The philosophy in the creation of traditional Malay carving motifs in Peninsula Malaysia

Haziyah Hussin¹, Zawiyah Baba¹, Aminuddin Hassan², Aishah@Eshah Haji Mohamed³

¹Institute of the Malay World and Civilisation, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, ²Department of Foundation of Education, Universiti Putra Malaysia, ³Pusat Pengajian Sosial, Pembangunan dan Persekitaran, Fakulti Sains Sosial dan Kemanusiaan, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia

Correspondence: Haziyah Hussin (email: haziyah56@yahoo.com)

Abstract

This paper explains how the concept of the creation of Malay woodcarving motifs is associated with the ancient Malay kingdom of Langkasuka which came under the influence of Hinduism. However, since the coming of Islam, the philosophy of creating Malay carving motifs had undergone discernable changes. The motifs created have been found to be adapted to avoid contravening Islamic principles and values. Generally, the creation of traditional Malay carving motifs has its own guiding principles which differentiate it from carving traditions elsewhere. Basically, traditional Malay carving motifs can be categorised into decorative motifs or patterns which have been inspired by early or ancient Malay motifs such as the design pattern with floral motifs, stalks of leaves and tendrils (awang larat which literally means meandering clouds) which are found in the environment of Malay society as well as motifs inspired by the imagination of early carvers. This paper concludes with an explanation on the philosophy of selecting traditional Malay wood carving motifs based on Malay carving techniques.

Keywords: Hindu influence, Islamic influence, Kingdom of Langkasuka, Malay wood carving motifs, nature motifs, philosophy of motif creation