



Research Article

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Heritage Value of the Malayness Socio-Cultural Symbols in Millennium Artist Series of Arts: A Research Analysis in Semiotics

Ahmad Hakim Abdullah

*Department of Heritage Studies,
Faculty of Creative Technology and Heritage Studies,
Universiti Malaysia Kelantan, Bachok Campus,
No 1 Locked Bag, 16300 Bachok, Kelantan, Malaysia*

Nasirin Abdillah

*Department of Heritage Studies,
Faculty of Creative Technology and Heritage Studies,
Universiti Malaysia Kelantan, Bachok Campus,
No 1 Locked Bag, 16300 Bachok, Kelantan, Malaysia*

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Abstract

*This study explains the analysis of the semiotics in the painting artworks of the Din Omar, who focuses on the forms of heritage values in his creations. This study is also important for the documentation of the Malay culture, which has customary and culturally-related elements, where the human value is given a touch of heritage elements, as portrayed in the production of the serial works *Tepak Sirih Series*, *Tepak Sirih: Menanti Tetamu siri 5*, and *Ukiran Indah di Puncak Indah* by Din Omar. The study looks into more details the description of the meaning of semiotic approach analysis by Ferdinand De Saussure, which is interview with the curator and analysis of three selected artworks. The researchers are also providing exposure to elements behind the cultural materials, such as the *Tepak Siri Series*, *Tepak Sirih: Menanti Tetamu Siri 5*, and *Ukiran Indah di Puncak Indah*. The findings of the study revealed that the *Tepak Sirih* series artwork possesses the value of non-verbal communication in community engagements and weddings. The legacy and Malay culture in the *Tepak Sirih: Menanti Tetamu siri 5* work carries the meaning of customary wealth in official ceremonies, but not suitable for arbitrary activities. In the *Ukiran Indah DiPuncak Indah* artwork, *Hulu Keris Patah Tiga* gives the meaning of a Malay traditional weapon used to complement *Raja sehari* or the Malay wedding dress. *Para pandai besi* produced a dagger with a Malay identity and spiritual elements which will not be extinct and is always kept as national treasures.*

Keywords: *Din Omar, heritage value, Malayness cultural symbols, paintings, the analysis of semiotics*

1. Introduction

The cultural heritage in Malaysia has a wide range of socio-cultural elements and values such as *keris*, batik, traditional house, and woodcarving as they contain symbolism of the Malay cultural heritage. This is because the value of heritage and culture has been an enduring guide among the Malay

community in the past. Heritage also includes the meaning of customs in the lives of the Malay community, including means of eating and respecting the people. The inheritance is also one of the cultural values that encompasses the preservation of a custom, that is the traditional community, in the purification of their lives.

In addition, heritage conservations like *keris*, *tepak sirih*, batik, traditional house, and songket are also important to ensure that the future generation can find out about the customs practiced by the Malay community that is upturn because of the value of the benefits inherent in the customs (Rashid,2007). Traditions in the Malay society is a way of life.

Cultural materials such as *keris* and *tepak sirih* has long been practiced since the early 1940s. Before that, only the word or the term, culture, brought an in-depth meaning of inheritance. But today, these *keris* heritage values have been emphasized more and has a heritage in artwork especially in painting artworks. These could be seen in the two research questions: “what are the values of the Malay cultural heritage described in the painting artworks of *Tepak Sirih Series* , *Siri Tepak Sirih:Menanti Tetamu Siri 5* and *Ukiran Indah di Puncak Indah* series in Din Omar’s solo exhibition?” and “What are the symbols of the Malay cultural heritage behind the painting artworks of, *Tepak Sirih Series*, *Siri Tepak Sirih :Menanti Tetamu Siri 5* and *Ukiran Indah di Puncak Indah* series in Din Omar’s solo exhibition?”

From this study’s research objectives and questions, they indicate the importance of preserving the Malay cultural symbols as expressed in the works of artists who depict authenticity like Din Omar’s. He has raised the Malay’s civilisation and heritage at the international level, which is supposed to be able to present to the various generations so that they can appreciate the rich cultural traditions and heritage again. For instance, the semiotics aspects of cultural materials such as *tepak sirih* and *keris* which have been inherited from the days of our ancestors.

2. Research Problem

The identity of post-modern life has been greatly evolving among the artwork of the painters to extract their works according to current developments and trends. The exposure of the artists to Western education as well as the modern style of living influences their work in abstract art, feminism, Dadaism, cubism, Pop Art, and Surrealism; and these have given knowledge to the artists to further explore in terms of the demands and current styles. As a result of this, not many artists want to express their artworks based on the values of heritage or oriental culture among the Malay community, so that they do not become outdated (Maizan & Aziz,2018).

Hence, the present researchers wanted to emphasise on two main objectives at identifying the semiotic values of the Malay socio-cultural heritage in the painting artworks of *Tepak Sirih Series*, *Siri Tepak Sirih: Menanti Tetamu Siri 5*, and *Ukiran Indah di Puncak Indah* series from Din Omar’s solo exhibition. Besides that, the researchers wanted to analyse the semiotic symbols of the Malay socio-cultural heritage in the painting artworks of *Tepak Sirih Series*, *Siri Tepak Sirih:Menanti Tetamu siri 5*, and *Ukiran Indah di Puncak Indah* series in Din Omar’s solo exhibition.

A review of the heritage values in this Din Omar visual art not only gives awareness to the millennium artist in maintaining the eastern heritage, but also the profound impact on the soul of the Malay artist and the work itself shows that Malaysia has a very valuable national treasure that explains the customs of the Malay civilization (Abdullah et.al., 2021).

Therefore, the lack of artwork that exhibit heritage values among the millenium artist will affect the recognition of the Malay customs of civilization and its traditions. The challenge was for the researchers to convey each of these works with knowledge, as well as their own exposure of how they explored the works that reflect and elevate the heritage in their production. It was also crucial to ensure that the value of the traditions in the past is made known so that it can be continuously preserved and not disappear as a symbol of the Malaysian heritage which is very significant.

3. Literature Review

3.1 The Heritage Identity of Cultural Materials such as *Tepak Sirih* and *Keris*

According to (Salleh,2014), the *Tepak Sirih* has a public-synonymous relationship with the Malay community, through its popularity in weddings and engagement ceremonies in the past until today. In general, *Tepak Sirih* carries a symbol known as the medium for the Malay community to convey their goals and their wishes. Not only does this act as a cultural substance, it is also sufficient to give a view that the Malay community is rich in customs as well as the taboos (*pantang larang*) in organizing events. It is obvious as stated by (Salleh & Harun,2015). The cultural identity of a society is built in a cluster rather than a portrayal given by outsiders. However, people always have their own portrayals or images of a society, such as the history of the Malay cultural civilization (Wan Yusoff, 2006).

The value of heritage in the Malay community is increasingly becoming more memorable especially among the younger generation. Through one of the cultural materials such as the *Tepak Sirih*, this elevates its specific value and aesthetics, which is to inculcate values such as mutual respect, courtesy, unity, cultured and living regulations (Rashid ,2007).

According to cultural theory by (Ismail,1986) The identity of cultural heritage is also dynamic and is able to change in adapting to the needs of the current community. This is as stated previously, identity is a symbol, icon, mark, introduction and symbolic statement. The cultural theory statement was also argued by the (Mahamood,2001) the cultural elements of heritage arts have also gained attention since 1970. However, this does not mean that traditional motives such as hand-drawn batik, block batik, shadow play, traditional houses, wood carvings have never gotten a place before. In fact, some artists like Fatimah Chik and Hashim Hassan always upsource it as those subjects as the most important element of their works.

This is true as the *Tepak Sirih's* role is highly related to the values of the Malay heritage in terms of the use of a courteous language/gesture (Ling & Abdullah,2018). In terms of the value of the same art, criticisms by (Syed Alhady,1962), stated that it began from the *Tepak Sirih* itself, in describing the value of a unique discretion through the design of the flora layout in the *Tepak Sirih*. This statement is also supported by the writing of (Syed Alhady,1986), who suggested that the beauty of Malay aesthetics itself has distinctive meanings through the observations and experience of the environment (Mohamad Kamal,2016). Not only in terms of the value of the Malay heritage the Islamic views are also emphasized in the elements of beauty and intrinsic meanings of the external perspective and in a visual meaning within the Malay heritage.

3.2 Semiotic Analysis in Research

Semiotic is a science of non-linguistic communication forms. It has been designed as a general science of a number of communication forms, including the natural language (Turkcan, 2013). Semiotic also represents a symbolism to something visual, which can be viewed from the human eyes. It is also a prose interpretation of the visual aspect to the logical aspect of information (Yusoff et.al.,2020). Not only that, semiotic is also symbolic to a field according to one's understanding of knowledge. It is related to the interpretation of visual analysis from the external view aspect of the humans' naked eyes of a human being in a social, religious, civilised, and customary life (Yunus et.al.,2019).

It is clear that the Malay community uses the function semiotic of the material culture *keris* and *Tepak sirih* to avoid the undesirable evil things befalling on them. Semiotic is also important to identify an object or subject matter against a visual statement (Mohammed,2020). This is clearly in line with that of Ferdinand de Saussure's description of state that combines a sign which is an object with an image. This is very much related to a signifier and its signified symbolism of meaning from interdisciplinary approaches in which the properties are from a combination of knowledge fields, such as anthropology, sociology, psychology, structuralism, linguistics, and art history.

4. Research Methodology

This study used the document analysis method at the solo exhibition of Din Omar, themed the Painting of My Heritage series, which was displayed at the National Art Gallery in 2016. The researchers had collected this painter's data during the year. An in-depth interview was conducted with one of the curators at the Art gallery who manages the solo exhibition. The researchers' interview with the curator involved asking several open-ended questions and recording answers during data collection. Audio-visual materials such as SLR camera for photographs were used to collect detailed heritage values of the Malay culture.

Carefully prepared questions were given to the curator in order to get in-depth information. The approach of documentation analysis is also used to document the selected work of the artist from the years after 1995 until the 2005. In addition, researchers also applied a method of finding the artist's works in catalogues as well as dedicated websites. The researchers were also able to gain views from the curator at the National Art Gallery as he has the experience of explaining the Malay philosophy in the works of Din Omar.

This method is used to clearly examine the creation of Din Omar's artworks in terms of the detailed explanation of his paintings. An understanding of each of the works produced was viable through data search methods on the websites. The researchers also used the document analysis by looking at the formatting of the formalistic and iconography, which is investigating in terms of symbols or meanings contained in the current artworks of Din Omar at the solo exhibition. His work was appointed as a collection at the National Art Gallery. The researchers collected samples of Din Omar's work from 1995 until 2008 to identify the identity of Malay heritage in each. The samples included Malay cultural symbols. The researchers then studied the various characteristics of these Malay symbols in Din Omar's paintings.

4.1 Significant of Saussure's Theoretical Approach

Table 1: The theoretical framework process of this analysis by Ferdinand de Saussure (1990)

No	Analysis tools by Ferdinand de Saussure	Description
1	Sign	The object or thing.
2	Signifier	Any motion gesture, image, sound, pattern, or event that conveys meaning and communicates.
3	Signified	The concept that a signifier refers to the meaning it conveys.

Table 1 above discusses the applied semiotic theories by Ferdinand de Saussure, which the researchers had chosen for this study. The semiotic theory is divided into two parts: namely, the marked (signified) and the markers (signifier). Semiotic as a form/object that can be observed as a meaning that is made through the concept, function or values contained in the text. This approach uses semiotic analysis because the *Tepak Sirih* and *Keris* chosen in the works of Din Omar reflect a heritage and cultural values among the Malay community, as a comprehensive value that cannot be separated. The researchers chose the Saussure theory because the cultural symbols are very important and significant such as *keris* and *tepak sirih*. They are related to the symbolic values of Malay philosophies and semiotic aspects. The written symbolism approach is to study the heritage values in the *tepak sirih* cultural materials and the *Keris* in Din Omar, and its side materials which include elements and behaviours during the events that were being carried out as an indication of delivering relevant meanings. Below are some of the explanation as described by Ferdinand De Saussure (1915/1966):

The semiotic approach by Saussure also elaborates language as a classification of symbols that expresses philosophies, and is consequently comparable to an organization of writing, the alphabets of deaf-mutes, symbolic rituals, well-mannered formulas, military gestures, etc (Basit, 2017). However, it is the furthestmost significant of all the systems. A discipline that lessons the natural life of signs within a humanity is believable, as it would be a part of societal mind-set and consequently of universal psychology, also personally shall call it semiotics from the Greek, semeion "sign or indication" (Salleh, 2014). Therefore, the *Tepak Sirih* and *Keris*, as the Malaysian national heritage's symbols and

treasures, not only convey the meanings in relation to matters such as heritage values but also to elevate the customs and the purpose of using these cultural materials among the Malays in the present society.

In addition, through three stages of analysis using Saussure's theory of understanding, it is related to the aspect of signifier such as the symbol of the use of green on betel leaves in Din Omar's paintings, red on the background of Din Omar's work. Whereas, Sign means an object or subject matter that was created by these artists with a variety of specific functions for the use of the Malay community in ancient times and up to now. For example, *Tepak sireh* and *hulu keris patah tiga* gives meaning to wealth customs practiced by the Malays of today are still not abandoned by the traditions of their ancestors. And signified is the stage that tells about the delivery of the message through the production of a work of art by Din Omar. This signified level is particularly important because it explains the function, language of communication, psychological communication, customs and values of social behaviour.

Furthermore, through the works of *Tepak sireh* and *hulu keris patah tiga* provide symbolism as a tradition in the community. But when the researchers deepen the study, it is also connected with the religious and cultural unity when a material such as both of these tools presented in the Malay community. This is because the Malay socio-cultural symbolism give a description of the community that emphasizes individuality and dignity in society. Not only through keeping traditions through the semiotics of Malay socio-cultural in painting Din Omar but the delivery form of communication can help the public to better understand the events that happened clearly and accurately. This matter is as explained and mentioned by Ferdinand de Saussure about the semiotic in art communication is as a tool of sociology of art, can be divided into several, namely the tool of conveying information as a visual communication that uses the elements and principles of design. Semiotics also gives the meaning of a visual communication based on the use of the sensory medium of the human eye.

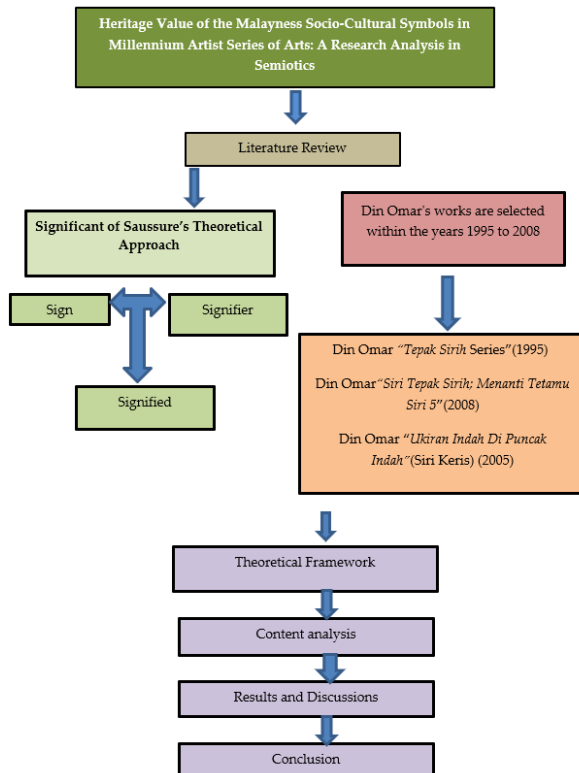


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

5. Results and Discussions



Figure 2: Din Omar, “Tepak Sirih Series” (1995), Mixed Media on Canvas.120 x 120 cm
Image Source: www.mutualart.com/Artist/Din-Omar/

The picture Figure 2 above depicts the *Tepak Sirih*, which is a signifier symbol of Malay heritage in weddings and engagement ceremonies in Malaysia. The *Tepak Sirih* has an aesthetic and also semiotic values as it is customary to present it in a Malay engagement and wedding ceremony. With the cultural substance of this heritage, the Malay community presents a richness in tradition which must be inherited by the younger generation. The heritage is also related to the symbols and the *Tepak Sirih* represents a philosophy of customary value in the special events.

Besides that, in terms of colour consumption applications, the artist exploded more aggressive colours such as red, golden yellow, also cooler colours like green on the *sirih* (betel leaves) and brighter colours on the background of this '*Tepak Sirih*' Series paintwork. Overall, the artist attempted to demonstrate harmony in line with the meaning of the artist's own idea that the *Tepak Sirih* has the value of harmony and rules that care about the high aspects of decency and courtesy in a wedding ceremony, from the family of the male candidate to the family of the female candidate.

If the receiver is willing to accept the suitor's intention, and if their daughter is agreeable to such an intended union, the female's representative would reply in the affirmative response by vocalising their agreement. Moreover, symbolics and evocative from the guy's sideways would bring a few stuffs as gifts to together the *Tepak sirih* and a ring for the engagement and marriage formality (Rahim & Zakaria,2020). Swapping donations item from the two sides (guy and woman) would be directed after the representatives of both parties were gratified with the discussion (Muhammad et.al.,2013). The argument during the engagement and marriage ceremony would be related to the bride's additional gifts, a suitable date and time for the marriage ceremony and likewise the dowry or (*mahar*) in Islam, that is a compulsory gift from the groom to the bride. Implicit engagements customs symbolize that the man and woman would become spouse and wife within the dated of time that was decided to in a family organized formality (Salleh & Kim,2020).

It is similarly indicated by the use of the *Tepak Sirih* that every gesture has a signified symbolic meaning behind it. For example, if the prospective groom's request is received, the female pattern on the *Tepak Sirih* will be handed over to the female representative. However, if the proposal is rejected, the female pattern will be reversed in order. But the scenarios that occur today are at times differ in the value of the customs that was cherished in the old days. For example, the Malay wedding ceremony

uses 'chocolates' as gifts and the present-day society has undergone changes by making the delivery using popular fast food from the west such as the brand, 'KFC'. It is directly opposed to the customs of the earlier desire that emphasizes ceremonial customs especially in the proposal for a marriage and preserving customs.

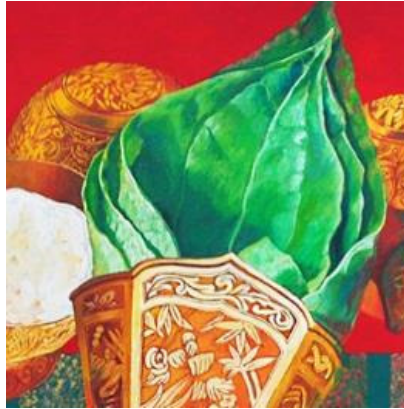


Figure 3: Din Omar, “Betel leaves Tepak Sirih series”(1995), Acrylic on canvas
Image Source: www.mutualart.com/Artist/Din-Omar/

Sirih or betel leaf of the subject (Figure 3) is semiology or signifier for a woman, and this is because the betel tree cannot live in an open area and need to have a support for life. It is essential for the signified betel leaves to have values as it is customary that those with veins that meet are not permissible to be of use. This is because they are beneficially used for medical purposes only. In addition, betel leaves also represent the dignity of women.

Another reason for using betel leaves is that Islam takes care of the good name not only of a woman but also the rest of mankind, so as to safeguard the female from a bad name and that she will continuously be protected. This understanding in semiology will be able to elevate betel leaves to a higher aesthetics value (Abdullah et. al., 2021).

Apart from that, the betel leaves are also more preferred as it is believed to have a wide range of benefits for health and other benefits, especially in the Malay community (Abdullah,2012). It is usually used in daily practice for the Malay community to maintain the health of the body. This is because the Malay community still believes in using the traditional method for treating internal health. In terms of semiotic theory, the habit of using flora such as the betel leaves plays an important role especially in traditional medicine such as treating personal health problems among women (Maizan & Aziz,2018). Other benefits of betel leaves include eliminating problems such as sore throat and severe cough. However, it is also believed to be able to shrink the reproductive tract for the woman in confinement, after the process of giving birth. There are various advantages for youth as well, as the betel leaves are able to treat the problem of acne and freckles, moisturize the skin, slow down eyebrow wool, and apply as beauty masks.

Not only that, the nutrients of betel leaves are used in the Malay community as a medication to eliminate joint disease and brittle bones. From a health standpoint, it is proven that the leaves have various uses for both internal and external health purposes. Furthermore, the betel leaves are also high in value as the semiotic symbol of the tradition of the Malay community. The custom must be preserved and its functions should be prioritized such as its roles in a marriage ceremony. This is evident by the symbolism and semiotic meanings of betel leaves in the Malay culture which is so deeply meaningful in its practical uses in life events such as the proposal, engagement and marriage ceremonies in the Malay community.



Figure 4: Din Omar “Siri Tepak Sirih; Menanti Tetamu Siri 5” (2008) Acrylic on canvas, 59 inch x 59 inch
Image Source: www.dinbinomar.blogspot.com/2016/01/

Din Omar's painting artworks contains a sense of deep meaning in terms of signifiers of cultural materials such as the *tepak sirih* that has been emphasised in the series named “*Siri Tepak Sirih. Menanti Tetamu Siri 5*” (2008) (Figure 4). The use of *Tepak Sirih* was widely practised by the people in Malaya. However, in the present situation, the maintenance of the *Tepak Sirih* becomes costly as it is difficult to preserve its cleanliness and shine.

For the Malay community, the signified *tepak sirih* is presented in such an appearance as it is the first item to be advanced and would then be taken back later in custom engagement and wedding ceremonies. The *Tepak Sirih* is usually packaged and covered with a *songket* cloth in its presentation, as part of the custom. The artist tries to convey a message that the relationship expressed through non-verbal communications is considered high in value. Human relations are also important to ensure that the delivery of messages through this non-verbal method is effective. In addition, communication equipment should also be properly maintained. In the meantime, many scholars consider the engagement of the decree should be, but on its own, considered as a religious act. What is more important, the engagement is to be kept confidential because the main purpose of the engagement is to allow some time for the two parties to get to know each other. This would hopefully avoid the involvement or intervention of other people with their relationship.

Besides this engagement custom using the *Tepak Sirih*, there will also be a gift-exchanging ceremony from both sides of the family. After such as an exchange, the visiting suitor's side will state as to who is the potential groom and confirm the bride's identity and state of readiness before proceeding further with the preliminaries (Knapp, 2006). These customs of conduct is still honoured, cherished and kept alive in the Malay engagement ceremonies. The receiving party will offer their guests drinks and invite them to refreshments whilst their conversation will then proceed to the setting of a date where the male suitors family will come to negotiate the material arrangements sought by the potential bride's family, and agreeing on the *Mas Kahwin* or dowry that the groom will pay to the bride as stated by the religious authorities, and the presentation of more gifts to the intended bride in the form of *hantaran*.

The (*cembul*) small brass containers in the *Tepak Sirih* hold areca nut (*kacang pinang*) slices, lime betel (*kapur sireh*), gambier leaves (*daun gambir*), tobacco (*tembakau*), cloves (*bunga cengkih*) and betel leaves (*daun sireh*). All these must be put in appropriately and in order. This is the rule that a traditional Malay customs practitioner needs to follow step by step as per what the Malay proverbs say, “*mengaji al-Quran dari alif, ba, ta*”, and so on. This also illustrates the inimitability and rare of the Malay customs. The whole thing they do must display the ancestral guidelines and protocols (Hussin

et.al.,2016). *Tepak Sirih* in the engagement customs acting a vital role to start a discussion, to agree, to receive or to denied, as well as act as a character role for nonverbal communications (Ahmad,2010). Even though period passes and the Malay community in the research area has been visible to other cultures, the *Tepak Sirih* still remains as the greatest important thing in the Malay marriage custom (Abdullah,2010). This demonstrates that the Malays still have faith in and rehearsal their customs affording to what they have been educated by their ancestors (Kasimin,2002).

The other ingredient in the preparation of *Tepak Sirih* is the cloves, which have a fragrant smell and a spicy flavour, describing the romantic and retelling nature of the liver. Not only that, the five elements that complement the series are also symbolic to the Malays, to reflect the five pillars of Islam that need to be practiced in the daily life of the Malay-Muslim community (Matsumoto,2012). *Buah pinang* was produced by Din Omar in the post, “*Siri Tepak Sirih: Menanti Tetamu Siri 5*”, which has a use in semiotic, in terms of the descendants of good descendants of the descendants of the peer and the higher status. This is because the judgement for the match or the selection of candidates to make a couple must have a high value of characteristics. Here, the cultural value is more important than the value of a ringgit/money, as to the value of the peer's value that cannot be purchased using money and will not sufficiently match the height and glory of the characteristics of positive moral values, life status, and religious values.

The same goes for other substances in the *Tepak Sirih* which includes the *kapur* (whiting/lime/chalk), one of the ingredients placed in the *Tepak Sirih* that symbolizes a kind heart and good manners. This element is important to educate our souls not to be contaminated with bad elements. The kind heart also symbolizes the two hearts that are intercepted with each other. This is as the kindness mentioned in the previous description relating to the semiotic meaning of the kindness within themselves.

The use of *Tepak Sirih* to await the arrival of guests is also a custom where *Tepak Sirih* is an important item during the visiting process of the guests and the host. In the past, if a person comes to a house for the purpose of visiting, the host will invite the guest to have a taste of the *sirih* with *buah pinang* as a custom of breaking the ice. This is evident in the event of the *merisik* or proposal entourage, where the guests would also carry the *sirih* as a token and the hosts will reciprocate by leading with their own *sirih*. However, they would first eat the *sirih* together before starting a conversation or discussion, indirectly reflecting the politeness of the Malay customs and culture from a long time ago.



Figure 5: Din Omar “*Ukiran Indah Di Puncak Indah*” (*Siri Keris*) (2005), Acrylic on Canvas, 60 inch x 60 inch
Image Source: www.dinbinomar.blogspot.com/2016/01/

Based on Din Omar's artwork entitled, "*Ukiran Indah di Puncak Indah*" (Siri Keris) (Figure 5), the heritage value is again dated back to the time of our ancestors. Such signified cultural materials like *keris* have deep historical values, which are from their functions until the aesthetic value of presenting the power of self-defence in the Malay society (Norul Azlina,2017) . Besides that, the effects from the use of colours in his paint artwork highlights the originality of the looks and forms of *keris* that has been around since the old days until today. The legacy of *keris* produced by the artist shows that the artwork of this post underscores the motives of the flora and is also more prosperous as it is combined with elements that practice the subtle and extreme details in the production of his work (Abdullah & Samin,2020).

Nowadays, it does not appeal to many art practitioners to get closer and reveal the visual works of their posts in the shape of prosperity (Bahari,2009). This is because producing works illustrating the art of a heritage tradition is considered unacceptable at the global level. However, by creating an artwork with the theme of this heritage element, it is able to uphold the relics of attracting the attention of art enthusiasts in Malaya. This is because the creation of works in the form of heritage characteristics can be specialized to the community that knows the value of inheritance (Al-Mudra,2009). For example, the subject of *keris* has a semiotic value symbolized by the integrity and strength of the Malays themselves (Hadi et.al.,2019).

In terms of the use of colour, the artist also practiced brighter colours such as blue, which is applied using the colour tone elements from the darkest to the brightest in the background on this "*Ukiran Indah di Puncak Indah*" (2005) (Figure 5) painting. Furthermore, the colour of the main motive is also expressed with golden colours that show the subject of the *keris* is full of signifier meanings with the philosophy of the Malay community (Noor,2014). Besides that, the production of this artist's work in this *keris* series paintings not only highlights the subtle aspects of the look and design of the *keris* pattern itself but has also lifted the prestige of the iron cleavers in the aspect of manufacturing and forging this *keris*. The artist also wants to convey the message that the *keris* has the semiotic meaning as a substance that can defend itself from enemy attacks (Hussin et al.,2017),. Back in the old days, there were no other types of weapon or modern self-defence tools.

In terms of its semiotic meaning, the manufacturing process of the *keris* has a Malay heritage value in the custom before the blacksmith embarks on any iron carpentry work. The '*para pandai besi*' expert reads several verses of the Quran to bless the manufacturing work of these weapons (Mohamad,2013). Usually, the commencement of a *keris* production takes several months. To perfect the quality of the materials used, the selection of the materials used in producing the *keris* is also considered carefully. In terms of colour consumption, the artist or *keris* maker used genuine colouring which is a golden colour on these '*hulu keris patah tiga*' that show the authenticity of *keris* weapons among the Malays (Harvey,2001).

However, the artist performed a work of a true expert with the carvings of the flora motif. The artists generally produced the pieces with full feelings in which he has researched in more detail in terms of carvings design. In the meaning of *keris* functions, it also plays an important role especially in the Malay heritage where it is used as weapons to defend themselves (Ismail,2000). Besides that, the *keris* is also used symbolically as the symbol of character, status, and greatness, not only as an equipment in the Malay community but also as a complementary form in certain occasions.

Besides that, the art of fine carving or weapons decorative arts is an art that lifts the Malay class in terms of culture, tradition, and customs. Besides that, these *keris* weapons have also become a sign of power and status symbol in the institutions of rulers in the country. (Sheppard, 2011) Various traditional motives and patterns are compiled and designed on a *keris*, especially upstream and sarong, expressing various implied and explicit meanings about the thoughts and conditions of the Malays themselves. Nowadays, with the political influence and circulation of times, the function of *keris* is no longer in its rightful place, but only as a study material and kept in storage for occasional hobby games, as we see nowadays. It is also reflected in institutions of study and recognized by the government. Higher learning institution such as the UITM, has created a symbolic Malay *keris* for its heritage value, by having at least one *keris* replica on its landscape environment. This depicts the Malay community

having strength in terms of traditional weapons equipment from the old days and to date (Yacob,2013). The name of the design motives that usually go on the *hulu* of the *keris* varies namely, *langkasuka*, *sulur kacang*, *pucuk pakis*, and also *bayam* motive of design carvings of the *hulu keris* (Sheppard,1972). The design of the Malay carving *langkasuka* (*kelopak dewa*), generally began in the since 6th century. Overall, each of the Malay carving motives has its own deep meaning.

There are also other plant motives inspired by creative carving craftsmen other. The *keris* is also synonymous with the constitution of the sultanate in Malaysia, where almost every year, the sultan has a *keris* of a degree as his constitution of rule. Besides that, the *keris* also symbolizes the semiotic for some of the clothing items of the *Raja sehari* (King of the day/newlyweds), as it complements the groom's attire during the wedding ceremony in the Malay community. However, the *keris* worn by the *Raja sehari* is usually of a low quality replica which is not as attractive as the authentic Malay *keris*. In the Malay society, the *keris* is commonly adopted on the front of the body (Abdullah & Senik,2007). When viewed from the front, enemies or opponents would assume that the *keris* wearer is ready for battle and brave enough to face any possibilities.

At the same time, there are still other values of the *keris*, for example, sometimes the *keris* wearer placed it on the *samping* side and only the *hulu keris* is visible to the observing person (Mohamad et al.,2012). The appearance and shape of the *hulu keris* plays a role and aim to show the carvings of the artists that have high aesthetic values especially in important motives which possess an expressed or implied meaning. In other words, the *keris* has an in-depth semiotic meaning that reflects the sublimity, details and uniqueness in terms of carvings design of a Malay art that is not found in other races (Mohamad & Muhamad,2019). The legacy of this heritage should be defended and preserved so that it remains a cultural material that expresses various meanings from this semiotic approach.

Table 2: The elaboration of semiotics and meanings in Din Omar's artworks based on the findings and discussions with the curator

No	Findings	The Semiotics	Meaning
1	Artist style and The realism style highlighted by the artist gives a concept significant identity impression in the production of traditional Malay painting artworks by Din Omar.		
2	<i>Tepak Sirih</i> series	The material cultural is associated with <i>Mahar</i> or the granting of marriage of the male to the female. Had the value of non-verbal communication in the customs of engagement and marriage of the Malay community in the old days.	
3	Betel leaves	Symbolizes the nature of <i>hawa</i> races who graceful (<i>Daun sirih</i>) must be protected according to the teaches of Islam. Symbolizes honor and holiness <i>hawa</i> races. Frequently used for medical purposes of various diseases in Malay communities through traditional methods through recitation of prayers and verses from the noble Quran.	
4	Elements of Islamic Art	The green color on the betel leaves symbolizes the color of the paradise adept who wears clothing from thick and fine silk based on the noble Quran which is Surah Al-Kahf: Verses 31. The yellow gold that Din Omar applied in this Artwork was to symbolizes to the elements of dignity , pride and peacefulness.	
5	<i>Hulu Keris Patah Tiga</i>	A weapon symbolizes the traditional weapons of Malay society that is usually adapted to the among male cloths of <i>Raja Sehari</i> or Malay groom. Describes subtly <i>para pandai besi</i> in the <i>keris</i> production so that its damaged identity <i>keris</i> nowadays can always be restored and preserved in terms of its conservations.	

5.1 Discussion

The series of significant artworks such as *Tepak Sirih Series*, *Siri Tepak Sirih: Menanti Tetamu Siri 5* and *Siri Keris: Ukiran Indah di Puncak Indah*, were produced by Din Omar. The exquisite paintings of Din Omar's *Tepak Sirih* series play a crucial role in presenting the non-verbal communication medium within the Malay community, especially in the gesture of asking permission for a woman's hand and whether it is accepted or rejected. Instead of merely accepting the artist's style aspects, Din Omar created a realism style with relatively aggressive uses of colours, such as red and gold. *Tepak Sirih Series*

artworks also contain wisdom related to *mahar* or *mas kahwin* in Islam, which is compulsory. *Mahar* in English language means marriage. It is a gift that is handed over to a wife when there is a marriage academy (Salleh, 2014). It is done with the consent of both sides, namely husband and wife.

Tepak sireh also carries the meaning of non-verbal communicative skills in engagement and wedding ceremonies that are rich with customs that indicate the civilisation of the Malay community. Betel leaves is one of the materials in *tepak sireh* which symbolise dignity and honour of a Muslim woman who must be cared for before being the wife of one of the male candidates through marriage. Betel leaves also mean that the women or the *hawa* race needs to be taken care of and protected by their respected husbands according to the teachings of Islam. This is because the Eve is also a race that expands Muslim population to date. Besides that, the betel leaves also have a traditional medical value in the Malay community which has been practiced until today. With the permission of Allah SWT, the betel leaves too can cure all the diseases faced by patients. The green colour of the betel leaves also explains the colour of the dresses from heaven as can be referred to in *surah Al-Kahf*: verses 31.

Furthermore, a golden colour is also applied to *hulu keris patah tiga* to explain the elements of dignity, pride, and peacefulness. The advantages of *para pandai besi* being able to preserve and produce a *keris* that still maintains the true philosophy of the *keris hulu patah tiga* motive have also been revealed. Besides that, the cultural material of the *Tepak Sirih series* not only possesses high heritage values in the customs of the Malay society but it is crucial for the future generations to recognize the origins of decency and determination in the customs of progressing the union of two parties through the process of winding up and marriage. His work in the series, *Ukiran Indah di Puncak Indah*, also provides a beautiful appreciation of the fully characterised carving aspect of the flora and application in the motif of the *hulu keris patah tiga* carvings as indicated in Table 2 above. Among the significant name of motives with Malay heritage are flora motives of *langkasuka*, *sulur kacang*, *pucuk pakis* and *bayam*. It is not only expressed in the art of *hulu keris* designs carving but also in various aspects of other heritage characteristics (Bahari, 2009). The flora motif such as *bayam* is also significant in Din Omar's work. It has an influence from the tradition of Malay heritage as the *bayam* motif represents the subtle art between the fine lines of the design of the *langkasuka*, *sulur kacang*, and *pucuk pakis*. Motif on the subject of the *hulu keris patah tiga* in Din Omar's work showcases the aesthetic value and motive processing skills of wing leaves by maintaining its motive sincerity in carving wood within the realm of his creations, equally between human beings and God. Hence, *tepak Sireh* is a symbol of non-verbal communication in traditional Malay wedding especially in custom engagement. The customary stage of engaging is a stage to gain equal certainty request from the male party is received by the female. The mixture of oral and non-verbal communication by using *tepak sireh* as a symbol (signifier) is very harmonious and orderly done. This study shows that every culture created by the Malay community is actually to show the height and common sense of its creation society in the most harmonious and symbolic way.

Besides that, there are two traditional Malay tools which are *tepak sireh* and *hulu keris patah tiga* which involves historical value according to the life of the Malay community since ancient times. Besides, cultural materials such as *tepak sireh* also plays an important role especially in the delivery of non-verbal communication against engagement or marriage ceremony among the Malay community. This is because, the Malay community is very concerned with customs and deterrence when it comes to wishing to relate to fellow human relations. Not only that, if it can be seen in general Din Omar has successfully produced a very nostalgic work that creates awareness to the general audience that the Malay community has a very high value of civilization. Furthermore, the artist also tried to give a message in the form of visual analysis through a painting he had produced. This study is also able to demonstrate that every culture created by the Malay community is actually to show the height and common sense of its creation society in the most harmonious and symbolic way.

Accordingly, other artworks by Din Omar *hulu keris patah tiga* It also has its own aesthetic value in showing symbolism to the Malay community as a complement of marriage foam among the Malay community. Not so far that, it has also been since the existence of the National Cultural Congress (NCC) since 1971. Through this National Cultural Congress (NCC), Din Omar has made a positive

impact on the artist Din Omar through traditional art through the production of three arts since the 20th and 21st century. Besides that, the works of the three fractured *hulu keris patah tiga* upstream also showed true Malay intrinsic value in terms of the design and function of the *hulu keris patah tiga* itself as a protection weapon to the Malay community. This is because production requires long scrutiny and time to produce it to enable it to stand upheld. Furthermore, before the work is done by the *para pandai besi* of several verses of the Quran to bless the manufacturing of these *hulu keris patah tiga* weapons. The same goes for the delivery of meaning and message through Din Omar's serial artworks such as *hulu keris patah tiga* and *tepak sireh* lifting upholding the Malay community so that it is more noble and living in a civilised.

6. Conclusion

This exhibition is able to lift traditional Malay arts as an art identity of the nation as well as to regain the beauty of the Malay culture, tradition, and customs through artwork. In total, Din Omar's work will inspire other artists to continue to maintain the identity of the Malay heritage in the form of cultural materials. This paper describes heritage-shaped materials in the industrial revolutionary era of 4.0, necessarily as various modernity achieved by the country involves the civilization of a society, that is the pulse of ensuring Malaysia does not miss out on the aspects of progress.

Despite the dimensions of community civilization, past experiences become exemplary and cannot be disposed of just as it is important to remember as teaching and learning, especially among the younger generation. The heritage values in Din Omar's artwork are important in the present day, as they are visualized in terms of materials such as the two subjects of *Tepak Sirih Series*, *Siri Tepak Sirih: Menanti Tetamu Siri 5*, and *Ukiran Indah di Puncak Indah*, and they can be preserved as originals but highlighted from the point of use and function towards the existence of the Malay community. Documentation of such visual arts, arts and cultural heritage should continue to be presented and collected, and in turn distributed among public universities' students, private institutions of higher learning, researchers, school children and related non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

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