Abstract

This study focuses on the works of Hashim Hassan paintings. The artist is known for showcasing the essence of the Malay socio-cultural and philosophy that is in-depth within the community. The scope of the study is his natural, conventional subject matters and the intrinsic meaning of the paintings. Regarding the philosophical and Malay socio-cultural meaning of Wau Bulan Terbang Malam, the painting resonates with the classic Malay song, Engkau Laksana Bulan, by Tan Sri. P. Ramlee. The painting has also been an inspiration from subject matter the Malay banknotes and coins and the graphic design logo of Malaysia Airlines Berhad.

Keywords: Integration, Millennium Era, Paintings, Philosophy and Malay socio-cultural elements

eISSN 2398-4287 © 2021. The Authors. Published for AMER ABRA e-Bs by e-International Publishing House, Ltd., U.K. This is an open-access publication under the CC BY-NC-ND license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0). Peer-review under responsibility of AMER (Association of Malaysian Environment-Behaviour Researchers), ABRA (Association of Behavioural Researchers on Asians) and e-Bs (Centre for Environment-Behaviour Studies), Faculty of Architecture, Planning & Surveying, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia.

1.0 Introduction and Background

Art Painting is a popular art form in the Malaysian fine art industry. In Malaysia, painters have produced their masterpieces since independence, and the art form has grown prominently in the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, 2000s and beyond. Over the years, local painters have presented various streams, styles and concepts across different mediums to audiences and art enthusiasts. At the same time, according to (Rahim et al., 2021) local paintings have been largely competing with artworks influenced by western art streams such as realism, futurism, abstract expressionism, expressionism, fauvism, surrealism, cubism, pop art and dadaism.

1.1 Problem Statement

Currently, the study of Malay socio-cultural aspects in the art of painting is still lacking, especially in the millennium era in the 21st century. This is because, based on the highlights of earlier studies, there is not much detail in the context of Malay philosophy and socio-cultural in the art of painting. (Muhamad
Kamal, 2016). According to the statement of this problem, it is clear that in this millennium era, the study of Malay socio-cultural through the art of painting is still lacking in the millennium era. Meanwhile, the lack of analysis and scholarly studies on the philosophical and Malay socio-cultural aspects in the art of painting is clearly proven in the millennium era (Hassan et al., 2018). This is due to the lack of documentation and research to unravel the philosophical and socio-cultural aspects of the Malay art of painting in the millennium era. (Sarena, 2018). Therefore, there is not much research made to highlight the elements and issues related to philosophy and Malay socio-cultural to produce a critique of the art of painting in the millennium era.

1.2 Research Aim

This study examines the philosophy and Malay socio-cultural elements highlighted in the 21st-century paintings of Hashim Hassan, specifically Wau Bulan Terbang Malam.

1.3 Research Objectives


1.4 Research Questions

RQ1. What is the philosophical and Malay socio-cultural elements presented in the Wau Bulan Terbang Malam painting produced by Hashim Hassan in 2007?

RQ. 2. How is the value of philosophy and Malay socio-cultural elements presented in the painting Wau Bulan Terbang Malam produced by Hashim Hassan in 2007?

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 The Value of Philosophy and Malay Socio-Cultural Elements in Millennium paintings

Local paintings have highlighted the significance of Malay philosophy and sociocultural elements in the daily life of the Malay community. Malay philosophy and sociocultural elements are manifested through actions that comply with the Syariah, as prescribed in the principles of Islam (Ahmad Hakim, 2021c). In general, direct or indirect communication is required in the life of every Muslim. Similarly, artists need to communicate and convey the meaning of a subject, especially when producing paintings (Sarena, 2018). In studying Malay philosophical and sociocultural identity, artists need to examine paintings that connect or describe the Malay, social, political, and religious elements (Issarezal & Humin, 2020). Researchers have also studied elements of Malayness in the literature, as shown in ‘The Paradigm of Malayness in Literature:

Malayness refers to anyone living based on a set of customs, a system of beliefs, a substratum of older beliefs and a cultural heritage that is exclusive to and has continued to exist among the Malays. Due to the wide-ranging understanding, I have proffered, I have decided to combine two terms, ‘adat’ and culture, to present this category of Malayness.

(Ida Baizura Bahar, 2010:20)

The emergence of ideas and identities based on Malay philosophy and sociocultural elements began to garner interest since the establishment of the National Cultural Congress in 1971 (Wan Soliana et al., 2021). As a result, the ‘Malayness idea’ has a profound effect on artworks. This is evident through local painters’ self-awareness to present elements that the Malay community in their paintings can generally accept (Fareez & Mohd Zahuri, 2020). This statement is supported by a statement by western critics who quoted Socrates,
Without an idea, there is nothing that allows the mind to fix it

(Mohd Johari, 2004: 196)

Over the years, many changes have taken place in the production pattern of paintings to create public awareness about the importance of preserving the Malay cultural heritage that is slowly fading from the current generation's minds (Ahmad Hakim et al., 2021b). Therefore, artists need to appreciate and work to preserve the Malay civilisation (Wahiza, 2010). In the current art situation, most artists have begun to emphasize Malay culture in their work (Ruzaila et al., 2015). The inclusion of Malay elements in the production of visual art, namely painting, positively impacts the artist and the soul of the Malay community. This discussion is also highlighted in Philosophy and Art Criticism:

Art is a very meaningful field. It has a meaning that is general and broad. The art is also beautiful. The art is subtle. The art contains a high aesthetic value. Art is a diverse field of knowledge. From the psychological point of view, art is expressed as the soul food of society’s response in prehistoric times, which considers art as the most important resource in human life to communicate, interact and connect with other human beings. Art is the link to these most important factors.

(Mohd Johari, 2004: 196)

The importance of highlighting the Malays' philosophical and sociocultural values is tied to visual arts, especially painting, and photography, graphics, textiles, and fashion. Such development highlights the importance of preserving the Malay heritage so that it is not forgotten with time. This situation is evident in the emergence of artworks highlighting Malay philosophical and sociocultural elements from the 20th century until now in the 21st century. This situation reflects that the increasing society's acceptance and understanding of the Malay civilisation (Alina et al., 2015) and shows that the Malay identity and civilisation can still be adopted as long as it does not violate the Syariah and is well accepted by people from various backgrounds regardless of their ideological, religious and political affiliation.

3.0 Research Methodology

This section discusses the appropriate Qualitative research methods for conducting this study. The study must be carried out systematically to ensure a comprehensive and accurate study result. In this qualitative study, the researcher's role is to analyse and critique the artist's artwork based on Erwin Panofsky (1939) western theoretical art critique model, specifically the iconography analysis.

Table 1. Three Stages of Analysis tools Based on Erwin Panofsky Iconography Analysis (1939)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Art Critique Theory (Erwin Panofsky)</th>
<th>Pre-Iconographical Description</th>
<th>Iconographical Analysis</th>
<th>Iconological Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Iconographical Description</td>
<td>Identify the form of artwork, i.e., painting, drawing, print or sculpture.</td>
<td>The icon or image drawn should be identifiable by the audience in a distinct cluster. In addition, the icons or images drawn should evoke reactions and give specific meanings to the audience.</td>
<td>Iconology refers to either explicit (direct) and implicit (indirect) meanings. The theory emphasises that the audience is the one making descriptive observations and interpretations. For example, the theme and purpose behind the title of the work, based on their respective artistic backgrounds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iconographical Analysis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iconological Interpretation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Panofsky, 1939)
Research Title:
The integration Perspective Between of Philosophy and Malay Socio-Cultural Elements in Paintings in the Millennium Era

Erwin Panofsky (1939) book 'Studies in Iconography: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance' outlined three stages of iconography to evaluate a painting produced by Hashim Hassan in the New Millennium

Pre-Iconographic Description/ Primary or Original Study Subject

Analyze the physical and iconographic aspects of the work, including artistic elements like:

- Lines
- Texture
- Colour
- Appearance
- Shape
- Space
- Tone

Interpret through physical aspects and the principles of art such as:

- Harmony
- Contrast
- Balance
- Rhythm and Movement
- Variety
- Unity
- Perspective

Analytical / Secondary Iconography or a Conventional Study Subject

Analysing on whether the icon, or the image drawn is identifiable by the audience.

Intrinsic Interpretive / Tertiary Iconography or meaning and Content

The level of implicit or explicit iconology or meanings on the painting.

Study findings and Discussion

Conclusion

Fig. 1: Conceptual Framework
4.0 Findings

Fig. 2: Hashim Hassan. (2007). Wau Bulan Terbang Malam [140 cm x 152 cm].
(_Source: Researcher's Personal Collection_)

4.1 Pre-iconographical Description

_Wau Bulan Terbang Malam_ is the second work produced by Hashim entitled. It was produced in 2007. The painting used warm and cool colours with acrylic medium on canvas. The use of colours could influence audience reactions, as described in Liza Marziana et al. (2015),

_Warm and cool colours can influence the audience both physically, psychologically and emotionally. Certain colours in the surroundings can influence our alertness, sense of well-being, and inner space. In addition, colours can be semiotic and, thus, associated with ideas and meanings._

(Lazzari & Schlesier, 2008: 34)

Hashim’s painting highlights fine lines in the subject matter, Wau Bulan (moon kites) presented in various scales and sizes from a formalistic perspective. This artwork gives an impression of the neatness of the design lines forming the moon kites, which used to be a pride of the Malay community. In addition, the artists used bold visual elements to emphasise the moon. The moon was also placed at the front of the painting, with the moon kites surrounding it.

The artist also emphasised the shapes of the moon kites flying at night. In this regard, the colours and patterns in moon kites are mostly varied to differentiate one from another. In this painting, some of the moon kites have a similar colour as the night sky used as the background of this work. This gives the impression that each player has different preferences in decorating their kites. Hashim also highlighted a vast space with no obstructions to show the beauty of the full moon created by Allah SWT that can only be seen at night.
4.2 Iconographical Analysis

The subject for Hashim’s *Wau Bulan Terbang Malam* painting in Figure 2 is ‘Wau Bulan (moon kite), a traditional game played by Malay communities. Flying Wau Bulan was a popular leisure activity, particularly on the East coast, such as in Kelantan and Terengganu in the olden days where there were no digital toys like now in the modern era. Flying moon kite is popular among older men and the younger generation who showed interest and skills in flying it.

Flying **Wau Bulan** remains a common traditional game among the Malay communities in Kelantan and Terengganu. It has become a popular attraction to the states and is commonly played in events organised by agencies such as the Kelantan State Department of Culture and Arts (JKKN). The relevance of the kite until now is deep-rooted in the respect and appreciation to the Malay heritage demonstrated by the young and old generation in these regions.

4.3 Iconographical Interpretation

![Malaysia Airlines logo](https://www.campaignasia.com/article/malaysia-airlines-quietly-launches-new-logo/297124)

**Wau Bulan** is a symbol often used as a non-verbal communication medium to convey explicit and implicit messages. The moon kite symbol is featured in the company logo of Malaysia’s national carrier, Malaysia Airlines Berhad (MAB) (Figure 3). The symbol is similar to the kites in Hisham’s painting. According to Hashim, the shapes of the moon and the **Wau Bulan** have a deep meaning and are interconnected. Its use on the MAB or Malaysia Airlines logo represents the legacy of the philosophy Malay identity. It creates a strong sense of identity and pride in the hearts of Malaysian citizens, especially the Malays on board the company’s plane. The new version of the logo was created to create a stronger positive impression towards the airline, which has been operating for more than 49 years and flying to more than 64 destinations worldwide.

In addition, the philosophy and significance of the moon kite for the Malay community in Kelantan are also highlighted through performing arts, specifically the **Dikir Barat**, which is usually performed by the **Remang** Malay Royal family in the southern region of Thailand. The **Wau Bulan** Dikir Barat is still widely performed by local singers like Halim Yazid, Fadil Turbo and Jemy Intan Berlian. The dikir barat is usually performed along with dikir barat group from East coast, like **Gerbang Ranjuna** (Figure 4). The lyrics of the song Wau Bulan sung by the original singer, Seman Mamat, which was performed during the Makmur Gold Tunjung opening ceremony, are shown below.

```
Eh wau bule, Eh wau bule
Wau bule, teraju tigo
Eh wau bule, Eh wau bule
Wau bule, teraju tigo.
```
The lyrics of *dikir barat* in Kelantan convey a good meaning and messages that reflect Malay cultural heritage's richness. The lyrics mostly highlight political, social, heritage, traditions and religious values (Ahmad Hakim et al., 2021a). Conveying messages through *dikir barat* performance allows listeners to enjoy and appreciate lyrics loaded with noble values and philosophy about the moon kite. The appreciation of the unique philosophy of the *Wau Bulan* has inspired several organisations such as Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) to use *Wau Bulan* as a motif on the 50 cent coins and RM1 banknotes since 1989. In addition, Hisham had incorporated the Malay socio-cultural and philosophy of the *Wau Bulan* as represented in paintings into his artwork. This can also be linked to the meaning conveyed in the lyrics of *Engkau Laksana Bulan*, a song by legendary composer Tan Sri P. Ramlee.

Meanwhile, the RM1 banknotes and 50 cent coins have been used in transactions in Malaysia for a long. The *Wau Bulan* symbol on the banknotes and coins represents the effort to increase Malaysian’s love for the country. It also reflects the undying legacy of the Malay civilisation. Furthermore, inspired by Hashim’s work, Malaysia Airlines has used *Wau Bulan* and Batik in its Fly Malaysia campaign to attract more tourists to Malaysia. The use of a *Wau Bulan* logo with a batik pattern, represents the pride of Malaysian tradition and culture. The design elements of Batik motifs heavily feature leaves and local floras such as plumeria, jasmine, and hibiscus.

The Malay sociocultural values with the philosophy of Malay symbolism are evident in the design of the Malaysian currency notes. It also highly features the hibiscus, the national flower of Malaysia, representing patriotic values. The five flower petals symbolise the five principles of Rukun Negara, namely belief in God; loyalty to King and country; the supremacy of the Constitution; the rule of law as well as decency and morality. These five principles form the fundamental of Malay patriotism and should be memorised and practised by all Malaysians. Meanwhile, in *Wau Bulan Terbang Malam* (Figure 2), Hashim has conveyed and emphasised the positive values in Malay society (Baharuddin, 2011). The use of a full moon as a subject in his painting could be linked to the Malay community who highly regard the greatness of Allah SWT and His creations. In the meantime, *Wau Bulan* represents the traditional Malay sport commonly played in Kelantan, Perlis, Kedah and Terengganu (Sarena, 2010). In general, Hashim is very appreciative and careful in presenting his ideas and subjects. In *Wau Bulan Terbang Malam*, he has used the symbolism of Malay philosophy to convey messages related to current issues in the context of art communication.
Table 2. An explanation an integration of philosophical and Malay Socio-cultural

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Philosophical Meaning Context Through Hashim Hassan’s Painting</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><strong>bulan</strong> (moon) as a subject matter:</td>
<td>Philosophically, the painter glorifies the moon as the subject of the painting, representing the realm of the universe created by Allah swt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td><strong>Wau Bulan</strong> as the research Object:</td>
<td><strong>Wau Bulan</strong> is a prominent symbol of the Malaysian national identity. This is evident through the use of the <strong>Wau Bulan</strong> logo on aircraft belonging to Malaysia Airlines Berhad.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><strong>Wau Bulan</strong> Shape and Form</td>
<td>Demonstrates the finesse of the handicraft and wall decoration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The use of the arabesque motif on the moon kites.</td>
<td>Arabesque motif on the moon kite design presents the high value of credibility and accuracy of kite craftsmen in producing the arabesque motif, which is part of the Malay traditions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Retention the <strong>Wau Bulan</strong> as a logo for Malaysia Airlines Berhad (MAB) based in Sepang, Selangor.</td>
<td><strong>Wau Bulan</strong> is featured in the logo of Malaysia Airlines. The logo has been used in Malaysia Airlines aircraft since 1947. As a result, the <strong>Wau Bulan</strong> has become a symbol of national identity, patriotism and love for the country for all Malaysians.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Malay Socio-Cultural Meaning Context Through Hashim Hasan’s Painting</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><strong>Wau Bulan</strong> as a subject matter</td>
<td>Symbolises the traditional sociocultural activity involving flying <strong>Wau Bulan</strong> within the community then and now.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td><strong>Wau Bulan</strong> Production</td>
<td>In the past, the production of <strong>Wau Bulan</strong> was merely a sociocultural activity for Wau craftsmen in the Malay community. At present, this activity has become a source of income for some of these craftsmen.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.0 Discussion

Hashim’s **Wau Bulan Terbang Malam** features examples that we could follow regarding the noble philosophical values and positive Malay symbolism it represents. The **Wau Bulan** is a traditional or game that requires strong wind to fly. In this regard, the **Wau Bulan** is associated with the moon, which symbolises the perfection of the universe created by Allah SWT. Such representation is highly appreciated by the Malay community, who always takes inspiration from the universe created by Allah SWT. Hashim Hassan recreated the moon’s shape in his painting and designed the **Wau Bulan** according to his preference. He also emphasised the meaning and philosophy behind the moon kite symbolism to the Malay community. It represents humility; while the kite is usually flying high above the blue sky, it will return to the ground once the game is over.

6.0 Conclusion

In conclusion, Hashim Hassan’s paintings have positively impacted visual art, especially the local arts in the 21st century. Hashim used a contemporary style that suits the current generation’s tastes and aligns with the modernity trends among Malaysian painters. This study highlighted the credibility of Malaysian artists in this new millennium. Furthermore, the use of surrealism style on objects matter inspired by nature and the universe, such as the shape of the moon and **Wau Bulan**, showcase the influence of the Malay philosophical and sociocultural aspects in the art of painting. It is hoped that this study could inspire artists to combine traditional and modern elements into their artworks. In this light, this study does not merely present criticism of arts but also examine the integration of Malay philosophy and sociocultural elements into paintings in the new
millennium. This study could fill in the gap of related studies on this issue in line with the industry revolution 4.0 and the current art scene.

Acknowledgements

The researcher would like to thank and appreciate the Publication and Rating Division by the Research and Innovation Management Center (RMIC), Universiti Malaysia Kelantan, for this publication incentive. The highest appreciation and thanks to the Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia (MoHE) and the Ministry of Education Malaysia (MoE) for providing funds and financial sponsorship during this Postgraduate study.
References


