

# Iconography of the Ornaments on the Traditional Minangkabau House in West Sumatra

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**ABSTRACT :** The development of traditional ornaments in Minangkabau has been around for several centuries. The Minangkabau traditional building or the *Rumah Gadang* consists of several *lanjars*, into a single unit. In certain parts of this building, several carved ornaments. The ornaments in practice are not only decorative. They also reflect certain values related to the life of the supporting community, because traditional Minangkabau ornaments are full of meaning. These ornaments will be reviewed from an iconographic perspective. There are three points that will be examined in this study, namely: What is the expression of the traditional ornaments of the Minangkabau Traditional House; What is the relationship between the theme and the concept (image) contained in the traditional ornaments of the Minangkabau Traditional House; What intrinsic meaning or content is contained in the traditional ornaments of the Minangkabau Traditional House. To answer these questions an iconographic approach is needed which consists of three stages: (1) Prelconographic examination; (2) Iconographic analysis; and (3) Iconological Interpretation. The research method used is a qualitative method, with analytical descriptive analysis. The sample was determined based on purposive sampling technique and data was collected through literature study, observation and interviews. The data was then identified and classified selectively, and then analyzed and interpreted according to the text and context.

**Keywords:** Iconography, Ornaments, Minangkabau, West Sumatra

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Minangkabau is one of the tribes in West Sumatra Province. This area developed various fields of art, one of which is ornamental. Ornaments are often also referred to as ornaments that have been applied as decoration of an object. Art begins with a human desire to decorate objects around them (Jana, 2020). The position of art in human life could be described as follows: Although in general people may assume that the human need for beauty is a last priority, it is also true that ornaments are realized after other needs are fulfilled such as the need to eat and drink to sustain life (Soedarso, 2006). Ornaments are present in the midst of people's lives as a medium for expressing feelings manifested in a visual form, in which the process of creation cannot be separated from the influences of the surrounding environment.

The decoration on an object is basically an attribute that is applied to attain beauty or elegance. The decorative types act as a medium to beautify or beautify a work, it embellishes objects outwardly, even if one of them has a symbolic value or contains a certain meaning (Toekio, 1987).

Ornament comes from the Latin *ornare* which means to decorate. The term ornament is known in the fields of music and fine arts. In fine arts, ornament means filling the void of a field or spaces, filled with certain decorative motifs and patterns so that they become more beautiful (Tjetjep Rohendi Rohidi, 1987). In addition, ornaments are decorative patterns made by being drawn, carved and printed, to support increasing the quality and value of an object or work of art (Atik Hosiah, 2012). Ornaments are also found in many countries around the world. Sometimes there are similarities in ornaments between one country and another, as well as Indonesia. In Indonesia, each region has ornaments or decorations, such as: Aceh, Jambi, Bengkulu, Batak, Palembang, Lampung, West Java, Central Java, Yogyakarta, East Java, Bali, West Nusa Tenggara, Sulawesi, Kalimantan, Maluku and Irian Jaya and Minangkabau. Some of the ornaments that have been developed in these islands are considered to have been influenced from outside the country (Zulhelman, 2001).

Ornaments are usually applied to various objects, tools and facilities requisite to the needs of human life, both spiritual and physical. These include ritual needs, kitchen utensils, weapons, batik cloth, weaving, traditional cloth, ceramics, traditional houses, houses of worship, and others. The role of ornaments in people's lives as a medium of expression manifested in a visual form, intended to complement the aesthetic sense. The process of its creation is inseparable from the influence of the surrounding natural environment which has perhaps changed its shape from the original (Patriansyah, 2016). Ornament make an object beautiful and more attractive to the eye. Ornaments added to an object can also have symbolic values or fulfil certain purposes according to the ideas and goals of the maker (Artha & Nuriarta, 2019), such as the ornaments that adorn the Minangkabau *Rumah Gadang*. According to Minangkabau customary rules, in addition to functioning as decoration, ornaments also serve an educational purpose for the supporting community (Bahrudin, 2017).

In the Minangkabau area, ornaments are applied mainly as carvings for traditional houses. Besides being applied to buildings, ornaments are also applied to furniture, to woven fabrics, and to products made of metal, such as silver, gold, and brass crafts. In the Minangkabau area ornaments can be classified into three categories, namely: (1) those derived from the form of plants; (2) those derived from animal form; and (3) those derived from the form of objects (Setiyowati, 2010). The name of a carving or ornament can be seen from the relationship of the carving to people's lives. Each name can symbolize a symptom of life and symbolize the values of life in society. The names of carvings are also often used as guidelines for living in Minangkabau society. The names and meanings of Minangkabau motifs convey the social life of the people and are used as references in everyday life. The social life of the community can be seen from the names and meanings of motifs derived from flora and fauna. Values and customs are illustrated by the names and meanings of motifs originating from *petatah-petitih* (Nofrial & Laksono, 2021).

The depiction of the nature and natural phenomena can be seen from the names of carvings which come from the names of plants and the names of animals. The depiction of the value system of human life in society can be seen from the name of carvings which come from traditional words. Based on the philosophy and life principles of the Minangkabau people, the art of carving also tries to take the form of nature, including flora and fauna. Carving is symbolic of the embodiment of custom (Damayanti, 2017). Names of plants and names of animals are natural forms that are stylized so as to create a certain decoration. Nature is like fauna, flora and other geometric shapes, sometimes it is only imitated in passing, so it look very chaotic and difficult to understand. Traditional ornaments Minangkabau is one from of physical culture that born from the art system owned by the community. One from of cuktur product is carving ornaments produced by traditional craftsmen using tools in the of chisels (Shalika et al, 2020).

Ornaments, especially those of animal and human objects, have undergone changes in the process of their creation. According to Claire Holt in Bahrudin, in Hindu times beauty was an attribute of gods and kings. Living creatures that can take on more gross forms, which are naturalistic at first, gradually take on ugly and unusual forms. In Java, this typology of Islam persists in highly stylized puppets (Bahrudin, 2017). Traditional Minangkabau ornaments thus also have a symbolic purpose that contains teachings for the surrounding community. To discuss the traditional ornaments in the Minangkabau *Rumah Gadang*, we refer to Panofsky's

study of iconography contained in the book *Meaning In the Visual Arts*. This study was chosen because it delves into the interpretation of meaning, in addition to its proximity to the issue of cultural history, which is very relevant to the meaning of traditional ornaments. Panofsky stated that iconography is part of the history of art which deals with the interpretation of the meaning behind the form in a work of art (Panofsky, 1982). Every work of art has three main aspects contained in it, namely: objects, events, and the combination of the two will give birth to expression. Objects are configurations of visual elements that produce a world of vision for the observer, events are changes from parts of objects, and expressions are expressions of feelings emitted from objects and events. The three are seen as a unity and represent artistic motifs (Moserdisuroso, 2010). In addition to having a secondary meaning and an intrinsic meaning, the three meanings are sequely related in a tiered relationship.

- a. *Pre-Iconographic* (primary meaning): refers to an initial response to a work of art. Perception works to identify visible factual elements and then recognize them as a form or object. Furthermore, the eye detects changes in parts and recognizes the potential perceptual movement of objects. In preliminary stage, elements are grouped into factual meanings. Every artistic motif inherently carries characteristics emanating from the artist's cognition. This is analysis of primary meaning using the historical principle of style. "(a) view into the way in which, according to various historical conditions, objects and events are expressed by form". Feldman uses the term 'art style' in classifying characteristics in works of art and divides the appearance of works into four attributes, namely: (1) objective accuracy (objective accuracy), (2) formal order (formal order), (3) emotional style (emotion) and (4) fantasy style (fantasy). Feldman, 1967).
- b. *Iconographic analytic* (secondary meaning): To examine the themes and concepts in traditional Minangkabau ornaments by looking at the historical aesthetic pattern of the type vis-à-vis the concepts and themes that are expressed with objects and events that are influenced by historical conditions, according to conceptions of a certain region. So doing we relate artistic motifs and combinations of artistic motifs 'composition' to a theme or concept. The motifs, further recognized as carriers of secondary or conventional meanings, can be called images/images, and the combination of images is what ancient art theorists call *invenzioni*, and commonly refer to stories and allegory (Banindro, 2018).
- c. *Iconologic Interpretation* (intrinsic meaning or content). Iconology is a method of interpretation that arises from synthesis rather than analysis, and a correct identification of motifs is a prerequisite for iconographic analysis, as well as the correct analysis of pictures, stories, and allegory (Panofsky, 1982). In traditional Minangkabau ornaments, with an intuitive imagination how the objects excavated reflect symbolic values (cultural history).

The method is a qualitative approach is research and understanding process based on a methodology that We investigate the topic as a social phenomenon and human product. In this approach, the researcher creates a complex picture, examines words, reports detailed views of the respondents, and conducts studies in natural situations (Habsy, 2017).

## 2. HEADINGS

The existence of traditional Minangkabau ornaments cannot be separated from the Minangkabau traditional order, which regulates all aspects of the life of the Minangkabau people, including the life of art. All activities rely on the Minangkabau *Rumah Gadang*. If one wishes to the existence of Minangkabau ornaments, one only needs to look at a *Rumah Gadang*. These ornaments can be seen on the carvings of the *Rumah Gadang* (all walls made of boards replete with carvings) (Zulhelman, 2001), except for the back walls of the house made of woven bamboo as in the traditional house buildings located in the *Tanjung Emas* sub-district and the *Limo Kaum* sub-district, while the buildings in the *Pariangan* sub-district only have carvings on a small part of the building.

The Minangkabau *Rumah Gadang* began to be built during the Second Kingdom which ended in the VI century, since the formation of *Nagari* which began in *Pariangan Padangpanjang*. along with the entry of Islam and folk arts have developed (Zulhelman, 2001). *Rumah Gadang* started to have carvings and a porch since Islam entered the area (Mahmud Interview, 01 April 2010). It is called *Rumah Gadang* (*Gadang* = big), not because of its great physical form, but because of its function. As expressed in the following verse:

<i>Rumah Gadang basa batuah</i>	The great <i>Gadang</i> House of fortune
<i>Tiang banamo kato hakikaik</i>	The pillar is called the word essence
<i>Pintunya banamo dalia kiasannya</i>	The door is called figurative argument
<i>Banduanyo sambah manyambah</i>	The bow is worshiping
<i>Bajanjang naiak batanggo turun</i>	Tiered up, steps down
<i>Dindiangnyo panutuik malu</i>	The walls cover shame
<i>Biliaknyo aluang bunia</i>	His room is Alung Bunian

(Navis, 1984)

Meaning is as follows: the number of pillars determines the size of the building. The location of the door expresses the harmony that the owner holds. *Bendul* is a limit on the number of outside the house that cannot be exceeded without a house order whose walls are carved depicting the values of culture and civilization. While the cubicle is a place to store valuable assets (Suarman, 2000). In addition, *Rumah Gadang* is a place to maintain dignity. The coronation of the *penghulu* is carried out there, an important banquet is held there, and the *penghulu* receives respected guests. The power and even sanctity of the Minangkabau traditional house. This *Rumah Gadang* built in 1984 is a traditional house belonging to Dt Rajo Batuah (Interview with Dt Bungsu: 04 April 2010). Ornaments of Traditional Houses in *Jorong Gudam, Nagari Pagarayung, Tanjung Emas* District. The traditional ornaments of this house on the front are very ornate compared to the surrounding walls which are not so decorated. Left, right and back walls are made of bamboo. We observe a mixture of carving techniques from Java, especially in the form of carving. The surface of the carvings tend to be convex and rounded, in contrast to the style of Minangkabau carvings which have a tapered surface. We refer to the ornaments under the front window as well as ornaments located at the door of the hall to the left of the building. One of the samples in this study is the home of *patang* duck ornament which is located in the traditional house of Dt. *Rajo Batuah Jorong Gudam, Nagari Pagarayung, Tanjung Emas* District (Figure 1 and 2).

### 1. Pre-Iconographic Description of *Patang* Homecoming Duck Ornament

Regarding the ornaments, there is an ornament called *Itiak Pulang Patang* at the Dt Traditional House. *Rajo Batuah, Jorong Gudam, Nagari Pagarayung, Tanjung Emas* District. This ornament is located on the front wall and arranged linearly so as to cover the fields both vertically and horizontally (Usman, 1985). The *Itiak Pulang Patang* ornament is an ornament with the basic idea of a bird animal, namely a duck or duck that has undergone a process of stylization. The shape of the *Itiak Pulang Patang* ornament does not resemble the actual shape of the original duck but has gone through a process of stylization and abstraction as shown below (Figure 3 and 4). The basic subject of poultry and the process of stylization is also found in ornaments outside the Minangkabau area, especially in people who adhere to the Islamic religion, as in the picture below of the ornaments found on the steps of the entrance to the traditional house in the Riau area (Figure 5). In this traditional house, the ornaments are mounted horizontally on the front wall. The *Itiak Pulang Patang* ornament is almost the same as the double gyre ornament, in rhythmic form or repetition of one form. The placement of the ducks in rows includes a very simple ornamental arch similar to the letter S with some elements facing in opposing directions.

Pilin (spiral); in the form of niches that overlap or overlap to form a screw in the form of the letter S or vice versa. This twist shape can be enriched by repeating multiple gyres or combinations made of different sizes (Toekio, 1987).

The *Itiak Pulang Patang* ornament is basically in the form of a curved line that binds at a central point, while the gyre is generally made in multiples, continuously shaped like the letter "S" (Khairuzzaky, 2018). In Bali there are single gyre carvings or motifs called *kakul-kakulan* (Sunaryo, 2009). The arrangement is arranged in a row, reversed or not reversed (Rohidi, 1987). At the right end it is depicted as a rounded beak of a duck, the top is like a crest, then the upper arch of the back is depicted as a back, which at the end is like a duck's tail itself. In the center of this ornament, there are *isen-isen* that divides the shape of the duck ornament. This ornament is made rather full and even round, unlike the shape of a duck in general.

Ducks countrymen fowl; belongs to the Lamellirostres including part, the type that is kept is from the Anas family. The coat color is mainly brown-gray; flat beak; long necked; feet closer to the tail so that if you walk you have to be straight. Usually kept up to several hundred tails; maintained by shifting herding (Bahrudin, 2017)

Regarding the color used for the carvings of this fauna, it is a color that resembles the state of the animal's body to be carved (Syamsidar, 1991), the color in this ornament uses three colors including the duck shape using white and brown while the background is black. This ornament is arranged in a repeating symmetrical pattern. In addition to the method of arranging the basic forms of continuous gyre in the filling of a carving plane, symmetry is often used, meaning that an ornamental field is thus divided into two equal parts, filled with the same ornamental elements (Tjetjep Rohendi Rohidi, 1987).

## 2. Iconographic Analysis

The concept of this ornament is to present a harmonious and harmonious arrangement of forms, such as the rhythmic movement of ducks when they march home from their foraging place. This ornament is almost the same as the double gyre ornament. According to Hoop, this multiple gyre motif was used as a symbol of the natural movement of the sun during the bronze age and related to the worship of the sun at that time (Arifin, 2012). *Itiak Pulang Patang* ornaments include geometric shapes, in addition to purely abstract forms, geometric motifs sometimes depict certain objects, but because the shape has alterations it is difficult to identify the original object (Sunaryo, 2009).

The *Pulang Patang* duck is a satisfied animal with satiated appetite and returns at dusk. The ducks never return home in the evening ahead of each other, always following a leader. The life of the ducks is unanimous and helps, besides that the duck in front is always an example for the ducks behind it, in this ornament there is not the slightest picture of a duck, except for the repetition of a shape has like the letter S a forward leaning position (Bahrudin, 2017). Even if such a shape depicts a duck, the shape has been so abstracted away that it has become unrecognizable. The theme of the homecoming duck ornament elicits a sense of unanimous agreement on the same fate, as well as obedience to the leadership.

## 3. Iconological Interpretation

*Itiak Pulang Patang* (duck coming home in the afternoon). An ornament that conveys the meaning of relaxing or relief after successfully completing a strenuous task. This ornament also describes a feeling of release after working all day. The meaning of order, order and discipline is engraved in the hearts of the Minangkabau people (Aulia Azmi & Imam Faisal Pane, 2018). In addition to the meaning of the ornaments mentioned above, it also implies that the leader becomes an example for his followers like a line of ducks who always follow and obey whoever becomes their leader, with no sense of resistance or betrayal. If the lead duck front enters the water, the duck behind it will follow suit. Hence a proverbial metaphor of failure: like a duck falls down a *tabiang* (like a duck falls onto a cliff) (Pebriyeni, 2019). In terms of loyalty and cohesiveness, it can be used as an example in everyday life, especially in the process of socializing, but in the context of democracy this is a form of authoritarian leader because the leader imposes his will on those he leads or his subordinates. In Minangkabau society, the *Itiak Pulang Patang* ornament in the process of its creation is based on the philosophy, the *Basandi Syara Syara Basandi Kitabullah* tradition, this is a statement of the attitude of the

Minangkabau people to accept Islamic teachings which already have many similarities and are in line with Minangkabau customs before Islam came (Marthala, 2013).

The artist ornament makers are reluctant to make ornaments with literal animal shapes. Rather they prioritize symbols, and through the process of stylization. Indeed, geometric patterns can also describe tendrils or figures that can be recognized by their shape. The color of the *Itiak Pulang Patang* ornament is white and brown, the color is almost the same as the color of ducks in general, the brown color is associated with the color of the earth, or the natural color, while the brown character is closeness of heart, polite, wise, and wise. while the white color has the meaning of a positive, bright, firm relentless character and purity, white is also a symbol of peace, on the background of this ornament using a dark color (black) symbolizes strength, formality, and wisdom (Sandi, 2001).

### 3. FIGURES



Figure 1: Traditional House of Dt. Rajo Batuah *Jorong Gudam, Nagari Pagaruyung, Tanjung Emas District*



Figure 2: Duck Returning *Patang* motif found in traditional houses



Figure 3: Basic shape of duck



Figure 4: The result of the duck shape transformation become an ornament for the back of *Patang* ducks



Figure 5: Fighting Rooster Ornament

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Minangkabau customs are among the few local cultural heritages that still survive today. The most distinctive and most prominent is the art of carving. The wealth of assets in the form of carving is still being maintained. Not only outwardly, but also more deep in the philosophical meanings contained in. The shape of the carving was developed with the inspiration of three things, namely plants, animals and other natural objects that are used in everyday life. One of the carvings that contain philosophical meanings/values is an animal-inspired carving, such as *itiak patang*. This carving contains philosophical meanings, describing the harmony and harmony of the life of the Minangkabau people with their nature, the social order in everyday life between individuals in society, the order of the government system, the synergistic relationship between the kinship system, and resolutely faithful in carrying out the life principles, togetherness and cohesiveness of Minangkabau society.

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**How to cite this article:** Ahmad Bahrudin, Rosta Minawati, Miswar, Purwo Prihatin, Sumadi, *Iconography of The Ornaments on The Traditional Minangkabau House In West Sumatra, Asian. Jour. Social. Scie. Mgmt. Tech.*2022; 4(3): 71-78.