

# New Approches in Applied Arts and Design

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## Creativity and Sustainability

Mandana Barkeshli



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INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA

# New Approaches in Applied Arts & Design - Creativity and Sustainability

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## CHAPTER FIVE

### ISLAMIC CALLIGRAPHY AS COMPOSITIONAL ELEMENTS IN CARVED COMPONENTS OF SELECTED KELANTAN AND TERENGGANU HOUSES

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#### **ABSTRACT**

This paper presents an analysis of Islamic calligraphy and its composition in the wood carvings found in the old traditional houses of Kelantan and Terengganu built in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The methods of investigation included analytical review of measured drawings of the houses and visual analysis of their carved components. Face to face interviews with prominent woodcarvers on types of motif used in wood carving were conducted as a complementary measure to the analytical method. The analysis revealed the application of different design qualities of the calligraphy in the carved components including double and single images which contributed to their distinctive compositions. The design qualities reflect craftsmen's collective world views and skills in the fabrication of the components and its position and configuration within the houses. Depiction of Arabic calligraphy as visual composition and identity of the carved components suggest their strong artistic preference to Islamic design ranging from the selection of script to the determination of its positional layout. Besides, the versatility of the calligraphy affords further development and appreciation in the craft of wood carving.

[Keywords: Wood carving, Islamic calligraphy, Malay traditional house, Islamic art]

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Wood carving is an integral carved component to the vernacular Malay houses in the northeastern region of Peninsular Malaysia. Many old traditional timber houses from this region, for example Kelantan and Terengganu houses were adorned with carving motifs of flora, calligraphy, geometry, fauna and cosmic features which are depicted according to the specified shape, size and dimension of wooden panel. Depiction of Islamic calligraphy as a motif is prevalent in the Malay traditional wood carving and has become one of the central features in this flourishing art work (Zulkifli, 2000). Although Malay traditional wood carving is a product of its environment, its regional variant is unified through the application of calligraphy as a vital element in composition. Arabic calligraphy was introduced in this region after the