

ADAPTING FORMALISTIC APPROACH IN ANALYSE MALAY ARTEFACT, KUKURAN INTO ITS CLASSIFICATION

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Abstract

Initially the creation of kukuran probably began as a simple seat straddled with a sharp iron grater protruding at the end. From a simple shape of kukuran, it evolved to more complex styles of form. The formal analysis is the work of describing and assessing the visual and material appearance of artworks. This formal analysis stressed the development of a technical language for description of the art work, so that the analysis can be depicted and addressed. Formal analysis describes the work of art and trying to understand the artists or craftsmen want to convey. These visual images are analysed into formalistic and pre-iconographical in order to reveal to its characteristics. It establishes categories of systematic definitions and thought to express point of view about the kukuran characteristics. The characteristics of kukuran constitute the basis for its classification. The analysis embarks on three major stages which are characteristics extraction, characteristics comparison, and classification techniques. The characteristics extraction stage captures the visual formal composition qualities of kukuran. After extracting the required characteristics, the image than been compare to the characteristics in appropriate manner. Later, these visual images have described and clarifies the visual composition and vital ornaments representational in order to reveal its significance characteristics. Finally, these characteristics classified accordingly to its analysis of the extraction characteristics. Finally, the finding concludes that kukuran forms are divided into four major groups which are zoomorphic form, anthropomorphic form, modern form and utility form. It shows the splendid achievement of Malay art form reflected in the form of art physically and spiritually.

Keywords: formalistic, approach, artefact, Malay, kukuran, classification

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INTRODUCTION

In the Malay Archipelago, craftsman from this region has taken a great variety of art forms according to local customs, norms and beliefs. This art form relate to the various social, religious and regional backgrounds of the people who created the art forms. The different modes of art form had reflected on the cultural world-view of their work of arts. The appearances of the art form vary depending on the elements and principles of design (Ocvirk et all, 2006). Therefore, the art forms are different from place to place slightly or variedly different from region to region (Shepperd, 1978). Siti Zainon Ismail (1986) had classified art forms includes folks arts, folk crafts, artefacts and material cultures. The traditional art forms are closely intertwined with the custom and value system of its respective culture. It is also used to direct people's behaviour, as well as to imprint certain ideas characteristic of the culture concerned. She stated that aesthetic characteristics are used for art forms that emphasized on decoration elements. Conversely she further these aesthetic values were depend on artists' sensitivity, craftsmanship skills, ideas and instincts, choice of materials and decorations. However, Syed Ahmad Jamal (1994) expresses that in order to understand a work of art in terms of purpose, function and concept; it should be based on aesthetic assessment.

Syed Ahmad Jamal (1994) concluded that Malay work of art is a mode of local expression and it can be perceived through sense of Malay craftsmen imagination towards nature. A form of work art gives visible faculties such as its formalistic aspect of elements and principles of design to the expression of emotion, thought and soul. According to Harris (1997), creative play, formal structure, aesthetic feelings and symbolic transformations are the essential ingredients in art. Lazzari and Schlesier (2012) noted that visual form includes formal elements, overall compositions and also materials. Visual form is manipulated in an artwork, fulfil its function and enhance its visual appeals. The formal elements in visual art are; line, shape, mass, volume, space and so forth. The four major Malay traditional arts are wood carving, weaving, silverwork, and weapon making can be found in neighbouring countries and still been practiced in Malaysia (Wan Hashim Wan Teh, 1996). According to Haziyah Hussen (2006), the work of arts produced by the Malays is related to the beauty of its material and techniques. Materials from the earth sources attract Malays craftsmen to produce and create the art works to fulfil the need and daily use. She pointed out that the use of natural sources involved technique and aesthetics. Technique is related to the process of producing and shaping the work of arts. The beauty of artwork exhibits an aesthetic value based on the philosophy, symbolism, beliefs and preference of the craftsmen at the particular time.

In the past, the Malay artists and craftsmen have created an attractive form and valuable traditional art form known as kukuran or coconut grater. Kukuran sometimes literally known as kore, kukuq or kukur, countless crafts have been devised over the centuries for use in preparation of food. Kukuran encompasses function; aesthetic, socio-cultural factors, style, ergonomic, and the combination of these elements can create for a form. The evolution from primitive to other periods of civilization has significantly contributed to kukuran development. Each kukuran has its own styles woven and embedded in it but the rationale for its form is always one of the forms in the development of human needs and lifestyles. Kukuran is formed from the stand point of previous functional purposes which focus on the domain of function,

material and appearance. Even though its form had roots in the past; human needs, functions and emotions had changed differently according to the circle of the modern lifestyle.

Kukuran suggests the three-dimensional forms of relief sculpture. The basic of sculpture of the kukuran is the knowledge of anatomical or structural form. It is important to know the structural and muscular structure to achieve artistic accomplishment. Knowledge of musculature of animals is important to the wood carver that may occasionally translate the animal's forms as subject matter for their art creations. The analysis, interpretation, reconstruction and evolution of kukuran fulfilled the task of understanding the work of arts. It is a manner in which kukuran presents in its forms and transmitted meaning as values. The physical attributes such as structural shape and form, colour, and decoration style would help to interpret kukuran and also to cluster kukuran into its classification. A form-based classification addresses characteristics and reflects much information. The classification of the form and the generic style can help to understand deeply and appreciate the form characteristics on kukuran. Kukuran form contains a variety of visual physical attributes including shape, pattern, and composition, pattern, carving and carving techniques. These formation of form can describe the artist's thoughts and sophistication of the equipment used to complete the task at a time and place. This work of sculpture acts as timeline, the knowledge and facilities owned by the craftsmen of that particular era.

METHODOLOGY

In understanding the work of art, we have to realize the existence of two major aspects that are form and content (Ocvirk et al, 1996). The form is simply the visual appearance of worked artistic materials. The Malay artefact chose for this understudy is kukuran. Tremendously, collections of kukuran were found in the National Museum of Malaysia, Terengganu State Museum, Kelantan State Museum, Selangor State Museum, Pahang State Museum, Malacca State Museum, and State Museum of Petaling Jaya. The samples from personal galleries were also contributed to the number of kukuran for this study. These kukuran were also been found in the Kandis Resource Centre in Kelantan, Galeri Warisan in Johor and Bakawali Woodcarving in Besut, Terengganu. However, the chosen samples are narrow down into limited numbers because some of the kukuran are likely similar in terms of the characteristics of visual compositions. The formal analysis is the work of describing and assessing the visual and material appearance of artworks. Form is restricted in definition to the pictorial (two dimensional or three dimensional), material means the representation of qualities such as line, tone, colour, shape, composition, modelling, surface texture, space, rhythm, movement and so on. This formal analysis stressed the development of a technical language for description of the art work, so that the analysis can be depicted and addressed. The ability in analysing these characteristic of formal aspect will make us look further with the question of iconography in the particular artwork. According to D'Allewa (2010), formal analysis includes those methods and questions concern the visual and physical aspects of the work of art. In formal analysis, the visual effect of the work of art by looking to the artists or craftsmen intention through visual means. Formal analysis describes the work of art and trying to understand the artists or craftsmen want to convey. There are certain basic characteristics works of art that will be focused in formal analysis. The characteristics are namely colour, line, space and mass, scale

and composition. She believed that the style is where art formal and contextual aspects meet. Art historians have defined artistic style and explain how and why it changes over time and varies between individuals and groups.

According to Panofsky's theory of Iconology (1972), the pre-iconographic description relates to the scientific, fundamental and easily understandable aspects of a work. In the pre iconographic interpretation stage, this action is called formalistic analysis and form basis approach for the description. He distinguishes its subject matter or meaning into primary or natural subject matter. The adaptation of Panofsky's pre-iconographical develops a guideline to describe the control pre-interpretation principles of *kukuran*. The identifications and interpretations would depend on equipment and controlled by the principle of interpretation. In pre-iconographical, objects and events were expressed by artistic motifs. Specific themes and concepts tend to express craftsmen thoughts. Measurements of the various types of themes are finally divided into specific groups according to the classification attributes in groups. Lazzari and Schlesier (2012) had noted that there are several stylistic attributes in the artists or cultures styles. These attributes are naturalistic styles, expressive styles, idealized styles, classical styles, cultural styles, surreal styles, non-objective styles and abstracted styles. According to Gombrich (1991), Vasari has placed the objects or artists into groups accordingly to schools and styles. Vasari accepted the need for classifying the standard quality of arts regarding to their own characteristics. Meanwhile, Feldman (1996) emphasizes categories is based on the observation of common qualities and characteristics. Ackerman (1963) suggested that the concept of styles is the establishing characteristic relationships among individual works of art.

Thus, the *kukuran* can be considered as resemble of the scientific classification work of art (Figure 1). Furthermore, the classification may be recognized by the physical characteristics on the surface and the overall quality the *kukuran* seems to express. The quality of *kukuran* constitutes the basis characteristics for its classification. In the end, the *kukuran* classifications are based on the compositional of physical properties of *kukuran*. In the classification process, the collected the visual images are converted into line drawing. This could constantly sharpen the analytical understanding of the studied of visual composition characteristics of *kukuran*. It would gain the expertise and an overview of the studied visual material. Conversely, visual images have divided into the line drawing images according to specific groups based on the visual composition. These purposive line drawings are used to allocate the *kukuran* into its certain characteristic. A detailed line drawing distributes *kukuran* into groups that ultimately determine the type of each group. These characteristics are used to divide the *kukuran* into a certain group.

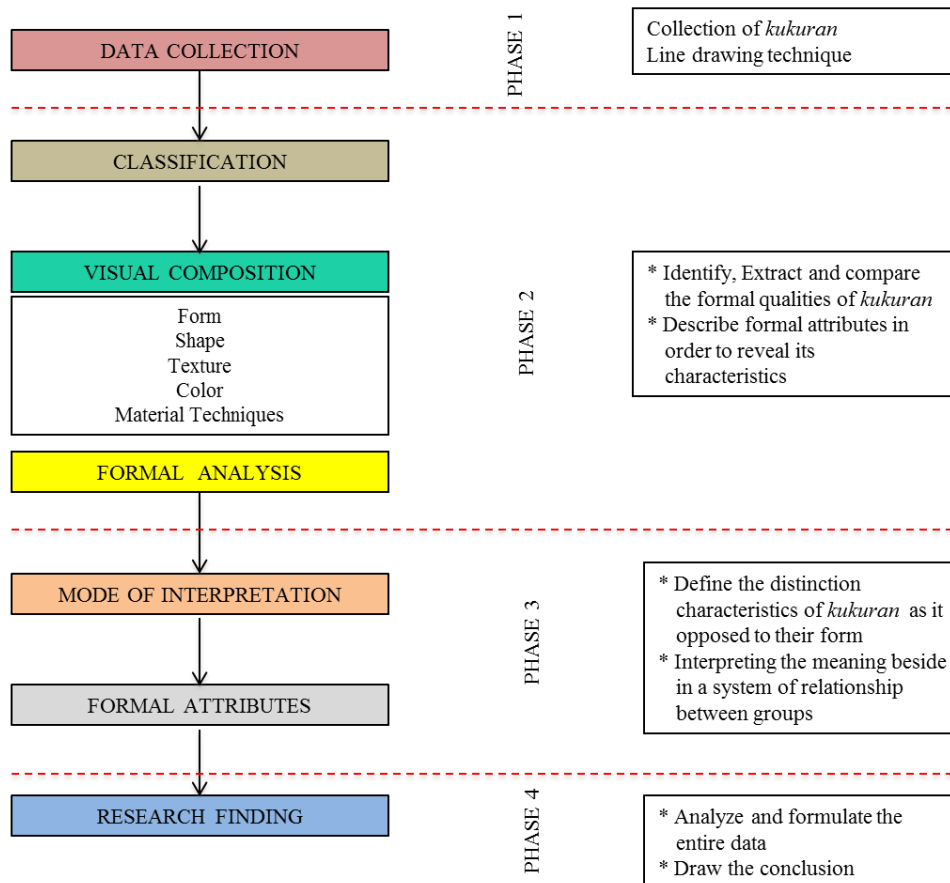


Figure 1: Methodology of Formal Analysis

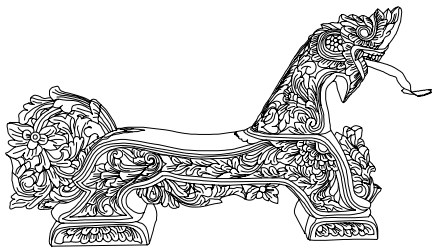
The task of classification is to distinguish *kukuran* into its variety of form morphology. The classification is based on the formal elements of the composition. It formed details, parts, materials, ideas or other ingredients involved and also the way they are interrelated to each other. Indeed, form is a mode of arrangement includes the physical structure of material culture. The classification embarks on three major stages which are characteristics extraction, characteristics comparison, and classification techniques. The characteristics extraction stage captures the visual formal composition qualities of *kukuran*. The visual compositions are form, shape, texture, colour, materials and techniques that consists information contained in an image of line drawing. After extracting the required characteristics, the image than been compare to the characteristics in appropriate manner. Later, these visual images have described and clarify the visual composition and ornaments representational in order to reveal its significance characteristics. Finally, these characteristics had classified the images of *kukuran* according to its analysis of the extraction characteristics. These visual images are analysed into formalistic and pre- iconographical in order to reveal to its characteristics. It establishes categories of systematic definitions and thought to express point of view about the *kukuran* characteristics.

FINDINGS

The distribution of *kukuran* form characteristics are referred to in order to gauge any similarities or differences with the work under study. After identifying the characteristics relationship, these

kukuran are classified into its groups. The identification of certain characteristic led to the grouping of kukuran. The classification of kukuran is important because it is from these characteristics that one is able to understand the underlying aesthetic theories and principles of art. The finding briefly concludes that formations of these kukuran are divided into four classification of group. Generally, they can be classified into zoomorphic form, anthropomorphic form, modern form and utility form (Figure 2.0).

Zoomorphic form seems to intuit and have an inherent appeal. Furthermore, an animal reference is the choice of characteristic form, emotion and appearance of kukuran. In kukuran form, curved animal forms were adapted to create sense of pleasure. The zoomorphic is readily understandable and easily scaled to the animal proportions. The zoomorphic form characteristics are exact or stylized animals a-like shape (triangular mouth, curving tail, belly, legs and genitalia), metal tips, surface (texture/smooth), line (curvy/wavy/spiral), colour (natural/paint/lacquer), materials (wood), ornament (motifs/semi abstract) and techniques (full, medium and low relief). Meanwhile, the anthropomorphic form characteristics are humanlike appeal or basic human concern, figurative/abstract, structure (2/3/4), metal tips, surface (texture/smooth), line (curvy/wavy), colour (natural/lacquer), materials (wood), ornament (motifs/semi abstract) and techniques (full, medium and low relief). The modern form characteristics are functional, combination of simple shape, metal tips, surface (texture/smooth), line (curvy/straight), colour (natural/painted), advanced materials (steel/brass), techniques (machining), ornament (text/motifs/geometry) and techniques (full, medium and low relief). The utility form characteristics are functional, storage purposes, combination of simple shape, metal tips, surface (semi texture/smooth), line (curvy/straight), colour (natural), materials (wood), techniques (jointing with nail, joinery), ornament (geometric) and techniques (full, medium and low relief).



Zoomorphic Form

Material: wood (unknown)

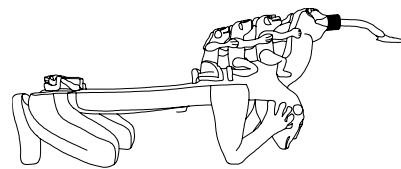
Motifs: foliage

Year: undated

Collection: Selangor State Museum

Size: 60 cm x 13 cm x 19 cm

Seating breadth: 40 cm x 13 cm



Anthropomorphic Form

Material: wood (unknown)

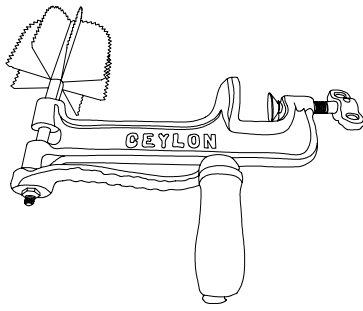
Motifs: none

Year: undated

Collection: National Museum Kuala Lumpur

Size: 70 cm x 20 cm x 16 cm

Seating breadth: 20 cm x 20 cm

**Modern Form**

Material: metal and wood (unknown)

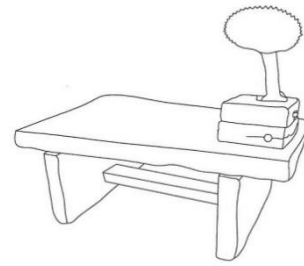
Motifs: engraving text

Year: undated

Collection: Petaling Jaya Museum

Size: 40 cm x 7 cm x 10 cm

Seating breadth: nil

**Utility Form**

Material: wood (unknown)

Motifs: none

Year: undated

Collection: Melaka State Museum

Size: 31 cm x 18 cm x 25 cm

Seating breadth: 25 cm x 18 cm

Figure 2.0: The Classification of Malay Kukuran

CONCLUSION

Initially the creation of kukuran probably began as a simple shape than evolved to more complex styles. Over the years, the formation of kukuran has become much more elaborate, and plays a significant role to cater as well as to influence the people needs or lifestyle. The splendid achievement of Malay art forms is reflected in the form of art physically and spiritually. In the context of Malay art culture, the aspect of art forms has influence the pattern and life style of the Malay society. Malay household crafts have developed through the principle of form following function, using the most readily available materials surrounding and applying traditional mastery skills. The form is secondary to practical application. A few of people would look it as artistic creation or even as decoratively carved. The kukuran has its own identity and value that reflect the form and soul of the Malay culture. Kukuran is intended for a utilitarian purpose but without neglecting its aesthetic value. The characteristics of kukuran constitute the basis for its classification. The interpretation of kukuran ornament display originally symbolic meanings, elaboration of styles and intended for purely decorative.

The finding concludes that formations of kukuran are divided into four classification form. Firstly, kukuran can be classified into zoomorphic form, anthropomorphic form, modern form and utility form. Zoomorphic form are seems to be a choice of wood carvers. It shows intuit and inherent appealing. In kukuran form, curved animal forms were adapted to create sense of pleasure. This zoomorphic form is readily understandable and easily scaled to the animal proportions. Furthermore, an animal reference is the choice of characteristic form, emotion and appearance of kukuran. Therefore, zoomorphic forms have long existed in many cultures and civilization throughout the world. The connotations of the zoomorphic form have related to the entrenched sources of inspiration in legendary, philosophical and historical of Malay culture. The zoomorphic is mainly the morphology of ideas and thoughts of the Malay people long time ago. Meanwhile, anthropomorphic form is characterized by human-like appearance and behaviour. The appearance of the figure is a representation of human, animal

or institution. Modern and utility forms are closely linked to the purpose of kukuran as kitchen utensils.

The Malay society is full of artistic elements and cultural affluence which reflect the sophistication of the Malay art culture. The pre Islamic culture had long taken roots in the Malay society. The pre-Islamic motifs and carvings have also influences the development of the form of the Malay kukuran. However, figurative elements in the art forms were modified to conform to the Islamic values. Anything that is in contrast with Islamic values was gradually discarded. With the coming of Islam, the Malay kukuran had manifested the teaching of Islam by achieving to the do's and don'ts in any creative endeavour. Thus, figurative animal forms were always transformed into plant motifs and not necessary representing any particular animal or human forms. Due to the Islamic input, the abstracted animal form is not referring to any particular animal. Hence, it is non-figurative form from nature. The zoomorphic elements were melded into floral form simply following the teaching of Islam. Therefore, the underlying concept of the kukuran form composition adhered to the concept of Islamic art but not all of its visual forms are clearly revealed and manifested in other aspects of Malay art form and custom. In a way, this artefact offers some understanding and insight into the Malay art form as well as in the spirit of Islam. Truly, the underlying message is the understanding concept of tawhid in Islam.

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