 2007). We can define language as a system of communication using sounds or symbols that enables us to express our feelings, thoughts, ideas, and experiences (Goldstein, 2008). Religion is an inseparable part of architecture. In some buildings, architectural styles carrying religious influences were used to impart a traditional character, without the intention of stressing any religious connotation. Sometimes, these influences are exhibited as unconscious echoes of religion. (Jovanović, 2012)

Singh (2006) describe traditional architecture as born out of local building materials and technologies and an architecture that is climate-responsive and a reflection of the customs and lifestyles of a community. Budihardjo (2002) explaining in more detail about the traditional architecture is a building that form, structure, function, ornament and craftsmanship inherited from generation to generation and can be used to perform daily activities. Ornament is a small, fancy object that is put on something else to make it more attractive (Merriam-Webster). Sunaryo (2009) also confirms ornament is the application of decoration on product. So, an ornament is a human effort to decorate a work of art. For Heathcote (2015), ornament is the language through which architecture communicates with a broader public, each remove puts another degree of separation between the profession and the public. Architectural ornament can be carved from stone, wood or precious metals, formed with plaster or clay, or painted or impressed onto a surface as applied ornaments.

### 3. Methods

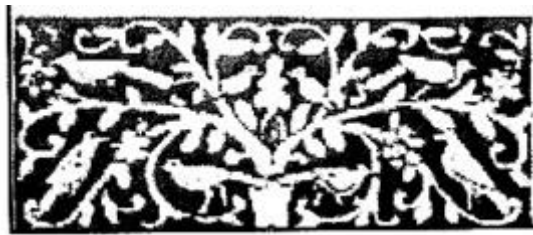
This research uses descriptive method to evaluating data variables and qualitative approach. A qualitative approach can help to find the nature and source of social problems (Patton, 1990) as its focus is on understanding meanings and processes through collecting a variety of empirical materials (Groat and Wang, 2002). Despite having field data by various methods, literature study proved to be the most reliable method for maximising opportunities to get information considering Malay Village was destroyed because of Social Revolution on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1946. The revolution was triggered by communist who aim to eliminate the royal system based on antifeodalism and caused Malay village destroyed and its identity was invisible (Basarshah II). Indeed, the most useful data was found by literature study. Many important sources can be access from university library, and regional library.

### 4. Results and Discussion

#### 4.1. Languages influences to the ornament

In this part, the description is centered on the language as one element of culture that manifested in the form of ornament on traditional architecture. Sukada (2009) explain that each traditional architectural object maker is considered to have their own way of processing in order to produce communicative objects. Thus each architectural object is typically the property of the author (it represents only the maker). Each architectural object is unique and original because it only carries messages from the author.

Such as plant ornaments and birds are usually placed on the window is a symbol of prosperity (see figure 1). There are not all traditional Malay house use this ornament, except who are actually well established in economy.



**Figure 1.** Tree ornament.

#### *4.2. Religions influences to the ornament*

Since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Malay people are someone who is Muslim, who speaks Malay, and has Malay culture. In the exploration of Marcopolo, an Italian explorer, in 1292 Marcopolo stopped in northern Aceh on his way from the Persian China key through the sea. In Peureula, East Aceh, he encountered people who converted to Islam, as well as many Islamic traders from India who actively spread Islam. Around the city many of its residents are still infidel. This shows in the time of arrival Marcopolo, the spread of Islam has not been long ago. Before Islam entered North Sumatra, local people had embraced Hinduism. This is evidenced by the news that the Sultan Malik As-Shaleh, the first Sultan SamuderaPasai, adheres to Hinduism before being Islamized by Sheikh Ismael.

Ornaments are not foreign to Malay culture. Because of the influence of Islam is so strong that the type or variety of ornaments more to the sheer beauty and rarely directed to magical activities or rituals of trust. Indeed Islam supports the creation of art, but with certain conditions, that which can bring benefits or build and not a harmful and destructive, its appearance does not violate the shari'ah of Islam and does not violate morality and morals value. The Qur'an, the Muslim holy book, does not explicitly prohibit the depiction of human figures, but only condemns idolatry. Aniconism in Islam is a prohibition in Islam against the creation of images of living things. The most absolute prohibition is the image of God in Islam, followed by the depiction of the Prophet Muhammad, and then the prophets of Islam and the relatives of the Prophet Muhammad, but the depiction of all humans and animals is not suggested in the hadith and by the old traditions of Islamic scholars, especially Sunnis. This has led to Islamic art dominated by geometric patterns of Islam, calligraphy, and foliage patterns, but figurative art still has a strong tradition, especially in small sizes in personal works within the house or palace.

In the early days, aniconism in Islam was intended as an act to remove idol worship, especially against the statues worshiped by pagans. The following hadith written by Muhammad al-Bukhari, Sahih Bukhari shows the Prophet Muhammad cursing the image: From Aisha r.a. (Prophet's wife): I bought a pillow on which there was a picture (animal). When the Messenger of Allah saw him, he stood at the door and did not enter. I saw a sign of disapproval on his face and said, "O Messenger of God! I repent to Allah and His Messenger What is the sin that I have done?" Rasulullah said, "What is this pillow?" I said, "I bought this for you so you can sit on it and lie on it." The Messenger of Allah said, "The makers of these images will be punished on the Day of Judgment, and will say to them, 'Turn what you have made (for example, these drawings)'." The Prophet added, "Angels (grace) will not enter a house in which there are images (animals)."

Variety of ornaments are often exhibited in traditional Malay house is a patterned ornament of plants such as leaf form of vines (see figure 2), flowers (see figure 3) and geometric graphics (see figure 4). Most are still vines that are interconnected and related to the Arab decoration. Hardly anyone uses animal or human motives. Along with the influx of cultures from outside the Malay as well as from the results of the odyssey of the Malay hence the patterned ornamental patterned animals began to be known on the Malay decoration. Such animal ornaments further show the beauty of animal nature and emphasize the expression of the symbol of the good nature of the animal symbolized not as something that is adored. Variety of animals on Malay house decoration usually motivated fish, bird or chicken. The use of this motif as a sign of devotion of affection for pets. It is also influenced by Hindu beliefs that believe birds and fish are faithful nannies symbolizing strength and pride. Birds are considered to be God's intercession with humans who will die while the fish are

considered to give the ability to adventure wandering away (see figure 5). Such ornaments can be found in houses of worship, people's homes and ornaments of weapons such as keris, swords and daily wear.

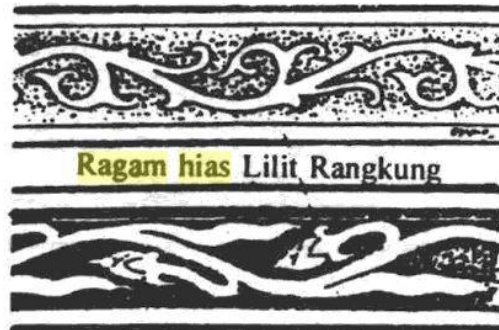


Figure 2. Lilit rangkung ornament.



Figure 3. "RodaBunga" ornament (left) and "Bunga Matahari" ornament (right).

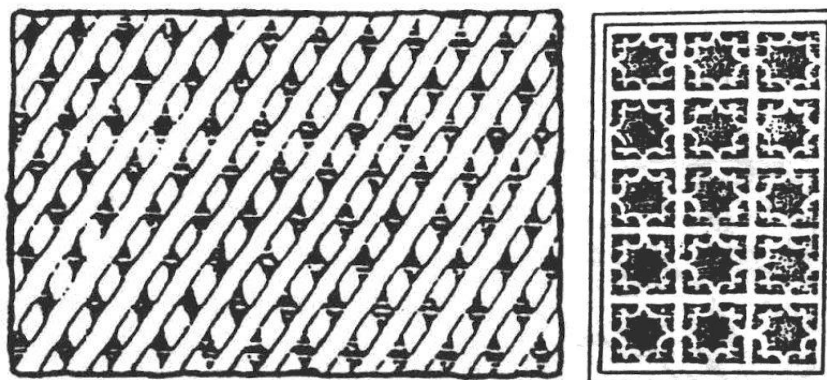


Figure 4. "Jala-jala" ornament (left) and "Tampuk Pinang" ornament (right).



Figure 5. "Naga Berjuang" ornament.

## 5. Conclusion

Ornament in Malay Deli architecture was influenced by religion and language. Malay people who is Muslims assimilating Islamic teachings into building ornaments. Malay people didn't craft any picture of man because it was banned by Islam. Later, influence by outside culture, Malay people made the ornaments that indicates the elegance of animal nature and emphasizes the expression of the symbol of the good nature of the animal symbolized not as something that is adored. Some ornaments was made to carry a message so it can be a communicative objects.

There are some research aspects which require further exploration in order to describe the culture influence towards traditional architecture in Medan. The first is in-depth research into the influence of culture on roof in traditional architecture in Medan. This research will show how the socio-cultural change effect the shape of roof.

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