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## Islamic Aesthetic Values in Principle of Symmetry through Malay Traditional Painting

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### Abstract

This paper is to identify and analyze the concept of Islamic art through the principle of symmetry in traditional Malay art paintings. The objective of this research is also to study the factor that connects the aesthetic aspects of Islam to describe the concept of symmetry exists through the beauty of design patterns in the work of paintings. They contain pictures of Muslim-Malay as the national Cultural Policy in the manifestations of 1971. This study analyses the artworks through different qualitative demand with descriptive interdisciplinary implementation. The focus of symmetry features purposely to classify pattern designs of paint works that involves repetitions. The collection of written and visual data is made through methods of documentation, visual recording, and observer to obtain information on the subject, design and work of the paintings studied. The findings of the study show the value of aesthetic beauty in Islamic art which is defined through symmetric analysis underlying the design of paintings to apply pattern design that displays the value of beauty. The implications of the study show that the work of painting can not only be seen in terms of appreciation of art, but can also be seen from the content of symmetry through the application of features that exist in the work.

**Keywords:** Islamic Art, Symmetry, Malay Traditional Painting, Aesthetic.

### Introduction

Mahamood (2008) said that the search for national identity in the arts was further strengthened by the application of Islamic values in administration and the inclination towards Islam in general in the 1980s. This led to the emergence of artistic values based on Islamic philosophy and aesthetics. As explored by Ruzaiqa Omar Basaree, Fatimah Syed Zubir,

Mastura Abdul Rahman, Ponirin Amin, Sulaiman Esa and other painters related to paintings (Mahamood, 2007).

Islamic art stressed a thing or atmosphere that emphasized the aspect of beauty but not the practical aspect (Jamal, 1992). Art in the context of visual art can be related with two main aspects, the first is the physical element, where the material and form are inspired and the second aspect is the aesthetic value, which is the literal and implicit value of art.

The understanding of the concept of aesthetics in the Malay-Muslim art is evaluated based on the appreciation of the responses, overwhelm, tranquillity, the poignancy, touching, contemplative and the sensitivity to history, humanities, social, natural and divine (Al Mudra, 2004). The prominence of the beauty of values and aesthetic finesse which produced through the work of the country's artists gives a symbolism of the excellence of the nation's heritage art. It reflected the development and civilization of creative and innovative human beings (Syahira, 2008).

The role of producing art lies in the strength of monotheism among the artists to express works that are guided by Islamic aesthetic values which stressed about the relationship between the creator and his creatures. It created an aesthetic impression by not painting a naturalistic work as its artistic content (Al-Faruqi, 1982)

Conventional working approach and philosophy based on the Malay and Islamic elements with exploration Malay wood carving motifs in works of art through the repeated motifs in modular form for treating compositions by well intricate and infinity. It is pictured as a reversal with the arrangement of modules from various angles and arrangements to obtain the most appropriate symmetrical balance. The work of Malay Islamic adapts elements of design and decorative elements in the production of works of art. The concept of cloud motif that reflects the beauty that involves the integration of the Malays, symbolism, smoothness, symmetry, flexibility and also functionality.







### **The Purpose of the Study**

This paper is carried out to identify the existence of aesthetic values of Islam through the work of traditional painting from the aspect of the principle of symmetry. Work analysis was conducted to classify symmetry in the pattern design in order to create a good study. It also aims to study the factors that support the relationship between Islamic aesthetic values and the principle of symmetry in paintings. This research contributes new information to existing knowledge in the field of art.

### **Research Methodology**

A research by descriptive qualitative approach with the implementation of inter-discipline design using case study analysis on the employment of symmetry elements in the form of carved motifs of traditional Malay painting work. The study of symmetrical features was conducted to classify the pattern design of the paint work. There are three methods of data collection used, namely observation, visual recording and documentation analysis to obtain information on the subject, design and meaning. Data were collected based on empirical fieldwork data obtained while in the field.

**Analysis of the Malay traditional artwork**

Artwork 1	Artwork 2	
Artwork 2		
		
<p>Siri Dungun (1981)                      Ruzaika Omar Basaree                      Wood carving and emulsion paint                      203 × 81cm                      Source: National Art Gallery</p>	<p><i>Siri Dungun</i> (1978)                      Ruzaika Omar Basaree                      Wood carving and emulsion paint                      203 × 81cm                      Source: University Science</p>	<p><i>Siri Nurani</i> (1996)                      Ruzaika Omar Basaree                      Wood carving and emulsion paint                      140 cm × 99 cm x 6cm                      Source: National Art Gallery</p>
Artwork 1	Artwork 2	Artwork 3
		
<p>Siri Nurani V (1996)                      Ruzaika Omar Basaree                      Wood carving and emulsion paint                      148 × 99cm × 6cm                      Source: National Art Gallery</p>	<p>Siri Nurani I (1992)                      Ruzaika Omar Basaree                      Wood carving and emulsion paint                      224cm × 183cm                      Source: National Art Gallery</p>	<p>Siri Nurani II (1998)                      Jendela terbuka II                      Ruzaika Omar Basaree                      Wood carving and emulsion paint                      75cm × 100cm                      Source: Chandan Gallery</p>

**The concept of aesthetic beauty from the perspective of Islamic art by Ismail Raji Al Faruqi**  
 The basis of the formalistic approach of Islamic art is seen through the application of motif images embodied in geometric shapes and patterns, calligraphy, natural decorative patterns and abstract forms.

Artistic approached through traditional work which involved symmetry principles and concepts of Islamic aesthetic beauty according to Al Faruqi (2013) is divided into six characteristics which are abstraction, modular structure, successive combinations, repetition,

dynamism, intricacy. Although general in nature that features enough to give an idea of the Malay-Muslim art



**1) Abstract**

The nature of abstract in the processing of the resulting motif is still based on the original form, but has been modified according to the wishes of the artist through the methods of styling, re-nature alteration and repetition of the subject. It has produced images that are both abstract and semi-abstract. According to Ali (1995), the production of abstract patterns and motifs is Islamic in nature because the designs produced by Islamic artists do not resemble the form of reality such as the original form of natural events to avoid competition with human creation. Yatim (1989) stated that plants were modified according to a style that consists of various shapes such as geometry, plants and even calligraphy.

**Analysis of abstract concepts in the traditional Malay artworks**

The table below shows the abstract concepts in the paintings of *Siri Dungun* and *Siri Nurani*.

**Table 1. Abstract concept by *Siri Dungun* and *Siri Nurani***

<i>Siri Dungun</i>	<i>Siri Nurani</i>
Abstract concept	Abstract concept
	
Manifestations are abstract or symbolic	

The approach of abstract based on geometric shapes and flora seen in the above work has triggered the art of Islamic breathing. The design of this wood carving is inspired by nature and geometric motifs. Painting’s work features abstract images that do not symbolize real objects. It is seen in terms of the selection of motifs and construction from wood carvings with the concept of openwork produced. The finesse and rich of the value of wood carving art created by skilled craftsmen are presented in the work. The approach of the abstract is produced through the design processing of geometric patterns and controlled and schematic color swipes. The motifs used meet the aesthetic features of Islamic art which prohibits the reproduction of real objects, so it has been stylized in terms of its design.

**2) Modular structure concept**


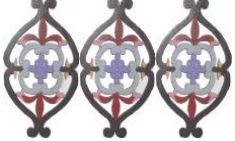
Islamic artwork consists of many small modules arranged and combined into one larger arrangement. Each of these modules is an entity that carries a measure of perfection that allows it to be considered as an expressive unit. These characteristics are clearly visible in the decoration and arrangement of the Malay-Muslim art motif. This modular structure is also found in arabesque patterns by looking at the whole complex pattern design or only focusing on one specific unit and module.



**Analysis of the concept of modular structure in the traditional Malay artwork**

The table below shows the concept of modular structure in the paintings of *Siri Dungun* and *Siri Nurani*.

**Table 2. Modular structure concept by *Siri Dungun* and *Siri Nurani*.**

<i>Siri Dungun</i>	<i>Siri Nurani</i>
Modular structure concept 	Modular structure concept 
— The combination of modules arranged into larger sections —	

The concept of modular structure in paintings can be seen through the use of balance (approximately symmetrical balance) which has produced multiple forms of modular. The balance on the left and right is divided by an axis line in the middle producing an indirect repetition of the modular structure.

The modification of the composition of this work is intricate and infinite when the reversal of the modular shape from various angles and arrangements to obtain the appropriate symmetrical balance. The modular structure approach based on the arrangement of modules arranged to produce a larger combination is seen through the repetition of the motif design in the above work. The combination of geometric and floral motifs can form a larger and more interesting motif through its arrangement technique to form a balanced and harmonious motif layout. This feature refers to the use of wood carvings that are joined from small wood carvings to form large carvings.



**3) The Concept of Repetition**

The repetition of a pattern gives the picture of a continuous continuity without the existence of prefixes and suffixes. It symbolizes the nature of Allah SWT who has no beginning and no end. Al Faruqi (2013) also stated that repetition is one of the characteristics of Islamic art that aims to give an excessive effect to an invention. This constant repetition reminds us of one of the ways human beings choose to remember God, which is by doing zikr continuously (Yatim, 1989).

**Analysis of the concept of repetition in the traditional Malay artwork**

The table below shows the concept of repetition in the paintings of *Siri Dungun* and *Siri Nurani*.

**Table 3. Concept of repetition by *Siri Dungun* and *Siri Nurani***

<i>Siri Dungun</i>	<i>Siri Nurani</i>
Concept of repetition	Concept of repetition
	
Repetition of motifs, structural modules as well as similar sequential combinations	

Repetition is a feature of Islamic aesthetics that refers to the use of motifs in carving repeatedly to fill the space of the work. This motif got a look at the Malay wood carving and has been applied in the art work above. A repetitive approach based on geometric and floral looks is seen in the work which shows wood carving panels placed in the space above the door leaf, carved with motifs of creeping trees, flowers and geometry. The harmonious division of space as well as the continuous repetition of similar motifs is seen in works consisting of the same motifs in terms of their shape and color.

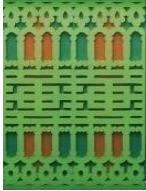

#### 4) The Concept of Successive Combination

The basic modules are repeated to form a large combination. The larger successive combinations in Islamic works of art do not obliterate the identity and characteristics of the smaller units that have formed them. Repetition in sequential combinations with larger entities is diversified and connected with either smaller or larger entities. It is to form a more complex combination. This method produces many fading points or aesthetic focal points to make the Islamic artwork not focus on the beginning or the end and is always infinite in nature.

#### Analysis of the concept of successive combinations in the traditional Malay artwork

The table below shows the concept of successive combinations in the paintings of *Siri Dungun* and *Siri Nurani*.

**Table 4. Concept of successive Combinations by *Siri Dungun* and *Siri Nurani***

<i>Siri Dungun</i>	<i>Siri Nurani</i>
Successive combinations	Successive combinations
	

Successive combined features are seen in the works of the *Siri Dungun* and the *Siri Nurani* through repetitive motifs and form a larger combination of motif arrangements. The design of the larger arrangement of motifs in the work does not eliminate the identity of the smaller motifs as in this work of painting. Repetition of larger motifs is varied to connect with smaller motifs to form other more complex combinations. A sequential combined approach based on geometric and organic shapes is seen in the works of *Siri Dungun* and *Siri Nurani* which show the size of shapes that are sequential from large to small and instead give a real spatial impact. So the concept of open space is more successfully highlighted. The movement of an object

results from a combination of images arranged sequentially and moved.

### 5) The Concept of dynamism

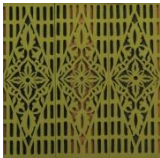

Islamic art design must be dynamic and transcend the scope of time or space. In art seems to use a lot of space. Art fills physical space and uses elements of space such as points, lines, shapes and volumes. Apart from the external features in the spatial aspect, the features that are considered universally necessary are those that may have a relatively long time-bound orientation. The pattern of infinity must be able to attract sight and thought through views that must be understood in a series.

Islamic art design creates a dynamic concept because art produces a subtle pattern or infinity in the work. It cannot be easily understood in a short period of time. A long period of time and space is required to observe and animate this work of art so that there is no error in the interpretation of its meaning. The design of Islamic art patterns cannot be understood by studying only one part of the work, but must understand the whole of the work. These features are widely practiced in the art of wood carving in Malaysia.

### Analysis of the concept of Combined Dynamism in the traditional Malay artwork

The table below shows the concept of Combined Dynamism in the paintings of *Siri Dungun* and *Siri Nurani*.

**Table 4. Concept of combined dynamism by *Siri Dungun* and *Siri Nurani*.**

Siri Dungun	Siri Nurani
Combined dynamism	Combined dynamism
	

The approach of dynamism based on geometric and organic appearances seen in the works of *Siri Dungun* and *Siri Nurani* needs to be examined over a long period of time to understand it as a whole. To assess the pattern, it is necessary for the admirers to assess with a linked view. The gaze moves from pattern to pattern to find the true meaning of the work. In this work it is necessary to observe from one part to another to find its meaning.

### 6) The concept of intricacy

This feature of intricacy demonstrates the ability of any pattern or arabesque to attract the attention and focus of the observer to the structure of the entity being depicted. A straight line or image design, no matter how beautifully made, will not be the only iconographic material for an Islamic pattern. The development of broad pattern dynamism and momentum can be done by doubling the internal elements with the addition of complexity to the implementation and the addition of combinations.

Intricacy emphasized the ability of a pattern or work of art in a work to indirectly attract the attention and focus of the admirer to a given structure. Islamic art cares about the smallest





to the largest pattern of motifs. The characteristics of the complexity of the motifs are seen in the works of the *Siri Dungun* and the *Siri Nurani*.

### Analysis of the concept of intricacy in the traditional Malay artwork

The table below shows the concept of intricacy in the paintings of *Siri Dungun* and *Siri Nurani*.

**Table 5. Concept of intricacy by *Siri Dungun* and *Siri Nurani***

<i>Siri Dungun</i>	<i>Siri Nurani</i>
The concept of intricacy	The concept of intricacy
	

The complexity intricacy based on geometric and organic appearance is seen in the works of *Siri Dungun* and *Siri Nurani* which show the use of images from the smallest to the largest motif patterns. Intricacy enhances the ability of any pattern capture and force concentration on the structural entities represented. A straight line or a single subject could never be the sole iconographic material of the Islamic pattern. Combination that the dynamism and momentum of the infinite pattern can be generated.

### Conclusion

Abdullah (1990) traditional Islamic art forms that are guided by the principles of monotheistic aesthetics are focused on non-symbolic motifs that are contrary to Islam. The artistic motifs that maintain the tradition of Islamic art that is abstract through the work are in the form of geometry, flora and cosmos.

Based on the overall opinions expressed, aesthetics is a field that discusses the concept of beauty that is relative and abstract based on one's taste. It is evaluated from two angles either externally that can be seen with the eyes or internally that cannot be seen with the eyes. In short, Islamic sculpture is not merely to fulfil the existence of art for art or as a reflection of a sense of beauty alone, but it also gives a deeper impact in the effort to bring the servant closer to Allah SWT.

Artworks display abstract forms and approaches through the use of wood carvings with geometric motifs as well as plants and the modification of ideas involving symmetry that creates harmony is often at its core.

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