

PLACEMENT OF “BUAH BUTON” CARVINGS IN LUAK TANAH MENGANDUNG: A SYMBOL OF THE STATUS HELD BY “ADAT PERPATIH” LEADERS AND THEIR COMMUNITIES

(KEDUDUKAN BUAH BUTON DI LUAK TANAH MENGANDUNG: SIMBOLIK TERHADAP STATUS PEMIMPIN ADAT PERPATIH DAN MASYARAKAT)

Fakhrur Razi Maamor

fakhrurrazi991@gmail.com

Department of Socio-Culture / Malay Art

Academy of Malay Studies, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Sabzali Musa Kahn

sabzali@um.edu.my

Department of Socio-Culture / Malay Art

Academy of Malay Studies, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Basitah Taif

taifbasitah@hotmail.com

Design Study (Industrial)

College of Creative Art, MARA University of Technology, Shah Alam, Selangor

Received: 1st April 2022; Accepted: 1st July 2022; Published: 29th October 2022

Abstract

The art of woodcarving is synonymous with the Malays and features elements such as symbols of its respective owners. Therefore, this study aimed to understand the physical placement and significance of the carving called “buah buton” found in traditional houses of Luak Tanah Mengandung, Negeri Sembilan, whose residents practise the “Adat Perpatih” custom. Data collection involved two methods: utilising field work to identify houses with the “buah buton” carving in Luak Tanah Mengandung and interviewing the heirs, customary leaders, researchers and locals. Results showed that the placement of “buah buton” carvings was varied and not restricted to certain areas. However, “buah buton” that were placed in specific areas, such as the “serambi”(porch), may be symbolic of the statuses of its occupants in “Adat Perpatih”. Hence, the influence and practice of this tradition prove that it is not only enshrined in daily life and specific custom but also impacts the elements present in traditional visual art. To that end, this article suggests that the “buah buton” should be placed in government buildings to symbolise the meeting of leaders and professionalism in administration. In addition, exhibitions centred on the themes of monarchies or national leadership may utilise the “buah buton” as a display artefact symbolising leadership.

Keywords: *buah buton, carving, house, leader, customary, society*

Abstrak

Ukiran kayu merupakan sebuah kesenian agung yang menjadi identiti kepada bangsa Melayu di samping mengetengahkan elemen seperti perlambangan terhadap pemiliknya. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menghuraikan kedudukan ukiran buah buton yang terdapat pada rumah tradisi di Luak Tanah Mengandung, Negeri Sembilan yang mempunyai kaitan dengan status penghuninya yang mengamalkan Adat Perpatih. Pengumpulan data melibatkan dua kaedah, iaitu kerja lapangan bagi mengenal pasti rumah-rumah yang mempunyai buah buton di sekitar Luak Tanah Mengandung, Negeri Sembilan. Kaedah kedua pula melalui temu bual, iaitu melibatkan waris, pemimpin adat, penyelidik dan masyarakat tempatan. Dapatan kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa kedudukan buah buton yang terdapat pada rumah-rumah yang terpilih berada pada kedudukan yang berbeza dan tidak terhad. Kedudukan buah buton didapati berada pada sudut-sudut tertentu seperti ruang serambi menjadi simbolik terhadap kedudukan penghuninya dalam Adat Perpatih. Pengaruh dan amalan adat tersebut tidak hanya diamalkan dalam kehidupan seharian dan adat-adat tertentu sahaja, malah turut memberi kesan terhadap elemen dalam seni visual tradisi. Oleh itu, dapatan kajian ini turut mendapati bahawa elemen buah buton seharusnya diaplikasikan pada ruang-ruang di bangunan-bangunan kerajaan sebagai simbolik pertemuan para pemimpin dalam kerajaan dan sebagai lambang profesionaliti pentadbiran. Buah buton juga sesuai dijadikan bahan pameran yang bertemakan institusi beraja atau pemimpin negara kerana menjadi bahan sejarah yang mengandungi konteks perlambangan terhadap kepimpinan.

Kata kunci: buah buton, ukiran, rumah, pemimpin, adat, masyarakat

Introduction

The artistic tradition of woodcarving is a source of pride for the Malay community in Malaysia. In fact, uniqueness is an essential part of understanding community life. According to Ismail Said & Ahmad Saifuddin Abdullah (2001), there are three factors which influence the art of Malay carving: social status, religious beliefs, and cultural traditions. Each of these facets is the result of practice and understanding of the Malay community, based on their involvement in economics, politics, socio-culture, and so on, in their daily lives. This is due to the relics of past societies. According to Wartha (2016), this historical impact is an important socio-cultural resource. The inherent symbolism is cultural symbolism, which identifies anything directed by the social expression (Harrison, 1999). Traditional art, like the ones in Malaysia, represents a culture whose aesthetics reflect its philosophy and values. The Malay identity is shaped by the environment, which fosters innovative, society-related thought (Idrus, Hashim & Raihanah, 2015). In fact, culture is included based on the identified effects in the surrounding area that influence the craftsman's or artist's thought process during the creation of a work of art (Çelik, 2019).

Buah buton is a carver's idea that is used to decorate traditional houses in Luak Tanah Mengandung, Negeri Sembilan. The subject is processed from a pole to three-dimensional carving creation, which is an adaptation of Adat Perpatih's law. It is well known that the maternal lineage or matrilineal system was brought by immigrants from Minangkabau in West Sumatra, Indonesia (Radzuan, 2021). This is also mentioned by Ibrahim (1993), who says that when the Minangkabau community moved to this state, they took with them all of their customs knowledge and artisan abilities. As a result, their competence is not only in workmanship, but also in using customs as a reference in presenting their beliefs through the concept of art.

Shahminan (2007) says that traditional houses around Luak Tanah Mengandung in Negeri Sembilan make *buah buton* carvings as a reflection of their community identity. Among the components researched by her that are found in the structure of traditional houses in the *luak* are observations on the aesthetics of form and space. She also says that the three-dimensional hangings and carved carvings are interpretations and are placed in specific positions based on the Adat Perpatih community's traditional beliefs. Similarly, according to Latif's statements in Yusop's (2017) article "*Keunikan Tiang Gantung Tak Jejak Bumi*", *buah buton* carving is only found in buildings belonging to nobility or traditional leaders. The statements, however, are not in-depth and only presented on an external basis. Simultaneously, the research focuses mostly on the structure of the building and not on non-structural purposes such as the *buah buton* that is being built.



Figure 1: Two *buah butons* found at Datuk Muar Bongkok's house at Kampung Parit Seberang, Kuala Pilah

According to the position of *buah buton* on traditional houses in Luak Tanah Mengandung, it is most common in spaces such as the porch or *serambi*. According to research by Latif et al. (2017) and Noor Hayati Ismail et al. (2016), the porch is the primary space in Negeri Sembilan's traditional houses. Its elongated shape serves as a meeting place for leaders and subordinates to discuss customs-related topics such as the election of leaders, marriage, and so on. According to Shahminan (1999) and Idrus (1996), the porch space is divided into three sections: the end, the middle and the base. Each porch section has different purposes, such as the end of the porch, which is reserved for Datuk Penghulu or *Ulama*, the middle of the porch, which is the reception area, and the base of the porch, which is the location of traditional leaders and subordinates assembled for discussion or consensus. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between the presence of *buah buton* in traditional houses and the political and social organization of the Adat Perpatih community in Luak Tanah Mengandung. The background of the political and social structure of the Adat Perpatih community in Luak Tanah Mengandung was included in the initial summary of the literature review. Then, a description of the methods used, such as fieldwork and interviews, to aid in the analysis of the study's findings regarding *buah buton* in Luak Tanah Mengandung with the Adat Perpatih community.

Literature Review

Political System in Adat Perpatih's Community

The Adat Perpatih political system has its own uniqueness. In this case, the method is used to select leaders to fill vacancies in the custom, depending on *musyawarah* or consensus from various parties (Ibrahim, 1993). In this context, women have an important role in influencing the selection of leaders and in the process of appointing leaders in Luak Tanah Mengandung (Juhary, 2011). The positions of leaders and their roles in Adat Perpatih are listed below.

i. Ibu Soko

Ibu Soko is a post held by women with expertise in Adat Perpatih. This position has influence over the selection of leaders and the following appointment of their leaders who hold positions in custom. *Ibu Soko*, for example, determines the positions of *Lembaga* and *Buapak* by having the power in selecting a man to fill the vacancy. The position was appointed based on tribe or lineage of *Ibu Soko* (Saludin, Ismail & Razali, 2020). Meanwhile, *Ibu Soko* is not chosen from any women as the person must be chosen from wisest and most accountable of the elderly (Sahid, 2018). Aside from electing or appointing customary leaders, an *Ibu Soko* also performs other duties. According to Salleh (2017), *Ibu Soko* has eight functions and roles, which are as follows: 1) responsible in handling marriage matters where *Ibu Soko* and *Buapak* will be working together in deciding and approving the wedding; 2) acting as a marker and responsible in selecting *Buapak* and *Lembaga* which descended from her lineage; 3) joining every discussion regarding the custom (but she is separated in another room); 4) acting as a good example for the followers by adhering to Islamic teachings; 5) protecting the heritage; 6) being responsible in handling the land matters and heritage as a trustee; 7) ensuring her lineage becomes a well-civilized and wise

society; and 8) continuing the expansion of her lineage through marriage by ensuring that married couples are made of good and noble individuals.

ii. *Yamtuan Besar*

Yamtuan Besar, also known as *Yang Di-Pertuan Besar*, is the highest position in Adat Perpatih (Nelson, 2002). The election of a king is decided by the *Undang Yang Empat* of Sungai Ujong, Jelebu, Rembau, and Johol from among the *Putera Yang Empat*. In custom, the post of *Yamtuan Besar* or *Yang Di-Pertuan Besar* has no authority. Selat (2014) claims that the king has no influence over adat and that his position is outside of the Adat Perpatih system. The king, on the other hand, is only a supporter of the Adat Perpatih legal system, which is a party in the judiciary. In this situation, he holds a prominent position and does not support any political party. The positions of *Putera Yang Empat*, *Orang Besar Istana*, and *Pegawai 99* are appointed by *Yamtuan Besar*.

iii. *Penghulu Luak*

The position of *Penghulu Luak* is elected by *Datuk-Datuk Lembaga*. *Penghulu Luak* is the head of *luak* that has a similar position to *Undang Yang Empat*. Despite having equal status with *Undang*, the function of *Penghulu Luak* is different and lower than *Undang*. It is similar to the customary process where the concept of deliberation or discussion is done before any decision is made. Meanwhile, *Penghulu* is not fully involved in the affairs of the state; instead, his role is only limited within the *luak*.

iv. *Lembaga*

The position of *Lembaga* is chosen by *Buapak* who heads the *perut*. The job scope of the *Lembaga* is to lead the tribe that is descended from his mother lineage. *Datuk Lembaga* has various roles in his tribe. This is because a tribe is the next biggest group after the *luak* and there are many subordinates under each tribe. *Datuk Lembaga* is involved in handling the crime within the community. *Datuk Lembaga* is responsible in sentencing wrong doings of smaller cases, meanwhile for bigger cases, he can only act as an investigator or the police where all the findings shall be reported directly to *Penghulu Luak* (Ibrahim, 1993).

v. *Buapak*

Buapak is chosen by the subordinates from his *Perut*. Therefore, *Buapak* is the head of *perut*. *Buapak* is the basis of consensus in choosing *Datuk Lembaga* to lead his tribe. *Perut* is a group from the family side of women. They are very close to each other in order to maintain the family relationship. The *Buapak* only has roles in the *Perut* where he is responsible to keep the dignity of his people, manage ceremonies such as marriages and maintain the division of the estate (Selat, 2014).

Social Organization in Adat Perpatih

Social organizations have three characteristics in indicating a community (Berelson & Steiner, 1964). The first is rule and procedure where all planned decisions are based on the daily life of a community. The second characteristic is a hierarchical system that shows different status with its own differences. Whereas the third characteristic is the community that grouped together to create a bureaucratic system. The rules in Adat Perpatih involve all parties. Every rule introduced has its own reason on why it is necessary or prohibited. For example, in marriage, there are rules to be followed that involve the prohibition of a tribal marriage or known as *sumbang balai melintang* in the custom.

Besides that, the leader selection system in Adat Perpatih involves consensus or *musyawarah*. Every selection made is based on certain criteria and a leader needs to be an expert about the custom and is fluent in all matters. Meanwhile, every customary leader should have the quality of defending the justice concept in custom. Based on the *perbilang* “*Biar mati anak, jangan mati adat*” it is said that it is an honor to let a child die in order to defend the customs. The definition symbolizes in this *perbilang* is the true justice (Idris et al., 1996). In addition, the concept of justice should be emphasized by a customary leader based on this *perbilang*. It is a responsibility of the head of custom to explain fluently when it comes to talking about his own custom. Rules that have been set act as a reminder for those who hold the *pesaka* to never neglect his responsibility. It is compulsory for a leader to carry out the responsibility with full justice and honor.

Methodology

The qualitative technique is applied to attain the aims of this study. Hence, based on this methodology, secondary and primary data were explored. Secondary data led to the selection of the sample of houses for data collection. On the other hand, the primary data came from interviews that are meant to collect information based on what the informants say.

Data Collection

For data collection of the secondary data, three houses with *buah buton* carvings were selected for this study. Two of them are mentioned in Shahminan’s (2007) book titled “*Rumah Tradisional Luak Tanah Mengandung: Kajian Inventori Rumah Bumbung Panjang*”, the first one is the house of Datuk Muar Bongkok in Kampung Parit Seberang, Kuala Pilah while the second one is the house of *Sali* in Kampung Talang Tengah. The third house is one which belonged to Dato’ Raja Diwangsa, which was originally in Kampung Merual, Seri Menanti and has now been transferred to the Malay Heritage Museum, Universiti Putra Malaysia, and was once featured in a newspaper article by Yusop (2017), titled “*Keunikan Tiang Gantung Tak Jejak Bumi*”.

Interview

Interview method (primary data) was selected for collecting buah buton research information and it is a descriptive concept. Identifying homeowners, the cultural environment of the Adat

Perpatih community that was practiced many years ago, and carving, which served as an artistic career for the community in the past must be explored in the course of historical study. Therefore, informants from various backgrounds, including family heirs, Adat Perpatih leaders, researchers, carvers, and the local community, participated in the interviews. This study's fieldwork findings will be correlated with the questionnaire data.

Table 1: The List of Informants Who Involved in Interview Method

| No. | Group / Category | Name |
|-----|--------------------------|---|
| 1. | Heirs | Puan Ani binti Idris |
| | | Haji Arif bin Otok |
| | | Haji Abdul Hanan bin Muhammad Yunus |
| | | Fatimah binti Ibrahim |
| 2. | Leaders of Adat Perpatih | Dato' Menteri Maharaja Luak Terachi Dato' Haji Sulaiman bin Kasim |
| | | Datuk Paduka Abdul Khalid bin Haji Ujang |
| 3. | Researchers | Professor Madya Dr. Muhammad Pauzi bin Abdul Latif |
| | | Puan Siti Rohamini binti Yusof |
| | | Professor Madya Dr. Raja Nafida Raja Shahminan |
| 4. | Carver | Encik Hashim bin Sahad |
| 5. | Local Community | Drs. Shamsuddin bin Ahmad |
| | | Mohd Nor bin Mohd Amin @ Noramin |

Analysis, Data Finding and Discussion

Analysis

Table 2: The Analysis of *Buah Buton* Position in Luak Tanah Mengandung, Negeri Sembilan

| House | Buah Buton | Description |
|-------|------------|-------------|
|-------|------------|-------------|

Datuk Muar
Bongkok's
house



Muar 1



- There are two *buah butons*; Muar 1 and Muar 2.
- Both subjects are different in design.
- Hanging at the end of the foyer.

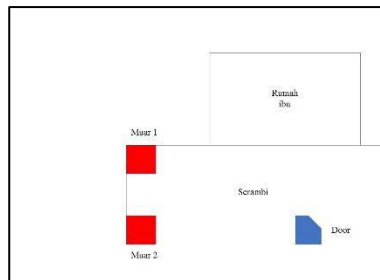
Muar 2



The two *buah butons* hang
at the end of the porch



The two subjects hung on
the left and right ends of
the porch of the house



The sketches show *buah*

butons' position at end of the porch

Ibah's house



Ibah 1



- There are three *buah buton* called *Ibah*.
- Each of these *buah buton* has a variation of the design.
- It is a rather feminine design with very noticeable floral carvings.
- In terms of position, the three *buah buton* hang in the *rumah ibu*.
- *Ibah 2* hangs in the middle and close to the *tiang seri* of the house.
- Meanwhile, *Ibah 1* and *Ibah 2* hang close to the wall of the house that is hanging next to the left and right of *Ibah 2*.

Ibah 2



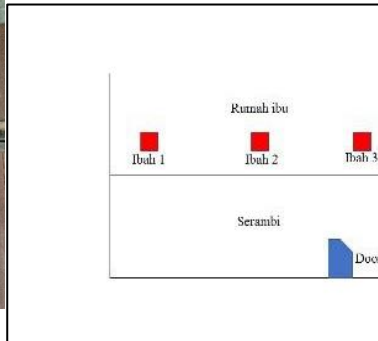
Ibah 3



Appearance of *Ibah 1* hanging near the entrance to the *rumah ibu* which is



connected to the foyer space.



The sketch shows the three *Ibahs* hanging in the *rumah ibu*'s section

Sali's house

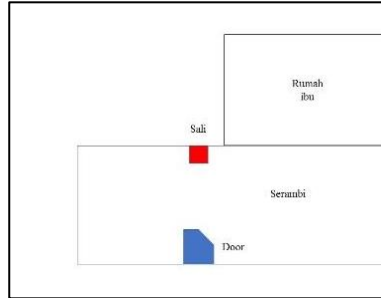
Sali



- Only one *buah buton* called *Sali*.
- The subject was carved to resemble a fruit.
- *Sali* hangs outside the base of the porch at the back.
- The position of *Sali* also near and next with *rumah ibu*'s wall.



The red circle indicates the position of *Sali* which is at the back of the base of the porch. Its hidden position is difficult to see from the front view of the house.



The sketches show the position of *Sali* at the base of the porch

Datuk Diwangsa's house



Diwangsa 1



- There are six different design *buah buton*
- called *Diwangsa*
- *Diwangsa*'s position involves two spaces, the porch and the *rumah ibu*.
- The position of the buttons hangs in parallel, three on the porch and the other three on the *rumah ibu*.
- *Diwangsa 1, 3, 4 and 6* hang parallel to the wall of the house. Meanwhile, *Diwangsa 2 and 5* are in the middle of the spaces.

Diwangsa 2



Diwangsa 3

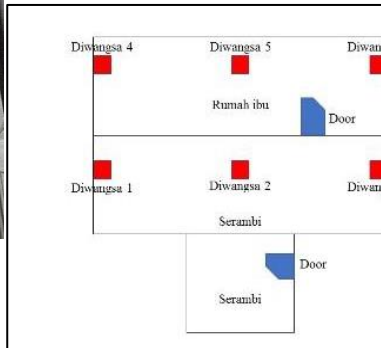


Appearances of *Diwangsa 1* and *2* hanging in the

foyer.



Diwangsa 4



Diwangsa 5

The sketch shows the position of *Diwangsa* from the top view



Diwangsa 6



Data Finding

According to the results of the interviews, four houses were inhabited by individuals with influence in the Adat Perpatih system. According to Ani Idris (personal communication, May 2, 2018), Datuk Muar Bongkok's house was originally home of the 7th Penghulu Luak Ulu Muar, Datuk Abdul Hashim. According to Mohd Nor Mohd Amin (personal communication, February 24, 2019), the residence was formerly home to a powerful Penghulu at the time. The residence also has a guard, known as a *hulubalang*, who ensures the protection of its occupants. The words of the great-grandson of Datuk Abdul Hashim is supported by the presence of a stage or *balai* at the end of the porch. This statement is supported by writings by Latif et al. (2017), Ismail et al. (2016), Shahminan (1999), and Idrus (1996), who say that the end of the porch is only for leaders with the title of *Penghulu Luak* or *Ulama*.

Besides that, according to Arif Otok (personal communication, October 3, 2018), the grandson of the house's previous occupants, *Sali's* house was originally occupied by Datuk Lembaga. According to him, Datuk Lembaga, a Seri Melenggang tribe member, was the tribe's leader in Luak Ulu Muar at the time. The position of the *buah buton* hanging at the base of this house's porch shows that the subject is a symbol of the status of Adat Perpatih's chief. This is in line with the observations of Latif et al. (2017), Ismail et al. (2016), and Shahminan et al. (2016). (1999). Meanwhile, Arif Otok (personal communication, October 3, 2018) stated that his grandfather's residence is frequently visited by subordinates to discuss issues regarding customs. This strengthens the interrelation between the position of the *buah buton* and the function of the porch and Arif Otok's grandfather.

Contrarily, the *buah buton* in the Ibah's house only fills the space of the *rumah ibu*. According to Fatimah Ibrahim (personal communication, September 16, 2018), her ancestors had lived in the house. She went on to say that her ancestor, Ibah Kidam, was the Seri Lemak Minangkabau tribe's *ibu soko* during the time. This is reinforced by the placement of the *buah buton*, which is in the space of the *rumah ibu* and hangs near the house's *tiang seri*. The position of the *ibu soko* is well demonstrated here in the design of traditional houses in Luak Tanah Mengandung. Salleh (2017) adds to this assertion by stating that the position of the *ibu soko* in Adat Perpatih is important, including in the design of this house.

Meanwhile, in Datuk Diwangsa's residence, there are several *buah butons* hanging in the foyer and *rumah ibu*. According to Abdul Hanan Muhammad Yunus (personal communication, February 27, 2018), the house was erected around the 1940s by his father, Muhammad Yunus, the *Empat Orang Besar Istana*. His father, the original occupant of the house, also performed vital work at the palace as he was an important person in the handling of all palace events. This implies that the elements present in the house they occupy are influenced by their rank. According to Muhammad Pauzi Abdul Latif (personal communication, July 20, 2018) and Raja Nafida Raja Shahminan (personal communication, July 20, 2018), the *buah buton* discovered in Datuk Diwangsa's house can only be applied to the houses of the aristocracy or customary authorities.

According to the visual of the *buah buton* design analyzed, the natural effect of flora had a significant influence on its design. This is according to the context of “*Adat bersendikan syarak, syarak bersendikan Kitabullah*”, which serves as a guide and reference for those who practise this custom. Similarly, Sulaiman Kasim (personal communication, May 20, 2018), Abdul Khalid Ujang (personal communication, February 28, 2019), Shamsuddin Ahmad (personal communication, July 18, 2018) and Mohd Nor Mohd Amin (personal communication, February 24, 2019) stated that all actions, including housework, must be governed by Islamic beliefs. They also agree that the *buah buton* used to build the traditional house in Luak Tanah Mengandung is influenced by Islamic beliefs. Sulaiman Kasim (personal communication, May 20, 2018) noted that *buah buton* in the house is a representation of Islamic influence in Adat Perpatih in addition to being subject to Islamic teachings. Meanwhile, Abdul Khalid Ujang (personal communication, February 28, 2019) remarked that every piece in a person's house is a symbol of themselves, revealing the personality and essence of the occupants. For example, if there are many carvings throughout the house, it indicates that the individual is influential or wealthy and is content with what they have. Shamsuddin Ahmad (personal communication, July 18, 2018), on the other hand, believes that the people who possessed houses of various sizes with full carvings in the past were individuals who held positions in Adat Perpatih.

In terms of carving context, Hashim Sahad (personal communication, September 18, 2018), a carver, believes that the carving of *buah buton* is indicative of its owner. He went on to say that a house with many carvings represents a wealthy individual or someone with a position in Adat Perpatih. He claims that not everyone is capable of creating such craft work. As a result, it is almost certain that the inhabitants place a carving order with a qualified carver. The application of motif is determined by the demands of the house residents depending on their tastes. In contrast, Rohamini Yusof (personal communication, September 17, 2018), who studied Malay wood carving in particular, has noted how the *buah buton* used in this tradition's buildings is unique and has the opposite meaning. However, the theme applied to the *buah buton* has a hanging nature, similar to the fruit hanging on its wooden branch.

In conclusion, each informant identifies three characteristics which are linked with the *buah buton*: influence, position, and symbolism. Each of these characteristics continues to relate to someone with status, title, and wealth. This is also consistent with the residences chosen for

this study, in that each initial owner of the houses has influence and a title inside Adat Perpatih or the palace. Therefore, the *buah buton* is attached to these homes as a symbol of the power and leadership of the household's inhabitants.

Discussion

The Minangkabau people who had traveled to Negeri Sembilan in the past brought their custom or *adat* to guide and rule their community. Through the *adat*, a customary leader has the power to govern; in which the result from this research can significantly point out that the positioning of *buah buton* within the specific area of the house is well associated with the idea of empowering the custom through their systematic fundamental belief structure. A customary leader has his influence so that respect could be fairly gained from his followers in the *luak*. He has to be in equal fairness to execute his power so that the problem is resolved fairly should there any matters arise within the community. Hence, the principle relates to the balance structure (symmetrical and asymmetrical) formed to the shape of *buah buton* which allowed a substantial setting within the parameter of the house. Exact location and setting relate to the eligibility of a leader to be appointed and ruled the community.

The positions and the space division for the *buah buton* reflect the honor (stability) of authority being presented to the customary leader in relating his duties. Thus, it can be said that the inheritance of power created is based on *suku* and the process is made on a rotational basis where the received title has been passed down from one generation to another. Only the title obtained from *Yamtuan Besar* is bestowed to certain parties such as rich people and nobles.

Another useful correlation is revealed through acknowledging the position of an individual within a social life of Adat Perpatih and the hierarchy of order (dominant, subdominant, subordinate) in all of the *buah buton*'s shape. Generally, in the social structure of the Adat Perpatih community, the tribes are associated through blood relations where *suku*, *perut*, *ruang* and *rumpun* made up the tribe's system. The personality and traits of members in each section symbolically represent the tribe and need to be respected at all times. The association between these social organizations is examined visually through the selection of space (*ruang*) of where an individual (leader) is placed in the house (*pangkal*, *tengah* and *hujung serambi*) and the hierarchy and distance of *buah buton* from one another in each area. Well defined areas in both; multifunctional space for leaders and surface area and organized distances of the *buah buton* outlined the association in the best possible manner.

Based on the visual analysis performed, the design of the *buah buton* on the selected houses refers to nature. Meanwhile, each of these designs is created to customize with the Adat Perpatih system especially in the religious context. This is because the design of the *buah buton* refers to flora as a subject parallel with Islamic teachings that prohibit carvings or creations of any human figure or animals. Adherence to religion has made homeowners practicing the Adat Perpatih to be closer to God. The practice of Islam is not only a religion adopted by the occupants of houses, it is also a reference and guide for the practitioners of the Adat Perpatih in Luak Tanah Mengandung in particular as mentioned in the customary phrase "*Adat bersendikan*

syarak, syarak bersendikan Kitabullah". Therefore, the production of *buah buton* is also influenced by this phrase. For this reason, the design of *buah buton* that comes with *tiang gantung* is one of the elements applied on traditional houses in Negeri Sembilan. According to Shahminan (2007), the construction of traditional houses in Negeri Sembilan was built with reference to Adat Perpatih.

Each structure found on traditional houses in Luak Tanah Mengandung were constructed with a specific function. In contrast with *buah buton*, these three-dimensional carved designs do not provide any functionality to the house structure. *Buah buton* design is a non-structural carving on *tiang gantung* that acts as a structure that serves as a supporter to certain house structures such as roof structure and floor structure. However, the *buah buton* on these traditional houses has its own functions that act as symbolism, philosophy and meaning behind the design. The symbolism refers to the status of the homeowner at the same time referring to the political position of the homeowner and the family in the Adat Perpatih related to the social organization context.

The political position is symbolized by the position of *buah buton* that is hung on a specific space that is synonymous with the Adat Perpatih leadership. The position of *buah buton* that is hung outside of the house also reinforces that the house is occupied by a customary leader and has a philosophy and meaning behind it. The thought and content established are referring to the positive natures of customary leaders that need to be practiced such as humility, respect, loyalty and good communication. The understanding was obtained through visual analysis of space for this research and answers of the informants stating that these attributes are featured by the carver into *buah buton* design in Luak Tanah Mengandung. These features are parallel with Islamic teachings that give pressure to the leaders who lead an organization. Meanwhile, these natures also show a leader's obedience to God. It is mentioned in surah Ali-Imran verse 32; "Say, "Obey Allah and the Messenger". But if they turn away - then indeed, Allah does not like the disbelievers". It is also mentioned by Saludin (2009), a leader or customary leader must strongly hold the teachings of religion and be able to lead its people safely in the world and hereafter. The statement of the leader's attitude is also expressed in oral form, namely *teromba*. The following is a *teromba* by Majid Raja Ahmad highlighted by Saludin (2009);

*Tahu menimbang awal dan akhir
Tahu Allah dengan Rasul
Tahu menentu sunat dan fardhu
Tahu membeza halal dengan haram*

*Adat bersendikan syarak
Syarak bersendikan hukum
Hukum bersendi Kitabullah
Syarak mengata adat menurut
Ibarat aur dengan tebing*

Conclusion

Buah buton is a three-dimensional carving used on the outside or inside of a traditional house in Luak Tanah Mengandung, Negeri Sembilan. The Adat Perpatih's location and application, in addition to its effect, lead to a meaning in the symbolism of the context of social organization. As a result, the *buah buton* has its own class that highlights a leader's characteristics. This aspect is emphasized by the position of the *buah buton*, which is thought to symbolize the customary leader. In reality, the presentation's structure leads to a philosophical hidden meaning underlying its aesthetics. Because of this distinction, the *buah buton* and Adat Perpatih have a relationship in constructing symbols in the context of professional and ethical leadership in the processing of systematic management. Therefore, this article proposes that the *buah buton* is applied to government buildings that serve as locations of leadership appearance by government workers. The position of the *buah buton* can be hung as in the foyer, which is a clash of diverse parties and not only able to decorate the space but also communicate a tale about the nature of a person of caliber. Furthermore, the subject can be used as display material for monarchical institutions or leaders. This is closely tied to the concept of history, which can be employed as a source of presentation with a symbolic context in leadership.

References

- Abdul Hanan Muhammad Yunus, personal communication, May 20, 2018.
- Abdul Khalid Ujang, personal communication, February 28, 2019.
- Ani Idris, personal communication, May 2, 2018.
- Arif Otok, personal communication, October 3, 2018.
- Çelik, E. (2019). *Culture and Art*. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/336220768_Culture_and_Art
- Fatimah Ibrahim, personal communication, September 16, 2018.
- Harrison, S. (1999). Cultural boundaries. *Anthropology Today*, 15(5), 10-13. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2678369>
- Hashim Sahad, personal communication, September 18, 2018.
- Hiroa, T. R. (1944). The local evolution of Hawaiian feather capes and cloaks. *The Journal of the Polynesian Society*, 53 (1), 1-16. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20702959>
- Ibrahim, N. (1993). *Adat Perpatih: Perbezaan dan persamaannya dengan Adat Temenggung*. Fajar Bakti Sdn. Bhd.

- Idris, A., S., Daud, A., M., Tainu, M. & Ibrahim, N. (Eds.). (1994). *Negeri Sembilan gemuk berpupuk segar bersiram: Luak Tanah Mengandung*. Muzium Negeri Sembilan Darul Khusus.
- Idrus, M. M., Hashim, R. S. & Raihanah, M.M. (2015). Malay cultural identities: A review. *Humanities and Social Sciences Letters*, 3(1),1-9. ISSN(e): 2312 – 4318, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/298898616_Malay_Cultural_Identities_A_Review
- Idrus, Y. (1996). *Rumah tradisional Negeri Sembilan: Satu analisis seni bina Melayu*. Fajar Bakti.
- Ismail, N. H., Yunus, S., K. & Surat, M. (2016). Reka bentuk rumah tradisional negeri sembilan dipengaruhi oleh adat dan kedaerahan. *Wacana Seni Journal of Arts Discourse*, 15, 113-136.
- Juhary, J. (2011). Abstraction and concreteness in customary practices in Malaysia: A preliminary understanding. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 1(17), 281-285.
- Latif, S. F.T. R. & Kosman, K. M. (2017). The *Serambi* of Negeri Sembilan traditional Malay house as a multifungsional space-role in custom (ADAT). *Journal of Design and Built Environment*, 17 (2), 37 – 50.
- Mohd Nor Mohd Amin @ Noramin, personal communication, February 24, 2019.
- Muhammad Pauzi Abdul Latif, personal communication, July 20, 2018.
- Nelson, S. D. R. M. (2002). *Sejarah Perkembangan politik Negeri Sembilan dalam Abad Ke 18 dan 19* [Unpublished Master's Thesis]. University of Malaya.
- Radzuan, A. W. (2021). Suku as self-representation for the Adat Perpatih community in Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia. *Palarch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology*, 18(4), 6853-6864. ISSN 1567-214x, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/351624273_SUKU_AS_SELFREPRESENTATION_FOR_THE_ADAT_PERPATIH_COMMUNITY_IN_NEGERI_SEMBILAN_MALAYSIA
- Raja Nafida Raja Shahminan, personal communication, July 20, 2018.
- Rindsberg, H. (n.d.). *Contextual analysis of art: Japanese art history*. In <http://helen.iglouhost.com/about/index.html>
- Sahid, M. M. (2018). Pembangunan model Adat Perpatih patuh syariah di Malaysia: Satu tinjauan awal. In M. M. Sahid, Azman Ab. Rahman, & M. I. Hami (Eds.), *Adat Perpatih*

berpandukan syarak amalan di Negeri Sembilan dan Minangkabau (pp. 1–18). NAM Publications.

Salleh, R. M. (2017, May 25). *Sejarah pengamalan Adat Perpatih di Negeri Sembilan*. Retrieved from <http://www.jmm.gov.my/ms/content/bicara-kuratoresejarah-pengamalan-adat-perpatih-di-negeri-sembilan-0>.

Saludin, M., S., Ismail, N., S., A. & Razali, N., A. (2020). Management of the Adat Perpatih matriarchy in Negeri Sembilan. *International Journal of Management (IJM)*, 11(12), 1527-1536, DOI: 10.34217/IJM.11.12.2020.138,

Selat, N. (2014). *Sistem sosial Adat Perpatih*. PTS Akademia.

Shahminan, R. N. R. (1999). *Evolusi seni bina balai adat* [Unpublished Master's Thesis]. University of Malaya.

Shahminan, R. N. R. (2007). *Rumah tradisional Luak Tanah Mengandung: Kajian inventori rumah bumbung panjang*. Lembaga Muzium Negeri Sembilan.

Shamsuddin Ahmad, personal communication, July 18, 2018.

Siti Rohamini Yusof, personal communication, September 17, 2018.

Sulaiman Kasim, personal communication, May 20, 2018.

Wartha, I. B. N. (2016). Manfaat penting “Benda Cagar Budaya” sebagai peninggalan sejarah arkeologi untuk kepentingan agama, sosial budaya, sosial ekonomi, pendidikan dan ilmu pengetahuan (Studi Kajian Budaya). *Jurnal Santiaji Pendidikan*, 6(2), 2087-9016.

Yusop, S. H. (2017, February 29). Keunikan tiang gantung tak jejak bumi. *Berita Harian*. Retrieved from <https://www.bharian.com.my/node/241148>.