BUAH BUTON AS A NON-STRUCTURAL EVIDENCE OF ADAT PERPATIH HOUSES IN LUAK TANAH MENGANDUNG, NEGERI SEMBILAN

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Abstract

Adat Perpatih is a custom brought by Minangkabau community from West Sumatra, Indonesia to Negeri Sembilan. This community has applied their cultural way of life to local communities in Luak Tanah Mengandung. Among the influences they carry are the 3-dimensional carvings; *buah buton* which is a non-structural element found in Negeri Sembilan traditional houses. This research was conducted to prove that the existence of buah buton design was related to the traditional house of Adat Perpatih community in Luak Tanah Mengandung, Negeri Sembilan. The qualitative method was used to study the interrelation between Adat Perpatih and buah buton design by making formal analysis i.e. shape and space as research samples.

Keywords: Buah buton, Adat Perpatih, Luak Tanah Mengandung

Abstrak

Adat Perpatih adalah adat yang dibawa oleh masyarakat Minangkabau dari Sumatera Barat, Indonesia ke Negeri Sembilan. Masyarakat ini telah menggunakan cara hidup mereka kepada masyarakat tempatan di Luak Tanah Mengandung. Antara pengaruh yang mereka bawa ialah permaidani 3 dimensi; buah buton yang merupakan elemen bukan struktur yang terdapat di rumah tradisional Negeri Sembilan. Kajian ini dijalankan bagi membuktikan bahawa kewujudan reka bentuk buah buton adalah berkaitan dengan rumah tradisi masyarakat Adat Perpatih di Luak Tanah Mengandung, Negeri Sembilan. Kaedah kualitatif digunakan untuk mengkaji perselisihan antara Adat Perpatih dan reka bentuk buah buton dengan membuat analisis rasmi iaitu bentuk dan ruang sebagai sampel penyelidikan.

Kata kunci: Buah buton, Adat Perpatih, Luak Tanah Mengandung

INTRODUCTION

Creation of an object or a thing is generally owned its intrinsic value to be observed depend on the origin, cultural significance, aesthetic or functional characteristics. These elements are not only allowed an individual to comprehend the logic underneath specific visual qualities, but they may also assist to recognize when, where and how a certain culture communicate. Each of these questions depends on the atmosphere of the environment based on its relevance to translating a presentation. The means of interaction provide an overall outline for a society to establish its own context of thoughts, emotions and behavior within the natural setting. The existence of *buah buton* in the traditional houses of the Minangkabau ethnic group in Negeri Sembilan is one of the evidences that characterize the way how the Minangs' community adapt to the surroundings and their living spaces.

Raja Nafida Raja Shahminan (2007) in her writing, "*Rumah Tradisional Luak Tanah Mengandung: Kajian Inventori Rumah Bumbung Panjang*", describes that most of the traditional houses in the area are

decorated with ornate carvings that reflects the community. The aesthetic observation of the shape of space of buah buton became one of her observations besides other components of the houses. The buah buton is carved and hung differently by observing the aesthetic and cultural values of Adat Perpatih of the Minangkabau. The observation of these values is influenced by the way of living and Adat Perpatih environment in Negeri Sembilan.

The existence of buah buton as a non-structural element is more to the understanding of philosophy that represents its particular purpose in the traditional house of Negeri Sembilan. The influence of this custom brings buah buton as a non-structural element that forms a cultural context inside Adat Perpatih community. This context is an effect from the influence of a society's formation of ideology from various angles of buah buton formation. The formation of buah buton can be seen from the aspects and connections of "buah butons" from outside of Luak Tanah Mengandung. Its formation is related with a column which is connected to the element which is said to be "buah buton".

LITERATURE REVIEW

a) Tiang Gantung as a Symbol to Homeowner

In this traditional house, there is one element that is said to be a symbol of the status of a person in the Adat Perpatih. Norhalim Ibrahim (1985) had pointed out that the tiang gantung refers to the symbol of power and the strength of the house and its owner. This is supported by Muhammad Pauzi Abd. Latif (2017) in his article entitled "*Keunikkan Tiang Gantung Tak Jejak Bumi*", tiang gantung is usually found in houses that belong to the royals or aristocrats. Tiang gantung also becomes a symbol of power for those who have positions in the Adat Perpatih. Preliminary observations in this research had come out with evidence that the tiang gantung is not like the columns which are usually found in Malay houses. Tiang gantung (Plate 1.1) is a 70-centimetre column built on the roof and does not directly touch the floor of the house and it is different from a long column that serves as a supporter to the structure and floor of house (Siti Haliza Yusop, 2017).



Plate 1.1 Tiang gantung in Datuk Diwangsa's house, Malay Heritage Museum, University Putra Malaysia Source: Photography by Fakhrur Razi Maamor, 2018

b) Influence of the Outside World

The elements of tiang gantung found in traditional houses in Luak Tanah Mengandung are among the structures in this house. In addition, the tiang gantung is said to be a symbol that shows the influence of the occupant who has a position in Adat Perpatih. Besides that, tiang gantung also has a similar meaning with external artistic that refers to an occupant who has a position in the administration in their area. At the same time, the design on tiang gantung almost looks like a 3-dimensional carving on the external of Luak Tanah Mengandung in general. In Java, this tiang gantung is called saka bentung and there is an ornament at the end of this (Yaakub Idrus, 1996). It is likely that the end of the carving on the saka bentung is associated with the 3-dimensional carving that appeared in Luak Tanah Mengandung. This 3-dimensional carve design also has a similarity based on its name; "buah buton" that decorates Malay building. Therefore, this subtopic will elaborate on the influence of the 3-dimensional carving from Java that has similar design with tiang gantung in Luak Tanah Mengandung.

b) i) Influence from Java

Tiang gantung is synonymous with a traditional Malay house of Negeri Sembilan. It was said that the influence was brought about from Java and spread among the locals in the Luak Tanah Mengandung. In Java, tiang gantung is called a saka bentung (Plate 1.2). Agus Dody (n.d.) described that, *saka bentung* on traditional buildings have two important meanings, namely the structural which serves as a supporter to the roof and as a symbol of personification of human head. Meanwhile, it can also be classified as a typology of buildings and also the social strata of the Javanese society.



Plate 1.2 The circle shows the saka bentung with decoration at the bottom Source: *Tugas Aplikom* by Anggaawan, 2013

Saka bentung can be classified as a structure which has a connection with Javanese architecture. However, like tiang gantung, saka bentung also has an ornamentation pointed down at the end of the shape. As for example; there are two kinds of decorations of saka bentung as shown in Plate 1.3, where the first one is described as *nanas an* and another one is *kebenan*. The inspiration of this decoration came from a pineapple which usually decorates a certain area of the house that belonged to nobleman or king/sultan. In addition, the color is matched with the colour of the building, unless

the building is colored in dark green or dark red; which then requires the nanasan to be in golden and red colour (Tri Wahyudi, 2009).

The second type found at the end of saka bentung is *kebenan*. This ornament is painted in natural wood color that decorates any nobleman's house. However, houses that belonged to ordinary people are left colorless. Kebenan is usually located at the corner of the veranda outside the house of Joglo (the shape of Joglo house has a different lateral load retaining structure system with other Javanese traditional houses, Yulianto P. Prihatmaji, 2017) and is symbolized in a hanging position (Tri Wahyudi, 2009).



Plate 1.3 The sketches of *nanasan* (left) and *kebenan* (right) Source: *Perpaduan Arsitektur Belanda dan Arsitektur Tradisional Jawa Tengah pada Bangunan Peninggalan Belanda JI* by Tri Wahyudi, 2009

The three-dimensional carving found at the traditional Minangkabau houses in Luak Tanah Mengadung was believed to be brought along by the Javanese immigrants. In the Minangkabau society, *merantau* or migration culture is highly encouraged by the family (Norhalim Ibrahim, 1993). Those who emigrate will also bring along their culture and understanding as well as to seek the livelihood of the people. The emigration process had spread to the areas such as the western and eastern parts of Minangkabau, Indonesia. However, the situation had formed a clash of culture and custom among other societies, for example, in Riau. This area was the center of the journey path of the migrated community before they headed to different destination.

The influence on this buah buton is also likely due to the migration of craftsmen from Java to Malaya. According to Abdul Halim Nasir (1983), the migration of craftsmen from Java and Sumatra was believed to affect the architectural design especially on the mosques found in Peninsular Malaysia around the 20th century. The carving, as shown in Plate 1.4, can be found at the tiang gantung of the roof of Kampung Parit Istana Old Mosque in Terachi Negeri Sembilan. The four tiang gantung resemble Javanese architectural style in which four of saka bentung hung on the roof with nanasan ornament at the bottom.



Plate 1.4 *Buah buton* along with tiang gantung at Kampung Parit Istana Old Mosque in Terachi Source: Photography by Fakhrur Razi Maamor, 2018

b) ii) The Existence of "Buah Buton"'s Names

The production of a product by an earlier community is a legacy that can be referred by the current generation to recall on their civilisation history and culture in the past. This can also become the identity of the previous community that acts as the mirror to the current generation. Identity can appear in various versions, in which one of it is the carvings on design. According to Mastor Surat, Usman, Tahir, Abdul Halim Ismail and Nik Ibrahim (2009), the approach that is always being used for the translation and construction of a design is the idea of the introduction and identity.

Buah buton name is referred to a design that is upright or directed to the sky, or specifically named as "*tunjuk langit*" that is positioned above the roof as mentioned by past researchers. Based on a research by Mohammad Nazri Ahmad (2016) in the "*Falsafah Seni Ukiran Melayu*", it is mentioned that buah buton is tapered on the mosque's roof top and is then carved into the shape of moon and star. Meanwhile, there are buah buton that are placed on the roof of houses which connect two *pemelah* long boards (Plate 1.5). It has various names such as *matahari tegap*, *awan beralih* and *penunjuk langit*. There is a form of buah buton that is given a touch of carving to reveal the beauty of buah buton shape.



Plate 1.5 Buah buton with tappered shape that connected two *pemelah* long boards Source: *Falsafah Seni Ukir Melayu* by Azizul Azli Ahmad, 2015

Besides that, Siti Dalila Mohd Sojak and Nangkula Utaberta (2013) in their research entitled "Typical Study of Traditional Mosque Ornamentation In Malaysia-Comparison Between Traditional and Modern Mosque" explained that other names for buah buton are tunjuk langit, *buah guntung, buah bubun, tajuk rumah, selembayung, sulo bayung, tanduk buang, silang gunting, mahkota atap, mustika, mustoko, keting belalang, puncak coppo', julang ngapak and gonjong*. Buah buton designs have various sizing from 60 to 100 centimeters and are placed at the rooftop as mentioned by Abdul Halim Nasir (1986) in "*Ukiran Seni Kayu Melayu Tradisi*". According to Siti Dalila Mohd Sojak and Utaberta (2013), there are four types of buah buton based on the buah buton shape; rounded, floral, rod and cross type.

Rounded type is widely used in Kelantan and Terengganu on five roof or perabung lima (hip), or on a pyramid-shaped roof called as *tumpang*. This buah buton type has a round design and has different layer size, in which the larger size is situated below the smaller size. According to Mohd Sabrizaa Abd Rashid and Mohammad Najib Dawa (2005) in their research, "The Symbolism of Tunjuk Langit (Finials) in the Malay Vernacular Architecture", there are two types of rounded shape; one with a decorative based and one without a decorative based. Decorative based is said to be inspired by Buddhist and Hindu beliefs that have lotus decoration on its based part. Meanwhile, the ones without decorative based are normally found at rooftop, as the name suggested which is tunjuk langit. This type is situated above or at the middle of the roof and this type is also famous in Kelantan and Terengganu but with different name. In Kelantan the term used is buah buton, while in Terengganu, it is called as buah gutung. The type can also be found on old mosques in both states. For example, the Kampung Laut Mosque that was built on 18th century located in Nilam Puri at Kelantan. This buah buton type is ranked on rooftop that formed layers in five roof that are arranged into three layers. Meanwhile, on Kampung Tuan Mosque that was built on 1832 in Chukai, Terengganu, the buah buton or the other name of this design are mustaka or puncak gangsa, is situated at the height of 2 meters located at the fourth layer of roof tumpang. The buah

buton is placed on top of both mosques as the key to the framework which is the projection from tiang gantung or tunjuk langit that supports the the highest level of *kasau jantan bumbung meru* that distributes the load from the roof to the beam, and then straight to the close pillar, then to the pillar. (Azizul Azli Ahmad, 2015).



Plate 1.6 Kampung Laut Mosque at Nilam Puri, Kelantan Source: Falsafah Seni Ukir Melayu by Azizul Azli, 2015



Plate 1.7 Rounded buah buton shape of Kampung Laut Mosque (left) and rounded buah buton shape of Kampung Tuan Mosque (right)

Source: Typological Study of Traditional Mosque Ornamentation in Malaysia: Comparison between Traditional and Modern Mosque by Siti Nadila Mohd Sojak, 2013

This floral type can be seen on old mosques around Melaka and Negeri Sembilan in Malaysia. Another name for this type is *mahkota atap*. In Indonesia it is called as mustika or mustoka. The type is said to have originated from mainland China. An example is the design of local lotus flowers (Nelumbo Nucifera) that are decorated on the top of the pagoda. This statement was supported by Abdullah bin Mohamed (1978) that the dome of the mosque in Malacca was originated from a flower bud which was later adapted into various permutations. The floral type is still visible in Kampung Hulu Mosque built in 1728 located at Bandar Hilir Melaka. This type is placed on top of the mosque accompanied by a base that is covering the roof with floral elements. Likewise with Dato' Undang Kamat Mosque built on 1934, this type of mahkota or mustaka is placed on the roof of the pyramid-shaped mosque surrounded by a covering roof that is decorated with floral carvings. Similar to the rounded shape type, this floral type also has a function that aims to be connector for Masai jantan and pillar.



Plate 1.8 Dato' Undang Kamat Mosque at Negeri Sembilan Source: Arkib Pusat Kajian Alam Bina Dunia Melayu, Fakulti Alam Bina, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia



Plate 1.9 Three variations of the floral buah buton (from left: Kampung Hulu Mosque, Kampung Keling Mosque and Dato Undang Kamat Mosque) Source: Typological Study of Traditional Mosque Ornamentation in Malaysia: Comparison between Traditional and Modern Mosque by Siti Nadila Mohd Sojak, 2013

Besides that, the rod type uses a stick that is in a vertical position at the end of the gable. This type is widely used in houses and palaces in Peninsular Malaysia especially in Malay house architecture in Perak (*limas* roof) or Perak cut *limas* roof. For example, a traditional Perak house located in Bukit Chandan built in 1911. The architectural form of this house is the Perak *limas* roof. The position of this kind of buah buton is located on two places; one at the top of the roof with Perak cut roof style. Meanwhile, there are two *tebar layar* that adorn the front view of the house. At the top of tebar layar, there are buah buton of this kind is carved into an oval-shaped carving as a decoration. The 3-Dimensional carvings are also visible at the foot of tebar layar that have *lebah bergantung* on both left and right sides. Meanwhile, the Yellow Palace was built on 1926 at Kuala Kangsar. The palace applied Perak cut roof style which is designed to be decorated with tunjuk langit of the rod type that adorns each roof of the castle. There are two categories of the rod type namely the end sharp and the end sphere.



Plate 1.10 Yellow Palace at Kuala Kangsar, Perak Source: Reinventing Sungai Perak: An issue on Socio-Cultural Marginalisation by Mohd Sabrizaa, Norhasandi & Sufian, 2009

Next is the cross type. This type is like a scissor that has two crossed blades. This type is often found in a long-roof house of Malay houses. This cross type also used a *papan layang* (plain board) for both crossings, with simple carving. In Negeri Sembilan, this cross type can be seen on the top of the roof of the Seri Menanti Old Palace built around the 1900s. According to Mohd Sabrizaa Abd Rashid and Mohammad Najib Dawa (2005), this cross shape is inspired by the shape of buffalo horn, bird or dragon.



Plate 1.11 Cross type on Seri Menanti Old Palace roof top at Seri Menanti, Negeri Sembilan Source: The Old Palace of Seri Menanti: One of the Malay Architectural Gems That Still Survives

Four of the types of buah buton that are being centralized by Siti Dalila Mohd Sojak and Nangkula Utaberta (2013) are the buah buton that are created upright, or the other name, tunjuk langit. Behind the creation of tunjuk langit, there is a creation of buah buton on top of a roof that was built together with a pillar that hung inwards such as the mosque. This can be seen on the design of buah buton on Masjid Kampung Laut in Kelantan and Masjid Kampung Parit Istana at Kampung Parit Istana, Negeri Sembilan, in which the buah buton is constructed with a wood facing downwards towards the space in the mosque. Under the downwards wood, there is a carving that was named as *lebah bergantung*. The name lebah bergantung was proposed by Abdul Halim Nasir (1983) in his book "*Rumah Kutai di Perak*" according to the carving that is shaped into the 3-dimension that can be found in the Kutai house in Perak. The lebah bergantung position comes in pairs that hung on feet of tebar layar that is connected to *rumah ibu's* long beam. According to Abdul Halim Nasir (1983), the designated size of lebah bergantung is as big as a pumpkin and is hanging at the feet of the tebar layar, which makes it looks like a honeycomb hanging from a high place.

In Perak, lebah bergantung is usually found inside the Kutai houses. This element is hung in pairs at the feet of tebar layar. However, in the mosque, lebah bergantung is hung in the middle of serambi. This is different than the lebah bergantung found in Masjid Kampung Parit Istana in Negeri Sembilan. According to Azizul Azli Ahmad (2015), the space in Masjid Kampung Parit Istana has five lebah bergantung with different carvings. The design of this lebah bergantung is carved with *tebuk timbul* (punctured arise). The lebah bergantung position is hung in a parallel position; in which four are hung at the end of every side, meanwhile another one is hung in the middle of the praying space which is also connected to the pillar that is built with buah buton or tunjuk langit on the top of the mosque.



Plate 1.12 *Lebah bergantung* that hung inside the Kampung Parit Istana Old Mosque at Kuala Pilah, Negeri Sembilan

Source: Ruang Dalaman Masjid Melayu Tradisional Semenanjung Malaysia by Azizul Azli, 2015

The pillar that connects the tunjuk langit or buah buton with the carvings that are found under lebah bergantung is named as tiang gantung. According to Yaakub Idrus (1996), he defined tiang gantung as a pillar that is not connected to house floor or land. This is because the pillar is hung without reaching the surface of the earth. This pillar is familiar among the traditional houses in Negeri Sembilan. According to Zambri Hussain (1997), he named the pillar as *tiang sotoh*. The pillar functions as the support to *kasau jantan* that is hung on *alang* which is the structure of the traditional house. The end of the pillar usually has a carving similar to the one found on Masjid Kampung Parit Seberang which is located at Luak Terachi, one of the luaks in Luak Tanah Mengandung.

METHODOLOGY

This research focuses on buah buton design that is found in Luak Tanah Mengandung which is said to be a non-structural element. Therefore, this research makes the literature review as a support for research related to the buah buton in Luak Tanah Mengandung. This literature review involves the context of international influences and elements that are said to be "buah buton" outside of Luak Tanah Mengandung to see its relation to non-structural elements. Before that, this research also makes *tiang gantung* as an element that always goes along with buah buton.

Besides that, houses that have buah buton in Luak Tanah Mengandung was selected based on two methods, first through the research of Raja Nafida Raja Shahminan (2007) in "*Rumah Tradisional Luak Tanah Mengandung: Kajian Inventori Rumah Bumbung Panjang*" which highlighted buah buton name. Meanwhile, the second method is through the article "*Keunikkan Tiang Gantung Tak Jejak Bumi*" by Siti Haliza Yusop (2017). The choice of this article is due to the writing of Yaakub Idrus (1996) which states that there is rounded carving under tiang gantung. Here are three houses (Table 1.1) around Luak Tanah Mengandung that was selected through the two mentioned methods;

Num.	House's Name	Place
1.	Datuk Muar Bongkok's House	Kampung Parit Seberang, Kuala Pilah (Luak Ulu Muar)
2.	Sali's House	Kampung Talang Tengah, Kuala Pilah (Luak Ulu Muar)
3.	Datuk Diwangsa's House	Muzium Warisan Melayu, Universiti Putra Malaysia (Lokasi asal - Lokasi asal Kampung Merual (Luak Gunung Pasir)

Table 1.1 List of three houses with buah buton based on two methods of house selection around Luak

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION ON BUAH BUTON AT LUAK TANAH MENGANDUNG, NEGERI SEMBILAN

Based on random observations, there are a few designs of buah buton that are carved with various sizes and shapes. The carving is not fixed on one design only, but is also carved in different designs. As an example buah buton design at Datuk Diwangsa's house was carved in a geometrical form that comes with tiang gantung. The tiang gantung serves as a support to the roof structure of the house and there are six tiang gantung. Each of this tiang gantung is like a geometric carving in which the buah buton is carved based on the surface number on tiang gantung; *pecah empat* (four broken). Each of this buah buton has different designs that represent a subject matter.

Meanwhile, buah buton with two carvings were present on Datuk Muar Bongkok's house with tiang gantung. In contrast with Datuk Diwangsa's house, tiang gantung at Datuk Muar Bongkok's house functions

as a support or link between the structures of long beam and short beam. Two tiang gantung in this house are carved into large and long-form shapes that are different with Datuk Diwangsa's house. Tiang gantung size with *pecah lapan* (eight broke) has influenced buah buton design which is also carved on tiang gantung. Two buah butons on tiang gantung with fruit-like shapes had different designs. Both designs of these buah butons are matched with different carving.

Besides that, buah buton design on Sali's house comes with a single design only. This is because the design comes with a tiang gantung that serves as a support to the long beam that goes through or penetrates into the tiang gantung. The small size of tiang gantung also affects the shape of buah buton that is also carved into smaller size besides carved based on pecah empat (four broke) that have on tiang gantung.



Plate 1.13 One of six tiang gantung functions as a support to roof structure that is hung in attic space (left) and One of six buah buton that was carved based on pecah empat (four broke) of tiang gantung (right) in Datuk Diwangsa's house

Source: Photography by Fakhrur Razi Maamor, 2018



Plate 1.14 Tiang gantung at Datuk Muar Bongkok's house functions as a supporter or link between the structures of long beam and short beam (left) and tiang gantung size with *pecah lapan* (eight broke) has influenced buah buton design which is also carved on tiang gantung width (right) on Datuk Muar

Bongkok's house

Source: Photography by Fakhrur Razi Maamor, 2018



Plate 1.15 A tiang gantung on Sali's houses that serves as a supporter to long beam that goes through or penetrates the tiang gantung (left) and buah buton that is carved based on *pecah empat* (four broke) tiang gantung with small size (right) on Sali's house

Source: Photography by Fakhrur Razi Maamor, 2018

CONCLUSION

This research shows that tiang gantung serves as a structural element that has its function on house's structure. This is based on the combination of elements with several houses structures such as long beams and short beams that act as supporters to the structure. The support requires the tiang gantung to be punched or chiselled on them to allow space for the beam structure to pass through.

Meanwhile, buah buton is deliberately carved on the bottom of tiang gantung and does not give any role to the other house structure. This can be seen in every house that was made as a subject of research showing that the design is not related with any other house structure, but only carved at the bottom of the tiang gantung. This gives its similarity to saka bentung in Javanese design that is carved on the bottom with 3-dimensional carvings. Each of the resulting carvings has its symbolism in reference to a person's status, similar with the tiang gantung in Luak Tanah Mengandung which refers to the status of their occupants. Therefore, the position of the tiang gantung as a structural element is applied to a particular room which gives meaning to the occupants' position in Adat Perpatih. At the same time, buah buton that acts as a non-structural element is as a decoration to the tiang gantung which also has its relation to the cultural context of Adat Perpatih community.

Buah buton decoration as it appears outside Luak Tanah Mengandung has its role in terms of philosophy and meaning behind the design. Similarly, the carved buah buton under tiang gantung that is hanging from the floor of house or the ground creates an understanding in philosophy and puts buah buton as a non-structural element. Therefore, buah butons that are found in Luak Tanah Mengandung does not give anything to any house structure. Instead as a design that has its relation to the cultural context of Adat Perpatih's community at Luak Tanah Mengandung.

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