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Evaluating Ornamentation of Twelve Pillared House in Kelantan and Terengganu

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ABSTRACT

Kelantan and Terengganu are rich with beautiful carvings and distinctive motifs. Typically, they use motifs of flora, geometry and calligraphy rather than other motifs and also use as a benchmark of local architecture identity in Peninsular Malaysia. This study will present design analysis of carvings and motifs used on twelve pillared house in Kelantan and Terengganu. Carving in twelve pillared house in Kelantan and Terengganu is measured and referred to drawings of the Malay Studies Centre (KALAM) UTM, Skudai. The analysis is focused on some component parts of the houses which has variety of carved motifs types such as the doors and windows, railings, walls, ventilation panels and stairs. Placement of carved motifs will be studied as well as its importance to the aesthetics of a house or even reflect local regional nature of both states.

Key words: Carved motifs in Kelantan and Terengganu, twelve pillared house

INTRODUCTION

A lot of disputes among academicians about the origin of ornamentation or carved motifs in traditional Malay house have often been questioned (Utaberta and Rasdi, 2014). Many theories have been highlighted in process of studying the origins of these carved motifs. According to Noor *et al.* (2003), the commonly used motifs such as floral contribute to the identity of the native Eastern region Langkasuka era. At the same time, this pattern is also widely used in Kelantan and Terengganu. The main purpose of this study is to discuss the introduction of design motifs carved on twelve pillared house in Kelantan and Terengganu. Motifs such as floral, geometry, Arabic calligraphy and cosmic features are found on door panels, walls, railings and ventilation components in different shapes and size (Said, 2001).

Therefore, detailed studies were made in identifying the origins of these motifs whether it had been brought from outside influence or local itself. In addition, this study focus on each carved motifs of traditional Malay houses in Kelantan and Terengganu which can be seen its uniqueness despite substantially different design compared to most other traditional Malay houses founded in West coast.

The second purpose is to detail up the development of carved motifs in Kelantan and Terengganu, as both are inter-related and there are many similarities in carved motifs. It occurred when this country was conquered by Western, especially British and Dutch, architecture of Malay

houses, also affected even carved motifs from outside were brought and blended together into Malay architecture. This causes confusion of identity because of the foreign architecture was mixed and jumbled together with Malays architecture and arose inconvenience in defining and determine the meaning of Malay carved motif (Utaberta and Rasdi, 2014).

Twelve pillared house in Kelantan and Terengganu was chosen because twelve pillared house is a beautiful house in traditional Malay architecture. Furthermore, the state of Kelantan and Terengganu are rich with variety of types of carved motifs and suitable for research literature. In addition, majority of well known carvers came from these two different states which are suitable as source for future reference as well.

This study presents a description of earlier study on carved motifs in twelve pillared house in Kelantan and Terengganu. The main question for this study is what type of motifs was usually decorated on twelve pillared house in Kelantan and Terengganu which is also known as the earliest design of traditional Malay house.

METHODOLOGY

Survey analysis on measured drawings: There are twelve houses identified as a twelve pillared house in Kelantan and Terengganu. Each house was selected based on aesthetic values and motifs used as quite interesting and distinctive. Seven houses were located in Kelantan and the other six houses were located in Terengganu. Figure 1 shows the list of twelve pillared house in Kelantan and Terengganu, as well as the date of house construction, the owner's name and home address.

Analysis on twelve sets of measured drawings including four elevations, plans, detailed drawings and sectional buildings are referred to identify the placement of carved motifs for each houses. This sets of measured drawings and reports were produced and documented by the student of architectural program from UTM.

INTERVIEWS WITH CARVERS

Interviews were done with well known wood carvers and specialist in Malay wood carving world. The first reputable wood carver is Latif Long who originated from Terengganu but has lived in Kelantan. The second woodcarver is Mr. Norhaiza which came from Kg Raja, Terengganu. The interviewes were done to identify the types of motifs and why those motifs are developed.

No.	Owner	Year	Address
1	Tok Ku Paloh house	1800	D62, MakamTok Ku, CabangTiga, Kuala Terengganu
2	HjNikSalleh Wan Ahmad house	1800	Kg PulauPanjang, Kota Bharu, Kelantan
3	Puan Wan CikbtSulaimanhouse	1880	BesidesPerkuburanTokTumpat, Tumpat, Kelantan
4	Wan Sulonghouse	1920	JlnSultanahZainab, Kota Bharu
5	Mariam Mat house	1880	168, Kg. Hiliran Masjid, Kuala Terengganu
6	Abdul Rahim Enduthouse	1900	Tanjong, Kuala Terengganu
7	Wan Embong Wan Awanghouse	1890	PulauDuyungBesar, Kuala Terengganu
8	HajjahWan Mekhouse	1800	Kg DalamRhu, Tumpat, Kelantan
9	MohamadDobah house	1850	1408, Jln Post Office Lama, Kelantan
10	TengkuNik house	1880	Kuala Terengganu, Terengganu
11	CikTeh house	1880	Kuala Terengganu, Terengganu
12	HjCheSidik house	1820	Kg. Penambang, Kota Bharu, Kelantan
13	En. Hussein house	1850	Rumah En. Hussein, 1409, Jln Post Office Lama, Kelantan

Fig. 1: List of twelve pillared houses in Kelantan and Terengganu

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on analysis result done on twelve houses of twelve pillared house in Kelantan and Terengganu, it showed that placement and features still share the same motif but have a different name. The carved motifs was found on wall panels, 'pemeleh', doors, windows, railings, stairs and ventilation panels. It is due to carver who carved in Kelantan is the same person who carved in Terengganu. That's why, not much differences can be seen in the carved motifs at both states. Size and arrangement of motifs are catching the eyes and give a good visual to viewer as well. The motifs are not too heavy nor too simple. Referred to historical study was done by Ali (1994) who found that carving began in Kelantan and Terengganu since the 16th century during Langkasuka era when Islam has been established at Langkasuka had brought influences and transformed the carving art in terms of motifs, intent and purpose. Therefore, aspects of simplicity are very significant for these two states as demanded by Islam. Placement of carved motifs show not much difference. By looking at the types of motifs used, flora motifs and calligraphy are the most commonly used as in line with Islamic teachings that prohibit the use of figure shape and living creature (Fig. 2). The study also found that motifs used are taken or inspired from plants surrounding. However, some motifs have no name because these motifs are based on imagination of carver itself. This shows how creative and artistic the earlier woodcarver in the hands of

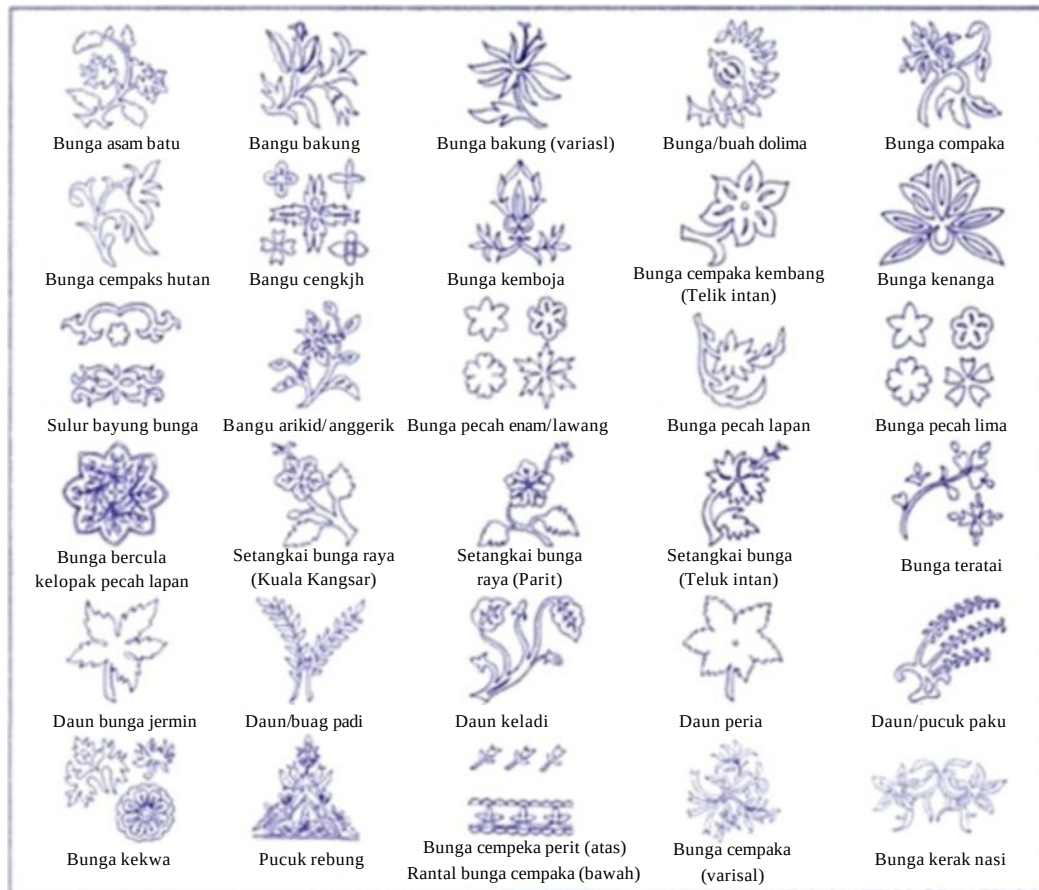


Fig. 2: Picture of a plants transformed into carved motifs (Chee, 1995)¹

¹Chee (1995) Pendidikan Seni Visual Tingkatan 2. Pelangi Publishing Group Berhad. Pg 266

expanding and spreading their ideas of its own without copying other people's ideas. Types of local plants which are transformed into carved motifs are:

1. Legume tree	6. Kenanga	11. Grains	16. Chrysanthemum
2. Clove	7. Orchid	12. Caladium leaves	17. Bamboo sprouts
3. Spinach	8. 'Sulur Bayung'	13. Bitter leaf	18. Rice Crust Flower
4. Lily	9. Hibiscus	14. Sprouts leaf	19. Star anise and so on
5. Jasmine	10. Lotus	15. Jermin leave	

It proved that the transformed motifs by woodcarvers in Kelantan and Terengganu are original and not plagiarized or brought from outside influences; due to the nature of these plants are certainly grow in the village or surrounding. It is not impossible such as in Thailand, often claimed to be a pioneer in carved industry at Terengganu and Kelantan because they have the same plants but the style of fretwork and the workmanship in wood carving that determines the identity for each carvers. This is because the workmanship for each hand of woodcarver is different even when they are using the same motif carvings. This circumstance was also acknowledged by Latif Long, woodcarver from Besut could also identified and recognized who made the wood carving based on the type of buckling lines and distinctive style on wood panel even though the employee under his supervision is nearly fifty people long time ago². Type of carving style which most commonly used are in relief or non relief, perforated or non perforated and overlapped or non overlapped.

Plant element that is often used in most twelve pillared house is 'Sulur Bayur' form which the trunk is growing upward like the letters and pistil at the end. This type of vegetation is often used because of the softness on circle motif became a pleasant visual point of view for audience. Balanced arrangement of stems and undulating groove is often became a choice of the house owner or the woodcarver himself. As philosophy is often expressed by earlier woodcarver seem to glorify motifs as nature's rhythm and till now the philosophical expression is often being used by the carver that sounds:

Tumbuh berpunca
Punca penuh rahsia
Tumbuh tidak menerjah kawan
Memanjat tidak memaut lawan
Tetapi melingka penuh rahsia

This philosophy expression is still stuck in mind of the wood carvers and this analysis found that motif of twisted stems was the most widely used. These floral motifs were placed on ventilation panels at Tok Ku Paloh house (Fig. 3). This type of motif was derived from Spinach plant. Besides of using Spinach motif, there is also other designs. The use of floral motif is not necessarily be the same design but it can change with idea and creativity from the carver itself.

Ventilation panels were arranged vertically as line with wall board panels or known as 'Dinding Janda Berhias' which were vertical and horizontal shaped. Carved panel was adapted to be vertically uniform and balanced look at the walls. This was consistent with the characteristics of the owner of house which is a religious teacher trying to emphasize aspects of balance and moderation. Additionally, floral motifs were also found on stairs and handrail in Tok Ku Paloh house. Most of the used motifs are not focused on a single motif but two motifs in one carving panel.

²Discussion on "Motifs in Kelantan and Terengganu in note-Interview session with Latif Long at Kelantan Wood Carving, Pasir Tumbuh, Kelantan

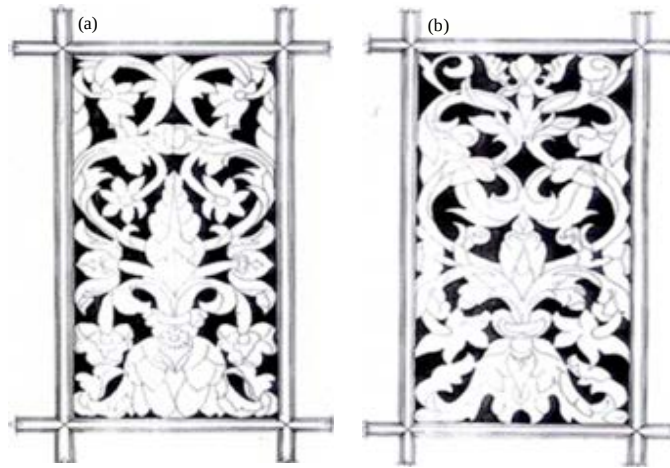


Fig. 3(a-b): Ventilation panels at Tok Ku Paloh house and the floral motifs derived from Spinach plant



Fig. 4: Ventilation panels arranged in horizontal line on top of rear wall at Mohamad Dobah house and the floral motifs derived from Lotus and 'Daun Sayap' plants

The aim was to find balance and motif 'Daun Sayap' commonly used as a complementary element on carved panel. It was proved that this types of floral motif was most widely used in this house. There was also a horizontal ventilation panel as shown in Fig. 4.

These carved motifs were founded on ventilation panels at Mohamad Dobah house in horizontal line and parallel with 'Janda Berhias' wall pattern. The type of carving are on relief motif with rounded trunk. Transformation of Lotus motif surrounded by other plants such as 'Daun Sayap' motif with trunk, suckers, stems, branches and buds with beautiful twisting. These types of motifs symbolize unending growth of the movement in life of plant³.

The use of geometric motifs are applied at Mohamad Dobah house (Fig. 5a). This non relief perforated panels resembles a woven pattern of Swastika. The origins of this pattern is still unclear and a lot of assumptions and theories had been arose. According to Abdullah (1981), this type of pattern is taken from prehistoric cultural and the influence continued after the arrival of Islam. On my opinion, it is probably the transformation from above theories and assumptions but according to Abdullah (1981) at the time Islam was arrived, geometric style and plant motifs had been produced based on Al- Quran. However, the use of these patterns were widely applied in traditional house ventilation panels. Motifs form is also used in Mr. Hussein house as well as in Fig. 5b.

³Discussion on "Motifs in Kelantan and Terengganu in note- Interview session with Norhaiza, Besut, Terengganu

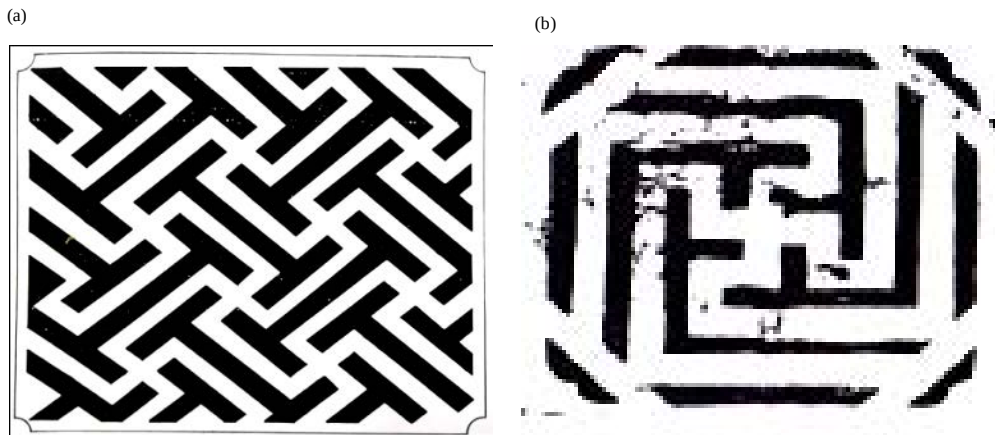


Fig. 5(a-b): Use of geometric motifs on ventilation panels

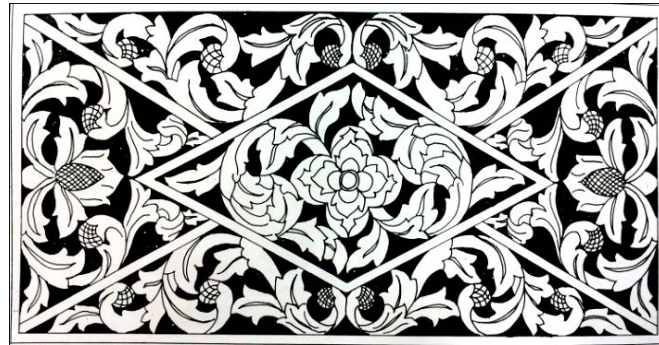


Fig. 6: Use of ' BuahLadu' motif inserted among the floral moti

There was also a floral motif inserted in 'Buah Ladu' motif at Mohamad Dobah house as shown in Fig. 6. This carving was taken from sunflower and 'Daun Sayap' motif, carved within relief and perforated style. Based on information from the website, 'Buah Ladu' motif was referred to a diamond or rhombus shape. The meaning was not so clear and sometimes just used as a synonym for forty-five degree angle rhombus. It was often been seen in engravings. The shape looked like a geometric shape with flora motif inside of it.

From this analysis, all carving have floral motifs carved with flower in the middle. Flower as a focal point at the middle and easier for carvers to focus in carving work. It also symbolizes an excitement, alive and fresh, not wilted but there are harmony elements on it. To make 'awan larat', motif become more realistic, a technique called 'silat' will be used to emboss or to dilute the carving form (Yahya, 1995)⁴. 'Awan larat' motif was also widely used in traditional Malay house. 'Awan larat' motif had been used on wall of Tengku Nik House using frangipani flower, orchid and catfish beard motifs (Fig. 7).

According to Sabrizaa B Mohd Abdul Rashid, one of the important principles in every Malay carving is the carving itself and the flower which will start from one place or source called "root" in form of "seed" or "mother" to the overall composition of carving. Malay carvings concerned about the motion sense starting from a root and grow slowly out of the source. In other words, every

⁴Yahya (1995) Simbolisme Dalam Seni Bina Rumah Melayu Kelantan

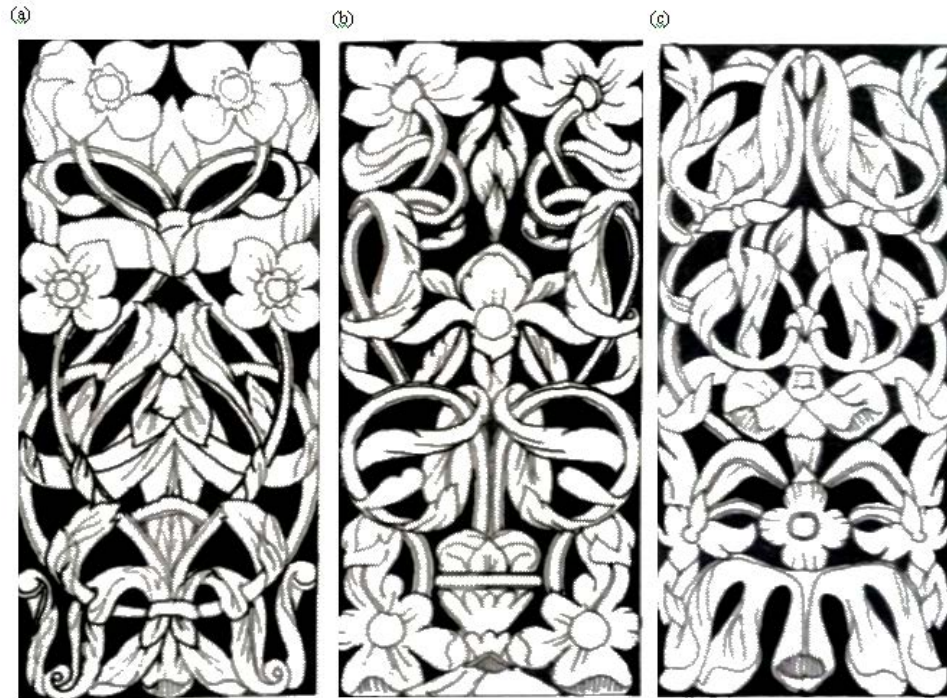


Fig. 7(a-c): Use of 'Awan Larat' motif on ventilation panels

Malay carving started from a point called the “mother” or “root” (Rashid, 2008)⁵. This principle is also associated with human nature as we are the root in beginning of human life.

Besides the motifs had been discussed above, calligraphic motifs were also found in many traditional house of Kelantan and Terengganu as well as to twelve pillared house in both states. As has been discussed above, calligraphy motif is found most commonly in Kelantan and Terengganu due to strong influence of Islam compared than other states in Malaysia. The application is sometimes combined with plant motifs, derived from nature and cosmos. The use of calligraphy in Malay carvings is due to the Islamic prohibition against the use of human form and living creatures.

Calligraphy motif is becoming synonym with Malay woodcarving because of the beauty and aesthetic value which fulfills the requirement of Islam. This carving is widely used on door threshold and it is believed to avoid evil elements comeinside the house as well as to get blessings and avoid the occurrence of disaster. Calligraphic motifs are found on door threshold at Hj. CheSidik house (Fig. 8a, b).

The use of calligraphy motif in Malay houses is to admit the greatness of Allah and the Prophet Nabi Muhammad. The carving is normally placed on certain part based on the carving function's. Al-Quran and hadith of Prophet are always been referred and inspired to create this calligraphy motif at once urging the carver to write and viewer to read (Utaberta *et al.*, 2012). Through these carving shaped, the knowledge can be learned and hikmah from Allah can be approached (Bakar, 1990). Figure 9 shows the use of calligraphic motifs found at Haji Nik Salleh house which have specific purposes.

⁵Rashid (2008) Seminar Antarabangsa Pemandiran Budaya Tamadun Timur Laut. Penafsiran Falsafah “Ibu Dalam Awan Larat: Warisan Estetika Seni Ukiran Melayu

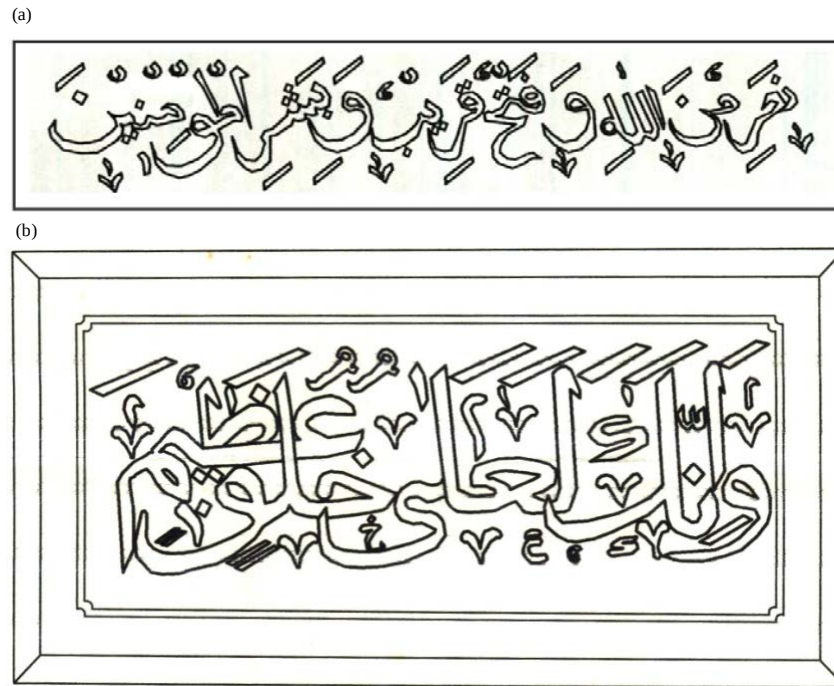


Fig. 8(a-b): Calligraphy motifs on door threshold

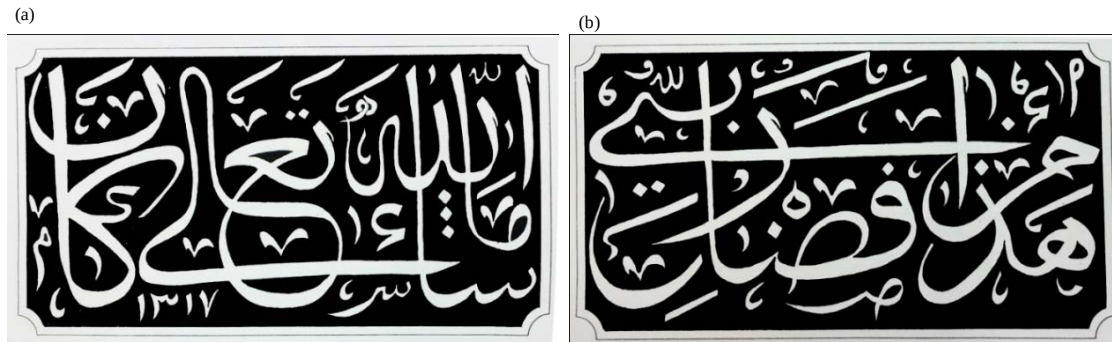


Fig. 9(a-b): Calligraphic motifs that contain a particular purpose

The meaning of Fig. 9a is “Whatever God intended for, that will happen/get”. This at once in still redha and trust in our soul towards Allah and acceptance of qada and qadar from Allah. Figure 9b also means “This (gift) from God’s gift” indirectly calls us to be thankful for all the blessings and gifts. Additionally, calligraphy can be said as a symbolism for obedient people which follows the teachings of Islam and as a caliph of the earth.

CONCLUSION

As a conclusion, study had been done showing that twelve pillared house in Kelantan and Terengganu had similar motif carving such as floral motifs, geometric and calligraphy. These motifs were the most popular motifs rather than other motifs. It happened based on belief and confidence supported by several important factors such as religion, beliefs, tradition, philosophy and the

environment. These three basic motifs are available in twelve pillared house. It is also known as the earliest traditional Malay house form which was built in Malaysia. Invention of this motif in art of carving and the placement in the house was not made randomly but inserted with discipline and arrangement of it.

The carvers are always looking forward for new ideas and try to refine the carving as well as to produce a quality carvers. It is the reason so that Malay wood carving will always be respected and won't be accused as plagiaristic motifs from outside. The fineness of Malay carving certainly been recognized in a other country because a lot of bookings had been accepted frequently even the tourists often visit Malaysia to witness the beauty of our wood carvings. Every single motifs has its own meaning on the eyes of carvers and carving fans because of its distinctive motif. Instead of having the external beauty, it is also capable to express the character of life through the motifs can be heard from the most popular Malay proverb "Hanya Jauhari yang mengenal Manikam".

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