Sustaining the Cultural Design Features of Kelantan Heritage Pottery through Contemporary-Cultural Approach To Achieve Cultural Continuity

by

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the Almighty God for His immeasurable love and grace, and for His words in Habakkuk 2:3 that kept me all through the journey of completing this work. I also dedicate this work to my beloved parents, Olufemi and Stella Olalere, whose good examples have taught me to strive for excellence and work hard for the things that I aspire to achieve.
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

2D  Two-dimensional
3D  Three-dimensional
ABS  Acrylonitrile Butadiene Styrene
CAD  Computer Aided Design
FDM  Fused Deposition Modelling
POP  Plaster of Paris
RP  Rapid Prototyping
SMEs  Small and Medium Enterprises
GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Contemporary products are products designed according to contemporary conditions and functions.

Cultural continuity means to maintain core elements of a culture (pottery craft) while adapting to changes over time.

Cultural design involves extracting cultural features from cultural heritage pottery and then transferring these features to contemporary design.

Contemporary cultural products are products that bear traditional features but are designed according to contemporary conditions and functions.

Cultural features are the characteristics (motifs) that can be embedded into a product both for the enhancement of its identity in the global market and for the enhancement of the individual consumer experience.

Documentation means recording findings from the heritage pottery analysed.

Hybrid Production technique involves the application of both modern technology and artisanal skills in production process.

Reproductive Production means producing historical samples of heritage pottery in an authentic way, with the formal features preserved to a great extent.

Rapid Prototyping Technology (3D Printer) is a machinery that constructs physical model automatically with the information derived from a three-dimensional CAD model.
Kelestarian Ciri-Ciri Reka Bentuk Budaya Warisan Tembikar Kelantan Melalui Pendekatan Kontemporari-Budaya Untuk Mencapai Kesinambungan Budaya

ABSTRAK


Katakunci: Rekabentuk kontemporari-budaya, kesinambungan budaya, ciri-ciri reka bentuk budaya, teknik hibrid, tembikar warisan Kelantan dan prototaip pantas
Sustaining the Cultural Design Features of Kelantan Heritage Pottery through
Contemporary-Cultural Approach To Achieve Cultural Continuity

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to determine how the cultural design features of Kelantan heritage pottery can be sustained to achieve cultural continuity. Based on the Cultural Design Implementation Model employed in the study, an experiment was conducted to identify and analyze cultural design features on Kelantan heritage pottery, using the Phi-proportion and the two basic structural units (square and circle) associated with Malay motifs. The cultural design features were integrated into contemporary designs as surface decoration and the designs were evaluated using Semantic Differential Survey. In order to improve the conventional production process, rapid prototyping technology was introduced into the development process. Overall, the findings identify seventeen (17) heritage motifs as the cultural design features and they conform to the two basic structural units (square and circle) used in plotting Malay motifs. Eleven (11) out of the seventeen (17) motifs conform to nature’s order (Phi-proportion), which reflects the harmony between man and nature. In addition, the study also proves that the heritage motifs can enhance both the visceral and reflective level of contemporary product design while rapid prototyping technology can improve the production process, especially when integrated with artisanal skills as hybrid technique. Therefore, from the findings, the study concludes that cultural continuity can be achieved through contemporary cultural designs and hybrid technique (rapid prototyping and artisanal skill).

Keywords: Contemporary-cultural design, cultural continuity, cultural design feature, hybrid techniques, Kelantan heritage pottery and rapid prototyping
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

Culture consists of a dynamic system made up of interacting parts, and one of the products of this interaction is heritage values, which results from the systemic interaction of culture with the environment (Arnold, 1985). However, the negative effects of products and lifestyles stereotyped due to globalisation have raised questions on the cultural authenticity of many societies. People tend to adjust their way of life so as to meet-up with the global trend and widely held life patterns. In this process, issues on tradition and culture originality were neglected due to the influence of external forces.

But then, awareness have been created lately among nations that cultural richness is a value to be cherished, and people have realised the importance of culture and cultural products (Boccardi & Duvelle, 2013). Thus, several national and international projects have been directed towards the preservation, revitalisation and maintenance of cultural heritage (Boccardi & Duvelle, 2013; Gulery & Basegit, 2011; UNESCO, 2012). The first successful move is the inclusion of cultural heritage into the sustainable development agenda by UNESCO (Boccardi & Duvelle, 2013). This has helped in revitalising historic districts; rehabilitation of sacred forest and mountains; collections of movable...
monuments within archaeological sites and museums; safeguarding of social practices and preservation of traditional crafts and skills.

Two basic approaches have been used to preserve traditional crafts and skills. First is the conservative approach, where the traditional crafts and skills (artefacts) are documented, treated and kept in a controlled environment (e.g. museum). However, in the case of pottery, mechanical degradation often occur rapidly as a result of material ageing and fragility (Amoeda, Lira, & Pinheiro, 2012). Thus, they are susceptible to mechanical shock that leads to breaks and chip. These make handling the major threat in the conservative approach of preserving pottery wares.

Reproductive production is the second approach used in preserving traditional craft and skills. This approach supports and encourages continual production of historical heritage crafts in an authentic way, with all features preserved to a great extent. It aimed to preserve both the craft and the skills simultaneously. However, since culture is a dynamic structure, people yearn for new things that integrate tradition (as required by its historical nature) and contemporaneity (as required by its liveliness) (Tunalı, 2010).

Therefore, reproductive production of heritage pottery is needed to retain traditional forms and have an understanding of the past, but it is not sufficient for maintaining cultural continuity. Hence, revitalisation of historical pottery can only achieve cultural continuity by identifying and keeping the good qualities from tradition (cultural features), then, developing and improving others to suit contemporary needs.
According to Rice (2006), pottery is formed and informed; that is, it undergoes a process enriched with information. Thus, the cultural heritage of pottery lies not only in the products but also in the process use in producing the wares. Therefore, to holistically achieve cultural continuity with contemporary values, both the product and the process must be addressed. The product should retain some cultural identity and also meet contemporary needs while modern technology should be adopted to enhance the production process.

The Post-Modernists\(^1\) shows the same taste for hybrids. In an age that has discarded historical values, the postmodern concept attempts to integrate these values into contemporary lives (Jameson, 1992). Their hybrid concept combines modern techniques with traditional elements to create contemporary values that communicate effectively with its ultimate users, and make effective links with the society and history (Jencks, 2007).

1.2 Overview of Kelantan Heritage Pottery

The pottery of Mambong is the only existing heritage pottery in Kelantan and among the oldest potteries in Malaysia (Tajul, 2007). According to Tajul et al. (2011), the craft skill has been inherited from Mainunah Binti Puteh (Tok Bara), who started the pottery production in 1868 (19\(^{th}\) Century) and later transferred the craftsmanship skills to her daughter, Animah (also known as Mek Yah).

\(^1\)The late 20\(^{th}\) Century movement in the arts, architecture, and criticism that was a departure from modernism
The heritage pottery is produced in Mambong village, which is located along Ulu Sungai in Kuala Krai district of Kelantan (Fig 1.1). The village can only be connected by boat or ferry from Bradley jetty at Sungai Galas, Kuala Krai. The jetty was named after the then Kuala Krai district officer Gerald Bradley and the journey from the jetty to mambong village take nearly 45 minutes along the Kelantan river.

Kota Bharu to Kuala Krai (Bradley Jetty): 1hr30mins (by Road)
Kuala Krai (Bradley Jetty) to Mambong Village: 45mins (by Ferry)

Figure 1.1: Map showing the location of Kampong Mambong
According to Mohd Nawi (personal communication, November 23, 2013), Mambong pottery was first initiated to meet the personal utility functions within the local community. The wares produced include Belanga (often used for cooking curry and rice), Buyung (used as water container) and Kukusan Tanah (Steamer pot) (Fig. 1.2).

Figure 1.2: Mambong pottery wares (The Photo was taken by the researcher at Mambong pottery)

Mohd. Nawi was born and grew up in Mambong village.

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2 Mohd. Nawi was born and grew up in Mambong village
Therefore, due to this invention as utility items, the pottery craft has played an important role in daily life. Besides this functional aspect, the pottery wares are also embodied with symbolic expressions (motifs) that have rich aesthetic values (Tajul et al., 2011).

However, the pottery craft has been un-progressive over the years. Due to the lineage and the mode of acquiring the artisanal skill, the potters had held on to the inherited traditional method of pottery production (coiling and pinching method) for over 140 years without any improvement.

This hand modelling technique (coiling and pinching) manipulates a lump of clay to form vessel shape by squeezing or rolling the clay into long ropes or fillets. The ropes, rolls or fillets of clay are then built up to establish the vessel circumference (Blandino, 1984) while successive clay applied increases the height gradually (Fig. 1.3).

With this technique, pottery wares are often made in several stages, which requires drying after each stage, so as to prevents sagging or cracking when more clay is added. This makes the rate of production relatively slow; for example, the potters in Mambong usually spend averagely three (3) days in order to properly produce a pot (Ramli bin Mat, personal communication, March 1, 2014). Besides, with this technique (hand modelling), the shape and size consistency is not guaranteed.

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3 Mr. Ramli bin Mat is the head of the potters in Mambong village.
A study by Smith (1967), as quoted by Arnold (1985), also shows that potters often spend averagely one and half hour a day for a week to properly shape a vessel using hand-modelling technique (coiling and pinching). An interview conducted by the researcher with the potters revealed that they have not attempted new production techniques over the years (Ramli bin Mat, personal communication, March 1, 2014). This may be as a result of three barriers. First, the habit pattern of new techniques may be incompatible with
their habit pattern; just as stated by Spier (1967) that motor habit patterns are often rigid and difficult to change.

Second, the organisational patterns of pottery making may be inconsistent with those necessary for the techniques (Arnold, 1985). That is, the potters in Mambong take the craft as a hobby and thus see no need for new techniques or technology. Third is their economic marginality (Arnold, 1985; Whitaker & Whitaker, 1978); that is, they have limited capital and resources and therefore rejected any innovation that requires capital investment.

Lately, cultural heritages have been a subject of revitalisation in Malaysia, with more focus on those at the brink of extinction (Tajul et al., 2011; Dhamari et al., 2012a, 2012b). Thus, the Malaysia Handicraft Development Corporation (Kraftangan) has made several attempts to improve Kelantan heritage pottery by offering financial aid and incentives to support reproductive production. They generate prototypes and moulds of the heritage wares using plaster of Paris (Fig 1.4), so as to aid in mass production.

However, the attempts have yielded no reasonable outcome (Ramly Bin Isa, personal communication, March 1, 2014). This is because, the previously functional heritage wares (Mambong) no longer serve the functional purpose but just a mere display in the house (Siti Mariam, 2014). Thus, in the midst of tradition and culture that involves a yearning for improvement, the attempt to sustain the heritage wares through reproductive production could not achieve the desired cultural continuity.