



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**GRAPHIC ADAPTIVE TRANSFORMATION OF ISLAMIC MOTIFS
A CASE STUDY OF KEDAH TRADITIONAL HOUSE**

ABDELAZIZ EISA A BAKAR

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By

ABDELAZIZ EISA A BAKAR

**Thesis Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Science in the Faculty of Design and Architecture
Universiti Putra Malaysia**

December 2000



DEDICATION

To the soul of my mother, who taught me the meaning of life.

Abstract of this thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in
fulfilment of the requirement of the degree of Master of Science

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Chairman: Mr. Zulkifli Muslim

Faculty: Design and Architecture

This study attempts to identify, analyse and transform selected motifs found in several traditional houses in Kedah. The aim of this study is to explore the potential of transforming local Islamic motifs into a digital format, enabling them to be used widely in other fields of design.

This study is qualitative in nature. It began with the identification of architectural Islamic motifs, which followed by drawing and computing processes. In addition, certain procedures were carried to modify the motifs' designs. The study revealed the unity concept and understanding of Islamic art and its diversity that related to local factors. It found that the geometrical shapes and calligraphic forms were not widely used in Malaysia. Furthermore the calligraphic motifs needed certain ways of modification and changes.

It is hoped that this study would encourage more Muslim artists and designers in Malaysia to use Malaysian-based Islamic motif in their work.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sains

**TRANSFORMASI PENYESUAIAN GRAFIK MOTIF-MOTIF ISLAM: SATU
KAJIAN KES RUMAH TRADISIONAL KEDAH**

Oleh

ABDELAZIZ EISA A BAKAR

December 2000

Pengerusi: En. Zulkipli Muslim

Fakulti: Rekabentuk dan Senibina

Motif Islam di dalam transformasi penerapan Grafik. Satu pengkajian terhadap rumah tradisi Kedah adalah bertujuan untuk mengkaji, menganalisa dan menghayati seni motif Islam rumah tradisi di Malaysia khususnya di Kedah, ke arah motif Islam yang seimbang serta mengambil kira bentuk nilai –nilai estetik. Pengkajian ini bertujuan untuk mewujudkan salah satu kaedah dalam menghadapi pengaruh di segi penggunaan imej dan teks yang negatif daripada luar negara barat didalam masyarakat Islam.

Sorotan utama pengkajian ini adalah melalui mengklasifikasikan imej dan bahan didalam kriteria seni Islam, ukiran tangan dan ilustrasi, proses melalui komputer yang bertujuan ke arah modifikasi rekabentuk motif. Hasil daripada pengkajian ini ianya mewujudkan konsep kesatuan dan kefahaman seni Islam dan alirannya yang di hubungkan dengan faktor-faktor tempatan, bentuk geometrikal dan kaligrafi tidak digunakan dengan begitu meluas di Malaysia. Motif kaligrafi perlu di ubahsuai dengan beberapa pendekatan atau kaedah yang lebih berkesan

Adalah diharapkan kajian ini akan dapat menggalakan lebih ramai pelukis dan pereka Islam di Malaysia di dalam penghasilan mereka berdasarkan motif Islam.

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This thesis submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science.

MOHD. GHAZALI MOHAYIDIN, Ph.D.
Professor
Deputy Dean of Graduate School
Universiti Putra Malaysia

Date:

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

2D. : Two dimensions.

3D. : Three dimensions.

En. : Encik (Mr.)

FRSB: Fakulti Rekabentuk Dan Senibina. (Faculty of Design and Architecture).

Jln. : Jalan (street).

K. : Kuala

Kg. : Kampong (village).

Pn. : Puan (Mrs.)

S.A.W: Peace has been upon him.

WWW: World wide web.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This introductory chapter was meant to serve two aims: First, to give background and context to subsequent parts of this study. Second, to elucidate the research issues as followed in this study. The first part of this chapter was made of two sections namely: Islamic art as the conceptual viewpoint and its various applications. The second part composed of two parts: The research problem definition and the research objectives.

1.1 Islamic Art: The Conceptual Issues

The conceptual issues are the theoretical thoughts, which were contributed by many scholars and writer's interpretations that formed a basic understanding to the Islamic art. Not enough studies have been conducted regarding the criticism of Islamic arts although it plays an important role in the mankind civilizations (Atasoy, Bahsassi and Rogers, 1990). Furthermore, those who wrote about the Islamic art (e.g. Brend, 1995) concluded that Islamic art was one of the primitive human arts based on their perspective and the concept of Western art criteria that are substantially different from the Islamic art concept and it's based cultural features.

Consequently, most of these Western writings comment on the Islamic art as a primitive and not capable to imitate the natural figures, and the human body (living creatures).

The Muslim scholars who wrote to expose and to defend the sublimity of Islamic civilization and its art, their efforts were not competitive with the desire for rapid development in different Islamic world countries, which have been influenced by the huge import of Western technology, planning and constructional expertise. In architecture, painting, drama and cultural features, we are facing styles appreciated by the Western soul and suitable to the European climate and life.

Due to the invasion of the foreign cultures in Muslim countries that formed the today life, Islamic features seem to retract gradually from the Muslim societies. Fortunately, in the rural areas in the Islamic world, the conservative Muslim values are still existing, the religious concepts and traditional values are still practiced and governing the movement of the society.

1.2 Islamic Art: The Applications

Islamic art is an applied fine art found to satisfy the needs of creation of the ornamental patterns and texts. It is a transformation of concepts, thoughts and principles of the relationship between the Almighty God and the world as they are revealed by the message of Islam.

The application of Islamic art is meant to find out a practical ways to use the motifs of Islamic identity in the, modern life.

1.3 The Problem Definition

This research was carried out to study the Islamic art motifs in the Malaysian traditional house in Kedah, through graphical processes, to provide a modified motif, which can be used in ornamental industries, an alternative to the current imported foreign motifs, which carry samples of texts, stickers and images, considered immoral to Islamic principles and teachings. They are the images, which reflect the cultural issues of non-Muslims societies through the universal media of the globalization era (Figure 1.1) reflects the effect of the western culture and arts in the daily life style of the Muslims' society.

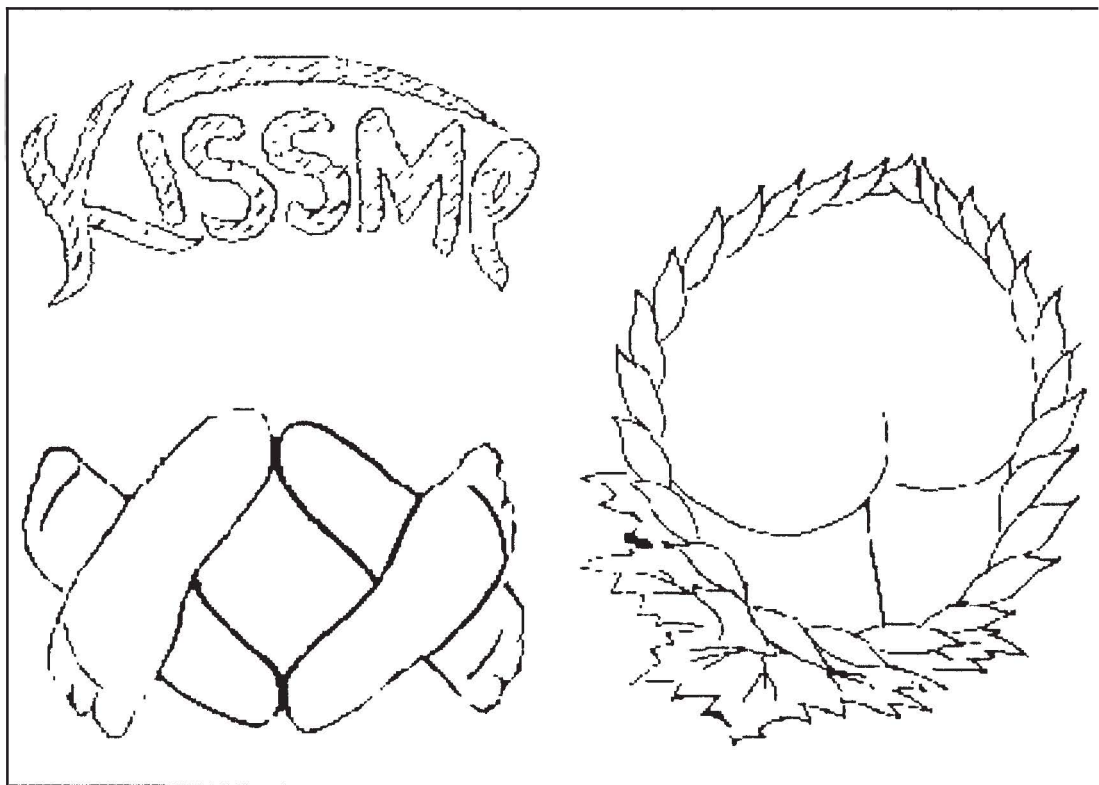


Figure 11. Types of text, stickers and decorative images found used in clothes and cars. (Abakar, "1999", Field survey)

The Islamic motif is potentially capable to be utilized in different decorative patterns as a mean of sphere related to the native identity of the Muslims. The abstraction, repetition, diversity etc., which were applied in the Islamic motifs, are means of certain concepts and thoughts, which can be specified as:

- To liberate the minds from shallow thinking of imitation and copying of the natural world in a way to penetrate deep through the reality of things.
- To express the concepts and thoughts of the Islamic view to the world and to reflect the ever uncounted, and unlimited power and efforts of the Almighty God through the stylized Islamic art.

Furthermore, these motifs were the production of the Muslim artist, whose view to life and the world are through the spiritual concepts that based in religious teachings and the Islamic thoughts, which bear the ever-solution for the mankind as the sealed message from Almighty Allah.

The Islamic motif was subjected through this study to confront the invasion of the Western and other foreign cultural features into the Islamic world. These imports of textiles, ceramics etc., which contain immoral designs and texts.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are to adopt the beauty of Islamic motifs in today's Muslim life as follow:

- To read through Islamic motif literature as a mean of introducing Muslims and other designers to the beauties of the Islamic motif and its potential merits to be applied in industries such as textile, decoration, ceramics and carpets.
- To study, analyze and authenticate the art of Islamic motifs in the Malaysian traditional house.
- To create standard Islamic ornamental units from the Malaysian local traditional motifs.
- To contribute progressive attempts of understanding the aesthetic values of Islamic motifs' designs.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Art Definition

The word art has been translated and interpreted into different meanings and concepts. Writers, scholars and artists noted different comments within their various perspectives and fields.

2.1.1 The Meaning of Art

Art, referring to the so-called “fine art”, (Artist, 1999), the pictorial, plastic and buildings, beside the minor art, the everyday useful and applied creative arts. It is the mastery of form, inventiveness and the associations that exist between forms and ideas and between techniques and materials (Krause, 1969), (Vincent, 1995). It is the technical and creative record of human needs and achievements.

Art can be defined as an expression of human creative talents in the form of painting, sculpture, music and poetry”, (Oxford Advanced Dictionary, 1995). It can be defined as “the ability to perceive the visual spatial world accurately and

to perform transformations upon the perceptions in the form of interior decor, architecture, and similar artistic ways of expression”, (Gardner, 1987).

From his psychological perspective, Gardner (1987) noted an imperative description, as he says: *“art is the intelligence that involves sensitivity to color, line, shape, form, space and the relationship that exist between these elements. It includes the capacity to visualize, to a graphic represent for visual or spatial ideas”*.

Siddiqui (1999) went further to put a specific words from a view concerns in Islamic culture and civilization *“Art is the mirror of culture and its worldview”*. *“Art in my personal view is the solemn identity of peoples and civilization. Art is a unique structure and the identity shape and tone of a society”*.

Obst, (1995), stated that art plays an important role in our life, considered it as a need to create a beautiful environment in which we live *(Art is not something to be set apart for occasional use. It is a sense to feel more satisfied of beauty as well as utility in the visual surroundings”*.

2.1.2 The Meaning of Design

Design is a part of art, it is how to give unity and consistency, to give an attention to perceive all parts of the work and its significance. It is defined as any arrangement of lines, colors and texture (Tingson and Velasco, 1993). It involves the problem of choosing these forms and colors, and then arranging them. The concept of design in everyday life is actually ‘arrangement’. A person’s creativity, his views, his

imagination and his skill are considered basic requirements in any design (Armstrong, 1994).

Design is the ability to identify and determine the most practical and appropriate solution to a given problem characterized by specific parameters based upon a combination of personal experience, knowledge, skill and creativity. Design also, can be defined as an organized effort to implement a plan with specific objectives and given function, based upon the principles of applied arts utilizing all of the factors, which serve wholly and completely the aims of the main brief, (Smadi, 1994).

Design must perceive emotional experience and it must be visually comprehensible. A work of art is only complete when all the elements combined to create it. A good design shows an orderly arrangement of the materials used, and in addition, creates beauty in the finished product.

2.1.3 The Definition of Art

A: Art is the expression of human's talent and intelligence, (Oxford Advanced Dictionary, 1995).

B: Art is an essential beautifying factor of human living environments, (WWW. 1999c).

C: Design is the consistency and the arrangement of art materials and units, (Armstrong, 1994).