

# The Symbolism of the Motif Malay Cucuk Sanggul

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## ABSTRACT

*Cucuk Sanggul* is a type of Malay accessories made from materials such as gold, silver, copper, wood, and others. Its purpose is to secure the hair in place, keeping it neat and tidy. Head accessories like *Cucuk Sanggul* serve as symbols of status, grandeur, and luxury in traditional Malay clothing. *Cucuk Sanggul* is categorized as a traditional accessory used by Malay women in the Nusantara. Research indicates that this craft is nearly extinct due to a lack of interest and skill among younger generations, and the design of *Cucuk Sanggul* has become outdated in the modern world. The objectives of the study focus on the design of *Cucuk Sanggul* within the context of Malay identity and women's civilization, and identifying the types and symbolism of the *Cucuk Sanggul* motifs. A qualitative approach through interviews was used in this research. The study also utilizes several samples of *Cucuk Sanggul* from museum collections as primary sources. The findings from this research can serve as documentation material and help preserve the design of *Cucuk Sanggul* within the context of national heritage art.

**Keywords:** *Form, Jewellery, Material Culture, Cucuk Sanggul, Symbolism.*

## INTRODUCTION

Material culture provides a crucial framework for understanding the customs, traditions, and societal structures that shape human civilizations. It encompasses artifacts, practices, and creations that are intentionally crafted to fulfill the cultural, social, and practical needs of a community. Anne (2008)

defines material culture as the study of handcrafted artifacts, archaeological findings, and social constructs within a society. Schlereth, as referenced by Blandy and Bolin (2012), emphasizes that material culture represents deliberate human modifications of the biosocial environment based on culturally prescribed norms and values. These definitions underscore the intrinsic connection between material culture and its creators, reflecting the intentionality and cultural significance embedded in physical objects.

The *Cucuk Sanggul*, a traditional Malay hair accessory, represents an invaluable component of the material culture of the Malay Archipelago, particularly in relation to women's identity and societal roles. Historically, the *Cucuk Sanggul* transcended its utilitarian purpose of securing hair; it was a profound cultural symbol denoting status, power, and refinement. This accessory, once prevalent among women of nobility and high societal standing in Southeast Asia and East Asia (Zubaidah, 2020), has gradually faded from contemporary life. Its decline can be attributed to changing fashion trends, a lack of cultural continuity, and diminishing interest among younger generations, highlighting the pressing need for its preservation and revival.

Within the Malay cultural landscape, the *Cucuk Sanggul*—also referred to as *Tusuk Konde* in Indonesia—is distinguished by its intricate craftsmanship and cultural significance. Typically constructed from precious materials such as gold, silver, and gemstones, this ornament is not merely a decorative item but a tangible manifestation of the wearer's social prestige, wealth, and cultural sophistication. The designs of the *Cucuk Sanggul* range from minimalist elegance to elaborate complexity, often incorporating hidden compartments as part of their aesthetic ingenuity. Measuring up to 10 centimeters in height, the *Cucuk Sanggul* is tailored to complement the wearer's hairstyle, particularly long, intricately styled buns (Siti Zainon, 2009). It is traditionally used in ceremonial contexts such as weddings and cultural performances, frequently accompanied by complementary adornments like *Petam*, *Gendik*, *Bunga Sunting*, *Bunga Goyang*, and *Bunga Jurai*. Together, these accessories form a cohesive ensemble that enhances the beauty and significance of the occasion.

The gradual disappearance of the *Cucuk Sanggul* from contemporary life is a poignant reminder of the fragility of cultural heritage. This decline underscores the importance of scholarly inquiry into its symbolism, design, and historical relevance. The *Cucuk Sanggul* is not merely a decorative artifact but a reflection of Malay women's identity, societal roles, and aesthetic preferences over generations. Its motifs, often imbued with symbolic meanings, offer valuable insights into the Malay community's cultural narratives and artistic sensibilities.

This study seeks to address the critical need to preserve the *Cucuk Sanggul* as an emblem of Malay cultural heritage. By examining the symbolism of its motifs and their evolution within the framework of Malay identity and women's civilization, this research contributes to the broader discourse on material culture and its role in heritage preservation. Moreover, it serves as a resource for contemporary designers, cultural historians, and policymakers to reimagine the relevance of traditional crafts in a modern context. Through this endeavor, the study aims to bridge the gap between tradition and innovation, ensuring that the legacy of the *Cucuk Sanggul* continues to inspire and educate future generations.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Syed Ahmad (1994), all works of art can be seen as artifacts from a certain perspective. The artist creates them not for their practicality but for their intended usage. According to Blandy and Bolin (2012), art uses form in conjunction with other elements to convey a statement or expression. Handicrafts allow individuals to create practical products that hold symbolic and significant value in their daily lives

(Syed Ahmad, 1994). *Cucuk Sanggul* served several functions and represented various significance beyond their primary aim of personal decoration.

## **Form**

The form embodies the artistic statement, inviting recognition, analysis, admiration, appreciation, and enjoyment. Classification can be achieved by examining the similarities in traits that indicate the style (Syed Ahmad, 1994). A component of a form is the theme. A motif is typically chosen as a decorative element for an object due to its aesthetic and attractive qualities. Furthermore, certain motifs are chosen due to their ability to evoke memories or feelings that hold great importance to the artist or society. In addition, specific themes are selected for their distinctiveness to elicit a feeling of adoration. In essence, the utilization of a motif will mirror the essence of symbolism and its inherent characteristics. Malay ring makers typically draw inspiration from the plant life seen in their surroundings when creating their designs (Adnan et al., 2013). In the Western world, the motif and form change across time, including during the Mediaeval era, Renaissance era, and subsequent periods (Siti Zainon, 1991). Another component of the form is the material used. Traditionally, *Cucuk sanggul* in both Malay and Western cultures were crafted from valuable metals like gold and silver, as well as from less valuable metals like bronze. The ornaments primarily comprise jewels. Occasionally, uncommon hardwoods, ivory, or bone were employed as substitutes for jewels in decorative items (Adnan et al., 2013).

## **Motif**

Siti Hajar (2015) defines a motif as a pattern arranged repeatedly to create designs in metal art, textiles, woodcarving, and other objects. Additionally, a motif is described as a pattern used in creating an object. A motif represents a visual depiction or image that serves as a decorative element on a metal surface, enhancing, beautifying, and adding value to the metal carving. Haziyah (2006) states a motif that produces a unique pattern holds significant influence because it determines the characteristics and function of the material rather than being merely decorative. Art is both outwardly manifest and has an inner meaning involving the use of all the senses. The Malay community has experienced different stages of cultural development, from animism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam to Western cultural influences. Islam has brought significant changes to Malay life, shifting from beliefs in supernatural forces, plants, living beings, spirits, and deities to a focus on the concept of the One True God Zaharah et al., (2016). The arrival of Islam in the Malay world did not eliminate the use of natural elements, especially fauna, but artisans adapted these elements into forms that align with Islamic teachings by using plant elements. Motifs are also realized in various ways and methods. Some motifs are used in their original form and are natural in appearance, while others are simplified and abstracted according to the materials used. Additionally, some motifs are stylized to enhance their aesthetic value. Flora or plant motifs are favored by carvers, created through direct observation and memory of their surroundings. The soft nature of plants symbolizes human harmony and a close relationship with the environment. The gentleness of flora is also associated with Malay culture, which values gentleness, politeness, and courtesy. Carvers use creativity and fine observation to develop and embellish these plant motifs into appealing designs. In essence, the idea of crafting natural motifs stems from the close relationship between the carver and their environment.

## **Symbolism**

Erwin Panofsky (cited in Siti Zainon, 2006) stated that symbols possess significant value and contribute to the artistic evaluation of items by fostering creativity. Bell et al. (2022) suggests that motifs might be seen as symbols that possess iconic forms, which can be further analyzed to derive specific meanings. Therefore, symbols can be seen as representations encompassing form, sign, image, or motif

(Saemah, 2014). Infused with philosophical concepts, it is widely held that each individual bears the duty to contribute something advantageous within a society. The motif's name is presented, which carries hidden meanings and is related to certain symbolism, morals, or guidance (Siti Hajar, 2015). For example, Malay groups frequently use the decorative motif known as '*Awan Larat*' in Kelantan', particularly for adorning *Cucuk Sanggul* (Adnan et al., 2013). This specific motif is widely regarded as one of the most prevalent abstract motifs in the Malay region. It is also commonly seen on various handicrafts, including wood carvings, metalware, and pottery. '*Awan Larat*' motif, which is thought to be influenced by the movement of clouds, is composed of interwoven spirals in the shape of 'C' and 'S'. This motif symbolizes gracefulness, love, and unity (Arba'iyah, 2018).






## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY




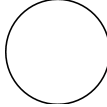
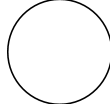
This study is categorized as qualitative research employing a descriptive methodology. Qualitative data is non-quantifiable information that pertains to things such as language, which can be observed but not quantified. There are two methods of collecting data: primary data and secondary data. Primary data is gathered through two methods: observation and interview. The observation collected comprehensive data regarding the *Cucuk Sanggul*, such as the composition of the body, decorative materials, and purchase price. The visual record was prepared to facilitate the initial study of identifying the form, including the motif and material. The process of extracting motifs and identifying materials was subsequently presented during an interview session with jewellery specialists and a *Cucuk Sanggul* maker to verify the accuracy of the data analysis. By studying signifiers in language and images. Secondary data is obtained from previous studies and other relevant academic discussions. The acquired data is subsequently examined to derive conclusions.

## DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

### Design of Cucuk Sanggul



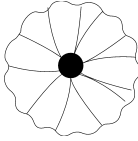

**Table 1. The Design of *Cucuk Sanggul* 1**

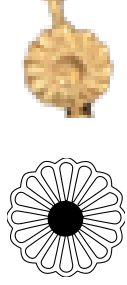
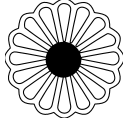



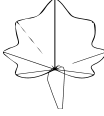
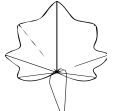
Cucuk Sanggul	Motif	Subject Matter	Category
 (Source by Aiqa Afiqah)	  Bunga Matahari	 a. Bunga Matahari (Source by Aiqa Afiqah)	Flora
			

	 Nanas	 b.Nenas (Source by Aiqa Afiqah)	
	  Circle	 c.circle	Geometry

The *Cucuk sanggul* one, also referred to as the *Cucuk Sanggul* spoon, has two limbs. The *batang/pencucuk* and body. The body of the squirrel has a spoonful of leprosy and is slightly curved. The shape of this square is also said to have a crown. This squire has two because the body is a little bigger than the other squire. The size of this hairpin is between 12 and 15 centimeters, and it is crafted from copper. This traditional *Cucuk Sanggul*, is adorned with *Motif Nanas*, *Motif Bulat*, and *Motif Bunga Matahari*.




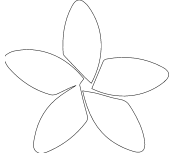

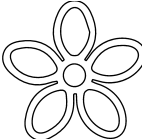

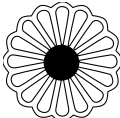

**Table 2. The Design of *Cucuk Sanggul* 2**

Cucuk Sanggul	Motif	Subject Matter	Category
 (Source by Aiqa Afiqah)	  Bunga Kangkung	 a.Bunga Kangkung (Source by Aiqa Afiqah)	Flora

	 <p><i>Bunga Dahlia</i></p>	 <p>b. <i>Bunga Dahlia</i>          (Source by Aiqa Afiqah)</p>	<p>Flora</p>
	  <p><i>Daun Keladi</i></p>   <p><i>Daun Keladi</i></p>	 <p>c and d. <i>Daun Keladi</i>          (Source by Aiqa Afiqah)</p>	<p>Flora</p>


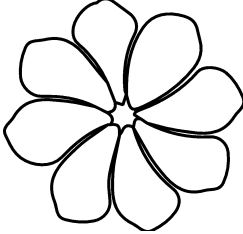

*Cucuk Sanggul Goyang*, also known as *Cucuk Sanggul Getar* and *Gedik*. This particular variety of hairpin is referred to as a "*cucuk sanggul goyang*" because it features a spring mechanism. There are three parts to the *Cucuk Sanggul Goyang or Getar*: the stem, the body, and the child. It was given this name because this *Cucuk Sanggul* has three, five, or eight *anak*, which are all different traits. You can see patterns on the spring in the child of this *Cucuk Sanggul Goyang*. This *Cucuk Sanggul Goyang* stick that vibrates has two sticks so that it can hold more *Cucuk Sanggul Goyang* sticks and be stronger. Dancers use this *Cucuk Sanggul Goyang* stick most of the time. As the bun stick moves left and right, it moves like its name says: vibrating and swaying *Cucuk Sanggul* stick. This *Cucuk Sanggul* may consist of only one stick, but it still needs to be used as a set. The intervals occur at three, five, and seven. Rocking *Cucuk Sanggul* designs often feature a single stem and a center point that serves to divide the number of *Cucuk Sanggul* heads. The size is 12-15 centimeters. This *Cucuk Sanggul* is made from copper. This *Cucuk Sanggul* is decorated with motifs *Bunga Kangkung*, *Bunga Dahlia*, and *Daun Keladi*.

**Table 3. The Design of Cucuk Sanggul 3**

<i>Cucuk Sanggul</i>	Motif	Subject Matter	Category
 <p data-bbox="321 894 578 926"><i>(Source by Aiqa Afiqah)</i></p>	 <p data-bbox="743 541 878 573"><i>Bunga Padi</i></p>	 <p data-bbox="951 506 1190 562"><i>a. Bunga Padi</i> <i>(Source from Internet)</i></p>	<p data-bbox="1300 520 1357 552">Flora</p>
	 <p data-bbox="724 821 898 852"><i>Bunga Kemboja</i></p>	 <p data-bbox="938 789 1198 846"><i>b. Bunga Kemboja</i> <i>(Source by Aiqa Afiqah)</i></p>	
	 <p data-bbox="748 1083 873 1140"><i>Bunga Kemunting</i></p>	 <p data-bbox="938 1150 1198 1207"><i>c. Bunga Kemunting</i> <i>(Source by Aiqa Afiqah)</i></p>	
	 <p data-bbox="735 1398 886 1430"><i>Bunga Dahlia</i></p>	 <p data-bbox="938 1486 1198 1543"><i>d. Bunga Dahlia</i> <i>(Source by Aiqa Afiqah)</i></p>	




*Cucuk sanggul* three is called *Cucuk sanggul Goyang*, sometimes referred to as *Cucuk Sanggul Getar* and *Gedik*. The name *Cucuk Sanggul Goyang* is derived from the spring mechanism enclosed in each stem of this specific variety of hairpin, which causes it to vibrate continuously. Although this *Cucuk Sanggul* may be composed of just one stick, it still needs to be utilized as a set. The intervals are at three, five, and seven. The dimensions measure between 12 and 15 centimeters. The *Cucuk Sanggul* is crafted from copper. The *Cucuk Sanggul* is adorned with motifs of *Motif Bunga Padi*, *Bunga Kemboja*, *Bunga Kemunting*, and *Bunga Dahlia*.

**Table 4. The Design of Cucuk Sanggul 4**



<i>Cucuk Sanggul</i>	Motif	Subject Matter	Category
 <p>(Source by Aiqa Afiqah)</p>	 <p><i>Bunga Melur</i></p>	 <p><i>Bunga Melur</i> (Source by Aiqa Afiqah)</p>	<p><i>Flora</i></p>

*Cucuk Sanggul* four, sometimes referred to as *Cucuk Sanggul Teguh*. Although this *Cucuk Sanggul* may consist of just one stick, it still needs to be utilized as a whole set. The intervals are three, five, and seven. Rocking *Cucuk Sanggul* designs often include a solitary stem and a centimetres that acts as a divider for the number of *Cucuk Sanggul* heads. The dimensions measure 12-15 centimetres. This hairpin is crafted from copper and adorned with a gemstone. The *Cucuk Sanggul* is adorned with the *Bunga Cempaka Kuning* motif.

**Table 5. The Design of Cucuk Sanggul 5**




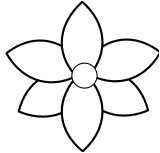

<i>Cucuk Sanggul</i>	Motif	Subject Matter	Category
 <p>(Source by Aiqa Afiqah)</p>	 <p><i>Daun Sireh</i></p>	 <p><i>a. Daun Sireh</i> (Source by Aiqa Afiqah)</p>	<p><i>Flora</i></p>







	 <i>Diamond shape</i>	 <i>b.Diamond shape</i>	<i>Geometry</i>
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*Cucuk Sanggul* five, sometimes referred to as *Cucuk Sanggul Teguh*, although this *Cucuk Sanggul* could be made up of two sticks or just one stick, it nevertheless uses a single primary pattern. It is common practice to employ three or five sets of *Cucuk Sanggul Teguh*, depending on the size of the *Cucuk Sanggul*. The twelve to fifteen centimeters is the overall measurement. Copper is used in this hairpin, and a gemstone is used to embellish it. It is embellished with the *Daun Sireh* motif and diamond shape, which is found on the *Cucuk Sanggul*.

Table 6. The Design of Cucuk Sanggul 6

<i>Cucuk Sanggul</i>	<i>Motif</i>	<i>Subject Matter</i>	<i>Category</i>
	 <i>Sulur Bayung</i>	 <i>a.Sulur Bayung</i> (Source by Koleksi Ukiran Kayu Muzium UM)	<i>Flora</i>
	 <i>Bunga Lili</i>	 <i>b.Bunga lily</i> (Source by Aiqa Afiqah)	

(Source by Aiqa Afiqah)	 Paku Pakis	 c.Paku Pakis (Source by :Internet)	
	 Kacang Buncis	 d.Kacang buncis (Source by Aiqa Afiqah)	

*Cucuk Sanggul* five is sometimes referred to as *Cucuk Sanggul Teguh*. Even though this *Cucuk Sanggul* could be made up of two sticks or just one stick, it nevertheless uses a single primary pattern. It is common practice to employ three or five sets of *Cucuk Sanggul Teguh*, depending on the size of the *Cucuk Sanggul*. The twelve to fifteen centimeters is the overall measurement. Copper is used in this hairpin, and a gemstone is used to embellish it. This *Cucuk Sanggul* was using a category motif of flora; It is embellished with the *Sulur Bayur*, *Bunga Lily*, *Paku Pakis*, and *Kacang Buncis*.

### Category of Motif

Motif	<i>Cucuk Sanggul 1</i>	<i>Cucuk Sanggul 2</i>	<i>Cucuk Sanggul 3</i>	<i>Cucuk Sanggul 4</i>	<i>Cucuk Sanggul 5</i>	<i>Cucuk Sanggul 6</i>
Flora	2	3	3	1	1	4
Geometry	1				1	
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>					

According to the findings of the research conducted on six *Cucuk Sanggul*, there are two categories of themes that may be found which are flora and geometry. Floral motifs are *Bunga Lily*, *Bunga Cempaka Kuning*, *Bunga Padi*, *Bunga Kemunting*, *Bunga Dahlia*, *Bunga Matahari* and *Bunga Kangkong*. Meanwhile, there are three types of leaves that are included which are *Daun Sireh*, *Daun Keladi*, and *Daun Paku Pakis*. *Motif Nanas* and *Kacang Buncis* are the fruit and vegetables that may be considered a motif. There are 16 total of different types of floral motifs. In addition, geometry motifs are utilized, although only two of them are analyzed, including a circle and diamond motif. The *Cucuk Sanggul* is made from copper, which was used to produce it.

## The Symbolism of motif *Cucuk Sanggul* in Malay Culture

**Table 8. Symbolism of the motif chosen**

Category	Motif	Symbolism Motif
Flora	Nanas	Symbolizes Economy
Flora	Bunga Matahari	Symbolizes health,Medical
Flora	Daun keladi	Symbolizes medical and daily needs
Flora	Bunga Cempaka kuning	Symbolizes fragrance and medical
Flora	Bunga kangkung	Symbolizes medicated or medical
Flora	Bunga Padi	Symbolizes Economy
Flora	Daun sirih	Symbolizes medical and malay culture
Flora	Sulur Kacang	Symbolizes of life
Flora	Kacang Buncis	Symbolizes medical
Flora	Bunga Dahlia	Symbolizes love
Flora	Paku pakis	Symbolizes medicated or medical
Flora	Bunga Lili	Symbolizes purity, sincerity, and fertility
Geometry	circle	Symbolizes Unity

It was found that the selection of floral motifs used in various artistic professions, like batik, wood carving, songket weaving, and exquisite metal carvings, is quite close to this selection. Natural flower motifs are a popular choice in fine metal carving, and this study identifies numerous important factors that impact this choice. Handicraft mostly takes into account the degree of individuality displayed by the flora. Form, color, scent, durability, practicality, health, and other characteristics are what set it apart. This uniqueness inspires the sculptor to employ those traits to create an absolutely one-of-a-kind piece of art. Craftspeople get their inspiration from the vast array of plant life, which includes different kinds of trees, flowers, and leaves, which they then use to create beautiful patterns. Typically, artists will base their carvings on visually appealing flower forms, such as those of Jasmine, Cape, Guri Crab, Star Anise, *Cempaka*, clove, and other similar flowers. These flowers also have fragrant aromas and attractive colors. A primary motivation for the usage of motifs is the choice of medical-related symbols. *Padi* and *Nanas*, two economic factors from Tanah Melayu, also have an impact on the gross domestic product of the nation.

Factors that are readily apparent and used in the social life of the community also play a role in the selection of natural motifs. Various plant species that thrive in gardens or communities are incorporated into floral designs. Some people grow these plants in their homes for aesthetic reasons and because they inspire them. These plants have dual purposes in households: as food sources and as attractive accents. There is a correlation between the choosing of natural incentives as motivations and medical functional

considerations. Many plants in the area have long been used for their therapeutic qualities by the locals. Fortunately, Malaysia is home to a wide variety of plants that have medicinal properties. The use of healing natural patterns also gives the wearer strength and vigor. Traditional medicine still has a big influence on the population, even in the modern medical system. In their view, traditional treatments based on organic substances are more hygienic and effective than modern medical procedures. The vast majority of medicinal plants are native species that grow in woodlands or in gardens owned by private individuals.

Factors like memories or sentimental values also play a role in the selection of natural motifs as beautiful metal carving motifs. "*Big Dipper Kiambang then coalesce*" is a Malay folktale that shows how the *Kiambang* motif represents the cultural value of communal peace. This provides more evidence that the concept of traditional Malay life is associated with natural selection. The ultimate arbiter in the selection of natural motifs for sculpture is the artist's view and assessment of the material's owner or wearer. Certainly, master craftspeople can assess and understand the personalities of their customers. Craftspeople who are really skilled at what they do can harmonize the qualities of plants with the personality type of their clients.

## CONCLUSION

The study's conclusion was that there are variations in the *Cucuk Sanggul* motifs among the collecting samples. This makes it clear that the people who crafted *Cucuk Sanggul* at that time used flora, geometric designs, and decorative motifs to make the *Cucuk Sanggul* look different. It demonstrates how different patterns and designs can be. Floral designs are utilized the majority of the time. The concept of *Cucuk Sanggul* is distinct because the singer draws inspiration from the natural world in keeping with Malay customs and beliefs. You may utilize *Cucuk Sanggul* for special occasions like weddings and concerts. In addition, it may be worn to formal occasions, art exhibits, and holidays. As a result, a lot of work must be done to preserve this traditional asset to prevent it from being lost in the modernizing wave.

The *Cucuk Sanggul* from the Perbadanan Adat Melayu Dan Warisan Negeri Selangor collection, can be preserved and its aesthetic appreciation among the younger generation can be encouraged by documenting the form's characteristics as well as its inherent meaning. The documentation may also serve as a source of guidance and references for future requirements. Offering more comprehensive information and facts about *Cucuk Sanggul* in Malaysia to the public, researchers from relevant fields, designers, jewelers, academics, and the younger generation.

The results show that *Cucuk Sanggul* 1 through *Cucuk Sanggul* 6 is a combination of semicircle and circle shapes with several geometric and floral themes. The shape and aesthetics of the *Cucuk Sanggul* are associated with symbolic connotations that describe their ideology and place of origin.

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