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VISUAL FORMS AND PLACEMENT OF CARVED COMPONENTS IN TIMBER HOUSES OF KELANTAN AND TERENGGANU

By

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Introduction

- Woodcarving is considered as an integral component to the Kelantan and Terengganu houses which are located in the northeastern regions of Peninsular Malaysia in the northeastern region of Kelantan and Terengganu.
- Malay traditional timber houses are normally decorated with excellent carvings with distinctive feature such as fascia board of gable ends, carved panels on external walls, over doors and windows for ventilation, lighting and decoration. (Abdul Halim, 1987; Lim, 1987; Ismail 2000; Mohamad Tajuddin et al., 2005)
- Carvings from Kelantan and Terengganu exhibit visual aesthetic which are the most refined and beautiful of all Malay woodworks and the shape and carving techniques comprise a degree of beautification not found elsewhere (Raja Bahrin, 1988; Syed Ahmad Jamal, 1994).
- As house components, the carvings are fabricated with specific motifs and patterns, perforation and incisions, shapes and layouts which reflect their distributions and uses in the houses.

Aims of Paper

- To present findings based on visual descriptive and interpretive analysis of the various forms of carved components fitted to the different building elements of Kelantan and Terengganu houses.
- To relate the visual forms of carvings with their placement in the houses which reflects their significant attributes, layouts and uses as revealed by the analytical study.

Research questions

1. What are the types of woodcarving forms and features produced as architectural components?
2. What are the layout and pattern of distribution of woodcarvings in the timber houses?

Methods of research

1. Analytical Review of Document– (main data)

Review of measured drawing and reports of the 10 Kelantan houses and 5 Terengganu houses from the Centre for the Study of Built Environment in the Malay World (KALAM) at the Department of Architecture in the Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM). This documents of drawings were systematically reviewed for detail descriptive and interpretive analysis on;

- (1) Types of components ad distribution
- (2) Carving motifs
- (3) Principles of composition

2. Semi-structured Interviews – (supportive data)

Personal interviews with two well-known woodcarvers to obtain their verifications on the attributes of carving components and its visual composition. The verifications from the woodcarvers was triangulated with the main data gathered from the analytical review.

Table 1: The Kelantan timber houses (n=10 units)

Type of House	Year Built	Owner	Location of House	Carved Components
<i>Rumah bumbung perabung lima</i>	1920s	Hassan Mohd Amin	Kota Bharu, Kelantan	Ventilation panels of door and window and wall, roof eave panels
<i>Rumah Bujang Berselasar</i>	1850s	Tuan Mohamad Dobah	Kota Bharu, Kelantan	Ventilation panels of walls
<i>Combination of Rumah bumbung perabung lima and rumah bujang</i>	1800s	Wan Aisyah	Kota Bharu, Kelantan	Ventilation panels of walls, bracket panels
<i>Rumah bumbung perabung lima</i>	1920s	Wan Ahmad Abdullah	Kota Bharu, Kelantan	Ventilation panels of doors ventilation panel of wall
<i>Rumah bumbung perabung lima</i>	1930s	Yaakub Mohammad	Kota Bharu, Kelantan	Ventilation panels of doors and wall, decorative panel of door
<i>Rumah bumbung perabung lima</i>	1937	Wan Hussain Wan Abdul Rahman	Kota Bharu, Kelantan	Ventilation panels of doors and wall, stringers
<i>Rumah bumbung perabung lima</i>	1933	Hassan Yusof	Kota Bharu, Kelantan	Ventilation panels of doors and wall, stringers
<i>Rumah tiang dua belas</i>	1800s	Tok Yakub	Bachok, Kelantan	Ventilation panels of doors and wall, wall panel
<i>Rumah tiang dua belas</i>	1920s	Wan Sulong	Kota Bharu, Kelantan	Ventilation panels of doors, windows and wall, wall panel, gable end panels
<i>Rumah tiang dua belas</i>	1880s	Wan Mek	Tumpat, Kelantan	Ventilation panels of wall, gable end panels

Table 2: The Terengganu timber houses (n=5 units)

Type of House	Year Built	Owner	Location of House	Carved Components
Rumah Bujang Berkembar Dua Beradik	188?	Mariam Mat	Kuala Terengganu, Terengganu	Ventilation panels of doors, ventilation panel of wall, railing panels, stringers, decorative carving of roof beam
Rumah bujang berselasar	1850s	Awang	Kuala Terengganu, Terengganu	Ventilation panel of wall,
Rumah bumbung limas	1914	Dato' Biji Sura (Nik Mohamad bin Hitam)	Kuala Terengganu, Terengganu	Ventilation panels of doors and windows, Railing panels, gate leaves, door leaves, wall panel
Rumah bujang berserambi dua beradik	1800s	Tok Ku Paloh 1	Kuala Terengganu, Terengganu	Ventilation panels of wall, stringers
Rumah bujang berserambi dua beradik	1800s	Tok Ku Paloh 2	Kuala Terengganu, Terengganu	Railing panels, panels of staircase, handrails

Findings:

Types of Carved Components Found in the Timber Houses

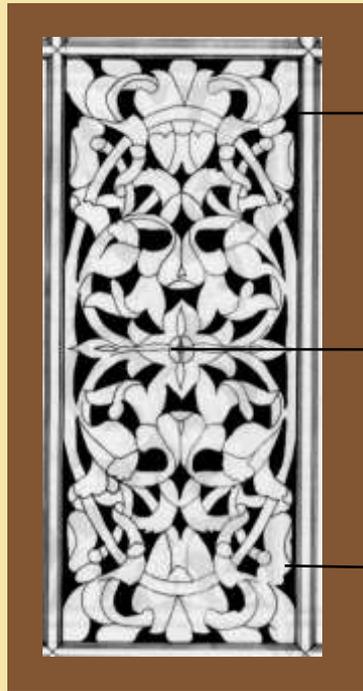
1. Wall ventilation panels
(a) single rectangular layout and (b) continuous horizontal layout
2. Door ventilation panel
3. Window ventilation panel
4. Window railing
5. Railing at serambi
6. Railing at staircase
7. Wall panel
8. Door leaf
9. Stringer
10. Gate leaf
11. Roof eave
12. Bracket
13. Gable end



(Top) Single rectangular panel on the upper part of walls of Mohamad Dobah's house and (bottom) continuous horizontal panel on the upper part of walls of Wan Mek's house

Visual Attributes of the Carvings

- 4 attributes of carving that serve as defining visual forms of the carved components are: (1) types of motifs, (2) types of incision and perforation, (3) shapes and layouts of components, and (4) styles of depiction



Perforated with relief and overlapped carving

Floral motif with central motif of a flower in stylised and abstract form

Compositional elements of plant flow within the vertical rectangular panels

Visual Attributes of the Carvings

- Most of carved components represent floral motifs either in forms of naturalistic or stylized depiction with perforated or non-perforated carvings suggesting craftsmen's strong preference for plant-based motifs. Flora is the most prevalent motif on Malay carvings (Norhaiza and Muhaimin, 2009).
- The motif of flora can be formed and composed in unrestricted fashion for various carved panels with unlimited types of pattern and carving layout according to the artistic and technical skill of craftsmen. Besides Islam permits the use of non-figurative elements in the artistic work (Othman, 1995).
- Relief and non relief carving with floral motif was mostly found on single ventilation panels fitted on top of windows, doors and walls either in vertical or horizontal rectangular layout.
- In short, most of carved components were fabricated with its appropriate carving forms and attributes for significant use in house setting, for example as seen in many perforated wall ventilation panels which dominate the timber houses analysed for this study.

Distribution and layout of carved components

- Distribution pattern for each house and the composition of carving are determined by the architectural elements and form.
- Placement of the panels on the main façades of the houses represents the mode of ornamentation for the earliest type (the long roof type) of Kelantan and Terengganu houses.
- Fabrication of panels as complementary elements to the house overall form thus making it stands out clearly.
- Placement of carved panels on interior and exterior walls of *rumah ibu* probably denotes the importance of space utilization of this main area of the house.



Placement of several carved panels as an integral components to the exterior wall of *rumah ibu* at Tok Ku Paloh's house

Concluding Remarks

- The visual forms of the components from Kelantan and Terengganu timber houses were skillfully crafted and formatted by the woodcarvers to be used primarily in domestic setting and synchronized with the pattern of its distribution.
- The distinctiveness of carving motifs and the architectural layouts of carved components within the houses serve as defining features of the building form and its spatial significance.
- Inasmuch, the development of carving design for the specific house forms in this northeastern region of Peninsular Malaysia has given identity to a vernacular type of dwelling architecture of its own.

THANK YOU