

THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF *ADIGURU KRAF* IN SUSTAINING THE HERITAGE OF MALAY WOOD CARVING WITH RESILIENT PRACTICES

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to elaborate on how the roles, responsibilities and acceptable practices can join in the enterprise of sustaining the heritage of Malay wood carving as reflected in the case of *Adiguru kraf* (master craftsman), Abd. Muhaimin Hasbollah from Temerloh, Pahang. The rationale is that virtues of research in understanding the roles and responsibilities of *Adiguru Kraf*, through his craft practices in sustaining the heritage of Malay wood carving are relatively novel and vital for recognition. Therefore, the main objective of this research was to identify the key components of his involvements in sustaining the wood carving industry. This is essential as the Malay wood carving is traditionally associated with the making of craft that requires manual skill and craftsmanship, while its production is to exercise skill based on knowledge and experiences. A qualitative interview with Abd. Muhaimin was conducted, and it has set out the context of a master craftsman, an inheritor of heritage carving and practices, concerning his roles and responsibilities that reflect his title as *Adiguru Kraf*. The investigation has led to the understanding of his characteristics and how he produced his works with some levels of exclusiveness, peacefulness, and purposefulness. The outcome and contribution of the paper is a better understanding of the roles of the master craftsman, which may become an inspiration for the younger generation of woodcarvers to excel in their profession. Knowledge of his positions with the professional virtues and craft production is essential because of the potential and value of eliciting and transmitting his knowledge and skill for the development of wood carving craft and industry.

Keywords: *Adiguru kraf*, Heritage craft, Master craftsman, Wood carving

INTRODUCTION

Malay wood carving had many magnificent forms and functions, and woodcarvers develop most of them as a splendid craft with subtle carving techniques. Woodcarvers usually develop exquisite carving forms through proper methods and techniques. Traditionally, woodcarvers have skill based on knowledge and experiences apart from using appropriate methods and techniques to produce beautiful crafts. Written sources (eg. Adomson, 2009; Wood, Rust and Horne, 2009) point out that craftsman acquire intuition in the understanding of materials and processes, of aesthetic, emotional and cultural issues through extensive experience of (manually) working with materials and techniques. This paper sets out the context of craft and industry concerning the roles of a master craftsman who has gone through extensive experience to reach the title as a master craftsman. Therefore, this paper aims to elaborate on how the master craftsman virtues and practices play significant roles in the enterprise of wood carving craft, as reflected in the case of *Adiguru Kraf Kayu*, Abd. Muhaimin Hasbollah from Temerloh, Pahang. Many kinds of research thus far (e.g. Ismail, 2005; Norhaiza, 2010; Sumardianshah et al., 2013; Fortuna, 2019) have focused mainly on the art of wood carving but not on the craftsman himself, especially about his roles as a master craftsman. The review highlights the gap in the current understanding of this field of research. The rationale is that virtues of research in understanding the roles and responsibilities of *Adiguru Kraf*,

through his craft practices in sustaining the heritage of Malay wood carving are relatively novel and vital for recognition. This research is essential as how the master craftsman, who is recognised for his vast knowledge and long experiences, contributes to the sustainable of craft industry and humanity. Therefore, the investigation is based on three research questions: 1) What are the types of wood carving made by Abd. Muhaimin? 2) What are his personal attributes towards the craft productions? and 3) What are the key components of his involvements in sustaining the craft of wood carving and industry? The objectives of this research are: 1) to identify the key categories of wood carving products made by Abd. Muhaimin and his personal attributes towards the craft production, and 2) to determine the key components of his involvements in sustaining the heritage craft of wood carving and industry.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section reviews the meaning of *Adiguru Kraf* (master craftsman), its requirements and attributes. The discussions also focus on the fundamental concepts of skilfulness, creativity and apprenticeship underlying the scopes of a master craftsman in his or her specialised field.

Overview and Meaning of *Adiguru Kraf* (Master Craftsman)

Adiguru Kraf means master craftsman, who receives the award of best craftsman and recognition from the Malaysian government as a master craftsman once they have fulfilled the specified criteria. The Perbadanan Kemajuan Kraf Malaysia (PKKM) states the specified criteria as follows: 1) possess high knowledge and skill in the field of craft, 2) have expertise or specialisation in the art of craftsmanship, design, product making and production of craftworks of Malaysian heritage, 3) plays significant roles in the conservation and preservation of the heritage craft, 4) remains weighty in the transmission of skilfulness to the apprentice to ensure the continuity of the heritage craft, and 5) being creative and innovative in ensuring the advancement and increase of quality craft products. These criteria have become drives for a local craftsman to achieve prestige recognition by the Malaysian government. Many local craftsmen have fulfilled the requirements that put him or her as one of the prominent craftsmen, thus recognising him or her as *Adiguru Kraf*. According to Adamson (2009), a master craftsman is a universal title for someone who has vast experience and who is exceedingly skilful in a particular craft. In general, the master craftsman has obtained the highest level of craftsmanship in that craft, which requires many years of apprenticeship and experiences to achieve the status.

Scholars have established that (e.g. Raj Isar, 2004; Wood, Rust and Horne, 2009) the local crafts were governed by the distinctive concept of beauty, yet restriction did not hinder the creativity of craftsmen or artisans who follow their intuition. Their intimate knowledge of their craft materials and their years of practice enabled them to fully manifest the shapes of nature and form the material into the distinctive style and form. A study by Wood, Rust and Horne (2009) revealed that an artisan can acquire the actual 'knowledge' of making by feel and experiment. Craftsmen or artisans make an object according to prescribed patterns and through defined processes until the completion of operations. The unique craftsmanship of traditional artisans usually reflects on the beautiful and exquisite craft production. Craftsmanship refers to aptitude, skill, or quality craft in the use of crafting tools and materials (Adamson, 2009). The skills of craftsmanship are learned through the process over years of apprenticeship under intensive guidance by master craftsmen or artisans. In short, many experts regard the craft as a discipline of its own, which requires material understanding, skilfulness, and creative mind to produce the right quality products.

Aspects of Craftsmanship: Skilfulness, Creativity, and Apprenticeship

Fabrication of traditional Malay wood carving involves many aspects of craftsmanship, including skilfulness, creativity, and apprenticeship. The craftsmen's individual taste and *air tangan* (skillfulness) are by having long experience and having acquired an immense degree of skill (Norhaiza, 2010). In the art of wood carving, for example, carving elements like plant motifs are organised and used in ways by which woodcarvers develop its forms as their expression. The methods of carving the motifs are distinct in characters that are inextricably bound to their taste and skilfulness. It is an indication of craftsmen versatility in the depiction of motifs, especially the one from flora.

Differences in the depiction of design elements and the use of carving techniques are apparent in the Malay carvings. The technique refers to the use of tools to execute a design in the wooden materials (Sayers, 1978). This pattern of differences was made possible by the availability of carving tools and creativity of woodcarvers in designing the carvings. Traditional woodcarvers produced carvings manually with conventional carving tools such as a wooden hammer, knife and chisels in the fabrication of wood carvings. The craft of carvings requires skilfulness which means specialised ability in the application of carving techniques that require uses of hands (Rosnawati, 2005). Creativity in wood carving means having the ability to bring out details about the originality of a piece of wood carving. Both commands are superiority in every stage of carving works. Thus, a dynamic form of a carved panel results from the skilful use and creative choice of carving devices by the craftsmen. Design, material, tools and technique are four aspects to be considered for a successful carving (Wilbur, 2008).

In the art of wood carving, craftsmanship refers to the aptitude, skill or quality craft in the use of carving tools and hardwood timber species especially Chengal, Red Balau, Merbau and Sena (Ismail, 2005). The skills of transforming a solid plank or block into relief and non-relief components are learned through the process of apprenticeship (Rosnawati, 2005). The fabrication of carvings requires high quality of craftsmanship apart from artistic ability which could only be acquired through training. A master woodcarver or craftsman may produce several panels in a similar design or slightly differs. The slight differences come about due to different apprentices working on the boards. Learning a craft skill is a complex process, which includes know-how about working postures, materials, and tools (Wood, Rust and Horne, 2009). This knowledge is procedural and tacit by nature.

On the aspect of efficient carving, Wilbur (2008) posits that skill is accumulated over years of practice, thorough knowledge of the wood carving and woodworking trades, and by mastering technique. Thus, efficiency ties together these aspects of the skill. A skilful craftsman is knowledgeable, and he or she can gain these qualities through apprenticeship (Norhaiza, 2010). The rendering of nature cannot be achieved by any untutored individual, however gifted, without the support of a tradition (Gombrich, 1984). The design of carvings come to mind of the craftsmen as such typical 'end products' of a long sequence of what Trilling (2001) calls 'linked solution'. There is a lineage in the dissemination of carving knowledge. In short, the craft and craftsmanship are interrelated, and the quality of both relies on skilfulness, extensive experiences, and apprenticeship. Hence, the title of a master craftsman refers to someone with vast experiences and exceptional skilfulness, which is obtainable through years of training and practices.

METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

The researcher had gathered the information from Abd. Muhaimin through a qualitative semi-structured interview. This method of data collection is vital to achieving the objectives of this research, which mainly focus on an in-depth understanding of a master craftsman, Abd Muhaimin Hasbollah. He has been awarded the title of *Adiguru Kraf* in 2019 for his distinguished contributions in the field of Malay wood carving. He owns a company known as Inakraf Wood Carving, which is in Temerloh, Pahang. He has been an active in the wood carving industry since 1991. His backgrounds with more than 30 years of experiences and still actively involved in the wood carving craft marks his well-known reputations in the craft industry. Therefore, as a research instrument, the interview questions were correspondingly used to guide the interview sessions. The interview concentrated on the three categories of questions with constructive phrasings that helped the researcher to get an in-depth understanding of the master craftsman.

The first category concerned his personal background and the characteristics of carving that contribute to his craft identity. The second category focused on the attributes of wood carving production including the types of wood carving products made by him. The third category gave emphasis on the key components of his involvements in sustaining the heritage craft of wood carving and industry. The researcher managed to successfully gather the required information from him to illuminate the subject of inquiry with the help of the interview guides. Abd Muhaimin has delivered a wealth of inputs, especially on the categories of wood carving products made by him and his contributions towards the preservation of the heritage craft of wood carving and industry. Apart from the interview and observation, the researcher also used secondary data from Perbadanan Kemajuan Kraftangan Malaysia (PKKM) as supplement information.

Meanwhile, from the interview transcript, the researchers managed to obtain innumerable information from the master craftsman while having a face-to-face conversation. Furthermore, the conversation is a construction site of tacit knowledge, which can be materialised for the extension of knowledge in this field (Toom, 2012) and the qualitative method helps to gain a deeper understanding of one's experiences (Creswell and Clark, 2018). Qualitative research interview is a construction of knowledge in which an interchange of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest (Kvale, 1996). Most of the information is tacit knowledge, which is embedded within oneself. According to Toom (2012), tacit knowledge is implicit knowledge that is not easy to transfer. In the case of Abd Muhaimin, his experience as a master craftsman is vital because his expertise rests on it. Therefore, this research could acquire his knowledge through the face-to-face interview to obtain information on his wood carving practices, experiences and contributions in the field.




RESULTS, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Key Categories of Wood Carving Made by Abd. Muhaimin

This research identifies the types of wood carving made by Abd. Muhaimin concerning his wood carving crafts, styles of craftsmanship, and methods of sustaining the heritage value of the Malay wood carving. The interview with him reveals that most of his profound works have a resilient adherence to the traditional roots and philosophy of Malay wood carving. However, many of them are in contemporary design idea and form. A wide range of wood carving crafts and products, which have utilitarian value is the focus of his production from the various types of local timber.

These products fall into three main categories, namely, interior, and ornamental components, home accessories and furniture, and landmark structure. The physical qualities of the wood carving products, especially the iconic landmark structure make it as one of the unique crafts in Malaysia, and it comes from the more locally sustainable resources. Inconsistent with the objective of the research, the line-up analysis as shown in Table 1 serves to place in the information of the products according to the three key categories including interior and ornamental components, home accessories and furniture, and landmark structure. Although this list of the product category is not exhaustive and there are a great many more types of wood carving product that are not listed here, but the authors have listed some of the dominant ones. These are the kinds of products that have more demands from consumers and their customers because of their distinctive styles, and they are more contemporary.

Table 1: Line-up of selected products from the key categories

Categories of Product	Category 1: Interior/ ornamental components	Category 2: Home accessories and Furniture	Category 3: Landmark Components
			 (Source: Abd Muhaimin, 2020)
Description:	The products made in different shapes and sizes, especially made as decorative components	The products have utilitarian value, especially made for indoor furnishings	The products function to serve as an iconic component/ structure for public/private premises, usually for outdoors.
Type of product and carving:	Wall art, ventilation panels, screens Perforated with relief and non-relief carving	Boxes, organizer, gifts, chairs, tables Perforated with relief and non-relief carving, Semi-pierced carving with relief motif	Iconic pole or sculpture Semi-pierced carving with relief motif
Situation:	Home style or decorative usage, Suitable used for indoor and outdoor area	Home style or decorative usage Suitable used for indoor or outdoor area	Open space, public area For short and long distance Used for outdoor area
Types of wood used:	Light Hard Wood + Medium Hard wood (Kasah, Nyatoh, Meranti, Kelumpang, Damar Hitam)	Medium Hard Wood (Keruing, Kempas, Jati, Merbau, Rengas)	Heavy Hard wood (Chengal, Resak Balau, Merbau)
Design concept	Traditional and contemporary,	Traditional and contemporary	Traditional and contemporary

Abd. Muhaimin uses woods for innumerable types of objects, from fittings, furniture, and other household items. In these collections, vegetal patterns appear alone or in combination with the different shapes of ornament, calligraphy and geometry. A vast number of ornamental objects, namely, wall art and ventilation panel are central items of production with the various employments of beautiful and delicate patterns. A proper selection of design motifs and forms is his primary concern to suit the aesthetic interests and tastes of the Muslim patrons and consumers throughout the nation. Furthermore, products with highly exclusive design and elaborate patterns as found in his iconic sculptural poles have notable spots in outdoor spaces of public and private premises.

Abd Muhaimin's vast knowledge on the traditional Malay wood carving has made him become one of the prominent master craftsmen in the nation until today. His works show fruition of design in the contemporary style yet maintaining the pure adhering to the traditional root. The exceptional works result from his profound understanding of the true meaning of the original concept and his consistent adherence to the traditional philosophy of carving. Abd. Muhaimin crafts his works from fine timbers with skilful craftsmanship and his extensive experiences along with creativity, including artistic and design skills, enrich his products. His products range from priceless authentic carved form to exquisite modern hand-made crafts and furniture.

Among the distinctive wood carvings are the beautiful decorative wall art with relief carving, as shown in Figure 1A. This carving with the motif of hibiscus flower serves to beautify the wall of *Dewan Rakyat, Parlimen Malaysia*. Abd. Muhaimin also carves various sculptural forms, and one of them is in a vertical three-dimensional wood carving with an overlapping character (Figure 1B). The inspiration for this piece came from his close observation and love of nature. This sculpture becomes one of the exclusive works that affirm his skilfulness and creative mind in achieving a graceful quality product. He explains "the sculpture is known as relief carving in which a solid plank of wood is carved to reveal the illusion of a three-dimensional form".



(Source: Abd Muhaimin, 2020)

A

B

Fig. 1 A) An exquisite carved wall art, and B) A three-dimensional carving in a sculptural form

Personal Attributes and its associated components towards the Craft Production

Vast collections of Abd Muhaimin's works reflect a lifetime of learning and engagement in the art and process of wood carving as a meaningful occupation. He continues to engage in the profession in meaningful ways. He has set out his career path, which allowed him to use his creative initiative

but at the same time to practice the necessary steps for resilient craft production. Abd. Muhaimin stresses the art and process of wood carving production demands right attitudes, and he has practised three important self attributes to become a successful craft producer.

First, he has always emphasised on the exclusiveness of wood carving by merchandising of unique products. He is in constant search for ideas to improve his products to ensure that his works are marketable. As a result, many of his products become preferred selling items among wood carving lovers, famous persons, public and private departments and agencies, and individuals. Among the hot-selling crafts are premium gift product and household items, which are not only favoured by consumers in Malaysia but also in other countries because the products have a good quality of design and materials.

Second, he incorporates the sense of peacefulness in the craft and process of wood carving. According to Abd. Muhaimin, this attribute should reflect on the means of dealing with customers. He also emphasizes the friendliness when dealing with customers, although in a busy and active schedule. He states it is necessary to entertain his customers, including researchers, especially when they ask his opinion about the wood carving. To be accommodating, he must remain calm and free himself from any disruptions during the conversations. His commitment and positive attribute also give advantages to him when commencing to make products with good quality and unique character. He said, “to be inspired, a person must remain calm and free himself from any distractions while carving”.

Third, he always produces wood carvings with a quest for genuine spirit and purposefulness, apart from becoming his primary source of income, Abd. Muhaimin has greater interest to expand his knowledge and skill in wood carving to ensure the sustainability of the craft and industry. He wishes for the wood carving to be present in many Malaysian public buildings, and private residences, and to become one of the long-lasting craft industries in the nation.

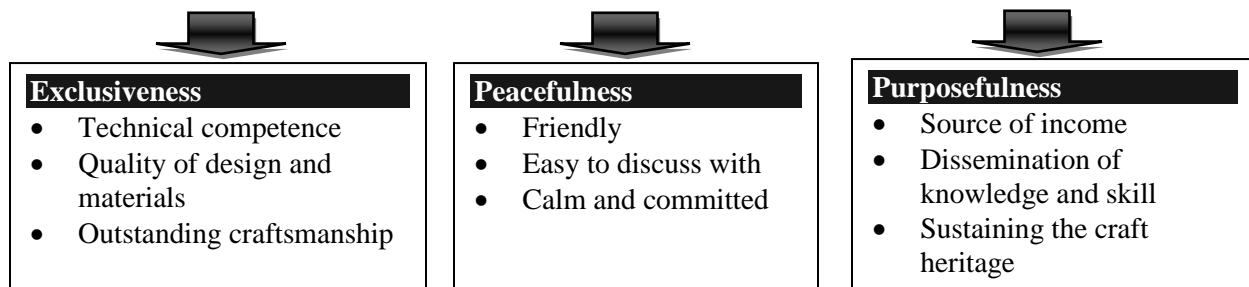


Fig. 2 Abd. Muhaimin’s personal attributes towards the craft production

The author has attended several programmes facilitated by Abd. Muhaimin, in collaboration with local agencies, and observed that he is undeniably very humble and convivial. This research also found that as a craftsman, Abd. Muhaimin possesses several personal attributes that reflect his noble roles. He is humble and modest in sharing his knowledge, especially with students and laypersons. He is passionate about his works, committed, enthusiastic and willing to spend extra time for such lengthy session. He uses valid references while discussing the uncertain things. He demonstrates a sense of intellectuality, sensibility, and love for sharing knowledge. He relates to his experiences when explaining some concepts by giving examples. He is indeed a master craftsman. He is very artistic and creative, and these qualities are exclusively reflected on his iconic poles as a landscape element, as shown in Figure

3. He designed the structures for Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM) in Kepong, and NRE in Putrajaya to serve as an organizational landmark by incorporating his carving identity to complement the design concepts of the poles.



Fig. 3 Iconic poles to serve as an organisational landmark
 (Source: Abd Muhaimin, 2020)

THE KEY COMPONENTS OF HIS INVOLVEMENTS IN THE WOOD CARVING INDUSTRY

From the interview with Abd. Muhaimin, five key components of involvements that he has performed during his career as a craftsman/woodcarver in sustaining the heritage craft of wood carving and industry were identified. However, his contributions towards the development of the carving, in general, are not limited to the five components only, whether they are big or small ones. Essentially, the five key involvements are his major leading roles towards the master craftsman recognition. The diagram in Figure 4 summarizes the key involvements of Abd Muhaimin in the wood carving industry, reflecting his principal roles and responsibilities about the key criteria of *Adiguru kraf*.

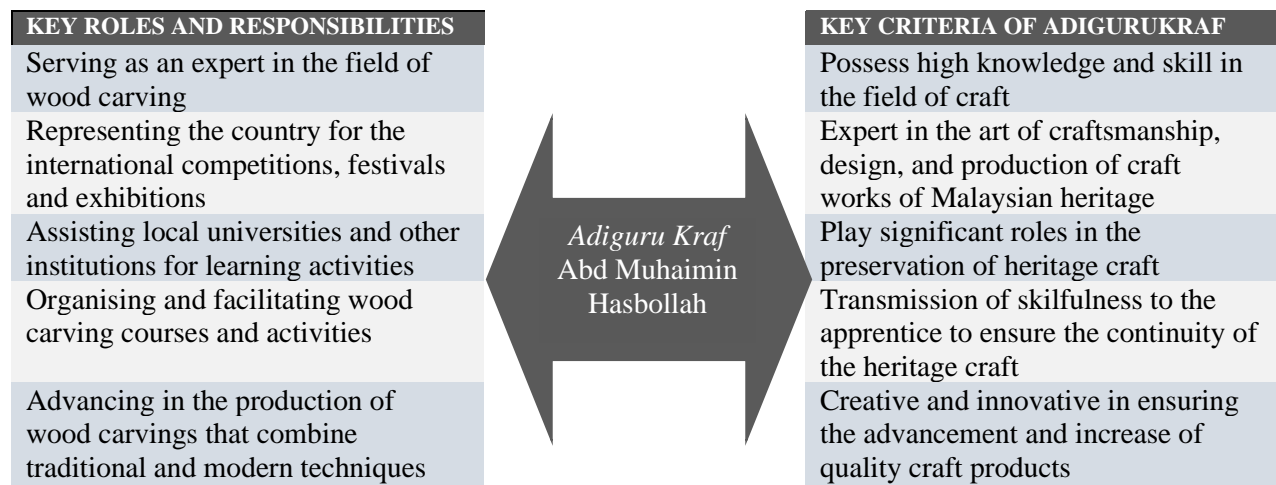


Fig 4 Key roles and responsibilities of the master craftsman and key criteria of *Adiguru Kraf*

Serving as an Expert in the Field of Wood Carving

As a master craftsman, Abd Muhaimin is irrefutably an expert in his field. Hence, he often plays host to researchers, university students, visitors and individuals who seek his expert opinions or views, and information about Malay wood carving. He regularly entertains these people despite his busy schedule with other commitments. It is part and parcel of his contributions to the cause of safeguarding heritage craft of wood carving and industry. Abd. Muhaimin gets satisfaction and accomplishment when the students and researchers give credits to his works through their researches and publications. Such credit signifies the public acknowledgement and appreciation towards his expertise and knowledge in wood carving.

Organising and Facilitating Wood Carving Courses and Activities

To transmit his skilfulness to the younger generation of woodcarvers, designers or publics, the master craftsman uses various platforms, which includes training courses, workshops, seminars and conferences. Abd Muhaimin always has a deep interest and intention to continue expanding the heritage craft art and skills of Malay wood carving and his efforts are admirable. He contributes continuously to the dissemination of his knowledge with numerous activities, including workshops, presentations, and training courses. He provided opportunities for professional development for the young generation of woodcarvers and his apprentices through training courses and workshops at state and national levels. Abd Muhaimin said, "One of my initiatives to safeguard the art of wood carving is by assembling the local young designers in a workshop, and to teach them about the advanced wood carving skill". He has collaborated with many local agencies to make his initiatives vigorous, and one of them is with *Lembaga Perindustrian Kayu Malaysia* (MTIB). In the year 2020, one of his collaborative involvements with MTIB was in a workshop on exploration and application of carving for the wood-based premium products. The purpose of this workshop was to develop further the skill and knowledge of traditional Malay wood carving among the young designers. This workshop initiative was an effective platform to refresh their design idea and inspiration.

The skill training workshop is of particular interest to the new generation of woodcarvers and young designers who have a focus on producing very individual carving products. The integration of materials and form is fundamental to the success of their design and subtly different from one carver to another. The trend in this field is for craftsmen, especially in the USA, to produce individual beautifully made knives that command high prices. By contrast, the industrial tradition in Sheffield has focused on relatively cheap standard products that, arguably, do not justify the level of craftsmanship employed. One of the main aims of this research has been to assist with the transmission of skills to a new generation interested in more innovative or artistic work.

Assisting Universities and Other Institutions for Learning Activities

As a master craftsman, Abd. Muhaimin always has high interest to facilitate the teaching and learning activities concerning the craft and process of wood carving at the local universities and other institutions. He determines to instil a greater interest in wood carving in the younger generation. As a result, he always accepts unceasing invitations from the local universities and other institutions to teach, deliver lectures and talks, and conduct demonstration. It has become part and parcel of his career development apart from fulfilling his role in community engagements. At many times, he serves as an invited expert for various local universities and other institutions. Abd Muhaimin believes the craft practices should be performed with variety of activities and qualities. It is also vital to give particular emphasis on the ethical values apart from learning

activities. In a wood carving workshop, for example, an instructor should teach the participants about the ethics of handling materials and tools. In Figure 5, for example, the author had observed that Abd. Muhaimin used different approaches to maintain students' focus and interests in the university settings. Here, the students of IIUM have benefited from his demonstration and explanation on the methods and techniques of woodcraft production which took the unquantifiable amount of patient and painstaking work in the workshop although in a short term of training and experience. Abd. Muhaimin stresses that in the process of learning, the students should make efforts to maintain the best-practice standards of conduct in the workshop. In this case, they were lucky to have the master craftsman to guide them.



Fig. 5 The master craftsman gives demonstration and explanation on the wood carving method

In a different set of wood carving training, Abd Muhaimin used his workshop in Temerloh, Pahang, which is commonly known as Inakraf Wood Carving to give a real-life exposure to the students about wood carving materials and process. Intuition in the understanding of materials and techniques, of aesthetic, emotional and cultural issues is obtainable through extensive experience of (manually) working with materials and processes (Wood, Rust and Horne: 2009). The learning qualities enable the students to acquire knowledge and skills that are available through hands-on experience, which is tacit, and that is only obtainable through proper training.



Fig. 6 Abd Muhaimin delivered input talks to the IIUM's students and provided a skill training during the wood carving workshop

Representing the country for Competitions and Festivals and Community Engagement

For a master craftsman, winning competitions, especially at the international levels would lead to his superiority or supremacy in his field. Similarly, Abd Muhaimin produces carvings with a big ambition not only for his source of income but also for his contributions in preserving the heritage of Malay wood carving knowledge and skills. He has been actively participating in the national and international competitions and exhibitions since 1995. In 2012, Abd. Muhaimin has won The Best Achievement of Craftsmanship award at the International Live and Wood Carving Competition which was held in Nanning, China. Such recognition signifies that the art and craft of Malay wood carving are recognised at the international level. The quality carving and its philosophical meaning are contributing factors to the achievement. He has won many national and international competitions from the onset of his career as a woodcarver. *Perbadanan Kemajuan Kraftangan Malaysia* is one of the organising agencies for his participation in international competitions and exhibitions.



Fig. 7 Sculptural wood carvings made by Abd Muhaimin at the international competitions
(Source: Abd Muhaimin, 2020)

Notwithstanding his excellent achievements in the competitions, he has received several service awards in recognition of his contributions to the profession. For example, in 2019, the Malaysian government recognised Abd Muhaimin with high recognition of *Adiguru Kraf* for his outstanding contributions in the development of craft wood carving and industry. This is the most prestige recognition received by him.



Fig. 8 Muhaimin demonstrates the method of carving during a craft festival in Kokand, Uzbekistan
(Source: PKK, 2020)

Today, after more than 30 years of maintaining his career as a craftsman in the wood carving, Abd. Muhaimin can look back and be proud of his contributions in preserving the heritage of Malay wood carving knowledge and skills.

Advancing in making creative and innovative products

As a master craftsman, Abd. Muhaimin has gained experiences working with a variety of projects and patrons. At every opportunity, he learnt a new practice to cope with the projects' demands. Each project has different requirements and needs. It is his role to establish an intimate engagement with the project with the essence of a good understanding of the goals of the project. It is worthy of note that the engagement, which forms a substantial portion of complex professional experience, embrace the sacred knowledge and practices. As a Muslim craftsman, Abd, Muhaimin always adheres to Islamic values, and this is manifested in all the skills, activities, and products of his works. Significantly, his products are not only admired for its aesthetic quality but also its creative materials usage and technical practicality and innovation. As a master craftsman, he can produce objects with his hands but highly individual. His identity and meanings should not in conflict with Islamic teaching because artistic skill should follow the sharia in the production of a work. This value is central to his artistic creativity and to ensure the sustainability of the practice in the current and his future undertakings.

The findings of the research show that Abd. Muhaimin has performed various roles during his career as a craftsman. His steadfast in keeping the traditions and glory of Malay wood carving practices have achieved recognition, and he certainly deserves the prestige recognition award of *Adiguru Kraf* by the Malaysian government. The finding suggests that how a professional craftsman likes Abd Muhaimin thinks in action. According to him, the craft of wood carving is an application of skills and material-based knowledge to relatively small-scale production. The craft of traditional items is an expression of craftsmen or artisans' creativity and dexterity. He stresses the challenges is how to use these attributes for the noble course and a decent contribution to the nation.

Resilient Practices in the Wood Carving Industry

In general, the wood carving craft industries could provide employment opportunities, and the ability to earn an income from craft making especially with a high level of authenticity and identity contributes to the longevity of cultures, and craft communities. However, demand for such crafts needs proper management to maintain its sustainability (Chutia and Sarma, 2016). The concept of 'sustainability' with traditional crafts and craftsmanship strongly connect to environmental, cultural, and economic concerns (Raj Isar, 2004). It carries environmental as well as economic challenges, especially to the young entrepreneurs, designers, or artisans. Therefore, there must be an integrated effort to support its sustainability, especially the cottage or small-scale industries that usually focus on the production of labour-intensive goods. They face significant challenges and disadvantages when competing with factory-based manufacturers that mass-produced goods.

Hence, it is challenging also to encourage craft producers, craftsmen, and artisans to institute this kind of business practices to ensure their ongoing survival. Neumann and Hirsch (2000) posit that trade in natural resources enables rural communities to generate cash. For example, the art and craft sector are crucial means of livelihood for people in remote rural areas and urban areas. Likewise, Choge (2000) argues that the availability of natural resources is the viability of the

industry and the livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of people who depend on the industry for economic survival.

In Malaysia, the craft industry is a significant attraction in cultural and regional tourism. The craft sector in Malaysia includes over 400 skilled producers who are also craftsmen (Perbadanan Kemajuan kraftangan Malaysia). The craft industry contributes 16% to the tourism sector as Malaysia boasts a delightful variety of traditional handicrafts. Few states in Malaysia, for example, Pahang, Terengganu, and Kelantan with a rich history of culture, arts and craft have a thriving cottage industry producing many beautiful works of practical and ornamental products. Pahang, for example, is often dubbed as "The Home of the Cottage Industries", in wood crafts.

Malay woodcarvers are obedient believers in Islam. The religious belief has become the most influencing factor that governs their craftsmanship. The choice and depiction of design motifs on carvings tend to illustrate their talented and artistic mentality, but most importantly, to reflect Islamic practice and belief. A master craftsman is not just an artisan but a local genius whose expression reflects a profound understanding and beliefs of the Malays (Farish, and Eddin, 2003). Thus, a common way to secure traditions was to continue the artistic achievements of the past glories from older generations. Although widely diverse in their inclinations, traditional Malay craftsmen shared an interest in preserving and protecting the pre-eminence of traditional craftsmanship. New influences, often entering the Malay world especially from Thailand, China, India or the Middle East, but any innovative ideas in the art of wood carving or its philosophy need to blend into the established fabric of traditions. Cultural elements certainly have a vast influence on the design philosophy of Malay wood carving.

In short, Abd Muhaimin's works exhibit that the art and craft of wood carving is a careful balance of traditions and innovations, of both native and creative ideas and deeply anchored to the Islamic religion. The other ingredients are his well-established craftsmanship, including skilfulness' and creativity. As a master craftsman, who have gone through the process, he suggests that there are opportunities for the craft producers to diversify their business by adding innovative elements in the design. Creativity and innovation could ensure the advancement and increase of quality craft products. These include workspace tours and product demonstrations, special workshops, and classes, and attending events such as fairs and festivals.

CONCLUSION

The objectives of this research are to identify the key categories of wood carving products made by Abd. Muhaimin and his attributes towards craft production. Also, this research seeks to determine the key components of his involvements in sustaining the heritage craft of wood carving and industry. This research has found that Abd Muhaimin produces a wide range of wood carving crafts and products that can be categorised into three categories, namely, i) interior, and ornamental components, ii) home accessories and furniture, and iii) landmark structure. He uses various types of local timber to produce the products. Most of these products have utilitarian value, and many of them are with contemporary design idea without neglecting the traditional roots and philosophy of Malay wood carving. The interview with him reveals that he has practised three important self attributes to become a successful craft producer. These attributes are exclusiveness, peacefulness, and purposefulness. Apart from these attributes, his artistic and creative qualities are exclusively reflected on his premium products and organisational landmark structures. In the

aspect of his roles and responsibilities that reflect his title as *Adiguru Kraf*, the investigation has led to the five key involvements; which include 1) serving as an expert in the field of wood carving, 2) representing the country for the international competitions, festivals and exhibitions, 3) assisting local universities and other institutions for learning activities, 4) Organising and facilitating wood carving courses and activities, and 5) advancing in the production of wood carvings that combine traditional and modern techniques. His contributions towards the development of the craft, in general, are not limited to the five components only. However, the five components of involvements are categorised as his major leading roles until he received the recognition as *Adiguru Kraf* from the Malaysian government in 2019. He continues the roles and responsibilities until today because he always keeps his vast interest in sustaining the heritage craft of wood carving and industry in this country. The outcome and contribution of the paper is a better understanding of the roles of the master craftsman, which may become an inspiration for the younger generation of woodcarvers, designers, or artisans to excel in their profession. It is vital to continue this type of research to understand the roles and contributions of other *Adiguru Kraf* concerning their professional virtues and craft production. Eliciting and transmitting their knowledge and skills to the younger generation would ensure the development of heritage craft and industry for the people and nation.

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