

## **Buah Buton in Traditional House Interior: Representation of Women's Role and Influence**

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### **Abstract**

*Buah buton is a three-dimensional wooden carving as an interior object in the traditional house of Negeri Sembilan. The purpose of this article is to establish a link between the buah buton in Luak Tanah Mengandung, Negeri Sembilan and the position of women who connect the legacy and leadership in the Adat Perpatih, a customary community law, and how such a relationship manifests itself within the traditional house's interior. The function of buah buton was revealed through fieldwork and interviews with community leaders, which were then combined into a narrative that represented the function of buah buton. The findings revealed the presence of buah buton design hung in certain positions in certain houses, mainly in women-dominated areas. The design and position of the buah buton represent the concept of feminism, which refers to the nature and character of women applied to the visual shape and position of the subject. This aspect is associated with the house's interior, such as the mother's house and tiang seri, which represents the unique characteristics of women and their influence in the Adat Perpatih. Through exploration of the psychological and cultural aspects of the mother's house within Adat Perpatih, this article intends to gain a deeper understanding of the societal framework. This inquiry will shed light on the distinct ways in which these environments shape and reflect women's pivotal roles and influences in their society.*

*Keywords: buah buton, art, carving, customary, influence, women*

## Introduction

Women are often characterised as the party responsible for various domestic roles in the house, including cooking and cleaning. In reality, this group serves a vital role as a 'bridge' and 'carrier' from one generation to the next (Brantelid et al., 2014; Saludin et al., 2020). In other words, they are the ones who give birth to renowned and strong leaders who wield influence around the world. However, there is a quality that might position women as important but sits behind their typical character (Rachman & Rahman, 2017; Setia et al., 2021; Yusop, 2017). Today, women have dominance in many leadership roles and organisational positions. This role demonstrates that the status of women is equal to that of men.

Similarly, the *Adat Perpatih* system (a customary law in Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia), which benefits women mostly, is a community-based legal procedure (Kassim, 1988; Radzuan, 2021). For example, an older woman named *Ibu Soko*, who is well-versed in customs, has the potential to influence the status and position of men in customs (Saludin et al., 2020; Wardi et al., 2018). The influence extends not only to the selection of customary leaders among men but also to the design of traditional houses in Negeri Sembilan. The mother's house, also known as *rumah ibu*, is a space next to the porch in the house reserved for *Ibu Soko* as a seat and for women.<sup>1</sup> It also serves as a room for the older woman to make family decisions, particularly regarding the positions and status of men. Along with *Ibu Soko* in that section, the main pillar, also known as *tiang seri*, is erected first before raising other structures to build the house (Shaffe & Said, 2013). A *buah buton* hangs next to the pillar and is carved at the bottom of a stick of wood that is hung from the house floor (Figure 1). The combination of these two interior elements, the main pillar and the *buah buton*, expresses a philosophy that highlights a woman's privilege as *Ibu Soko*.

*Buah buton* is an interpretation of the culture of *Adat Perpatih* within the people of Negeri Sembilan, one of the states in Malaysia. The interpretation is based on the community's practice of Minangkabau (an ethnic group from West Sumatra, Indonesia) traditions introduced to the state (Aman et al., 2019; Masri, 2018). It is generally known that the Minangkabau community's understanding uses Islamic

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<sup>1</sup> This space of the mother's house is usually a gathering place for women, especially when there is a large crowd. This area is also restricted to men with a family relationship, such as fathers, husbands, or sons. This rule demonstrates the social context of maintaining gender boundaries and respecting the women who have rights over the house and the land on which it stands. This honour demonstrates how *Adat Perpatih* values and protects women's chastity from neglect and threat.

teachings as the foundation for the spread of *adat bersendikan syarak*, *syarak bersendikan Kitabullah* [custom based on *sharia* that refers to the Quran, the holy book of Islam] (Asrinaldi & Yoserizal, 2020; Latif & Kosman, 2017). According to Latif and Kosman (2017), there are various designs for the circular *buah buton*, in which the carving is applied beneath the hanging pillar—a pillar that hangs from the surface of the floor of the house. Meanwhile, Rashid and Amat (2008) define its form as a *lebah bergantung* [hanging bee].

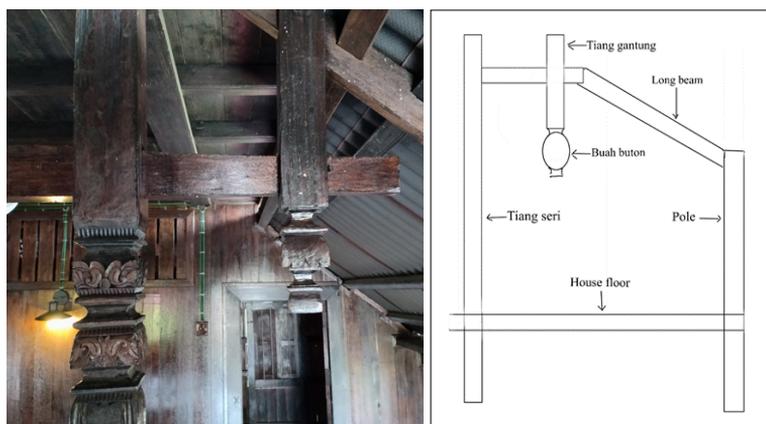


Figure 1  
The position of the *buah buton* next to the main pillar or *tiang seri* in the mother's house or *rumah ibu* (left); the sketch depicting the position of the *buah buton* and other house structural elements (right) (Photograph and image by authors)

According to Islamic law, Muslims are forbidden to create art forms such as sculptures, carvings, or statues depicting living beings, such as humans and animals (Effendy, 2004; Hussin et al., 2012; Salleh, 2017). The *buah buton* design in Negeri Sembilan, particularly in the Luak Tanah Mengandung area, as mentioned by Shahminan (2007)<sup>2</sup> and Idrus (1996), is carved from a stick or pillar block in a three-dimensional form that is more directed toward the shape of flora (Figure 2). The design is influenced by the physical characteristics of the referred-to subject. Half of it is carved into the form of a fruit, and the remaining part is filled with a distinctive pattern (Maamor & Taif, 2019). In accordance with the concept of *adat yang sebenar* [custom based on Islamic teachings], the process of establishing customs must be governed by Islamic teachings (Sutanto & Aveline, 2021). The same holds true for the *buah buton* (Figure 2) designs seen on traditional Negeri Sembilan houses, which are carved in accordance with the *Adat Perpatih* and Islamic beliefs. Nor and Shahminan (2016) said that every part of Negeri Sembilan's traditional architecture comes from Minangkabau, with no exception to the *buah buton* design.

<sup>2</sup> *Buah buton* can be found in traditional houses, including mosques, around Luak Tanah Mengandung, Negeri Sembilan, as stated by Shahminan (2007).

Figure 2  
 Three-dimensional  
 wood carving of  
 the *buah buton* with  
 floral carving at Luak  
 Tanah Mengandung,  
 Negeri Sembilan  
 (Photograph  
 by authors)



In Negeri Sembilan, the harmony of *Adat Perpatih* and the *buah buton* serves as an arbitrator of universality in the lives of the locals. Nature's relationship with humanity has made it a reference point for all actions. Similarly, the production of the *buah buton* design has been impacted by numerous areas of *Adat Perpatih*, including economics, politics, social structure, and art, among others. According to Navis (1984), nature has positioned people as one of the components with the same significance as natural elements such as land, dwelling, tribe, and *nigari* [state]. Each of these factors has served as the foundation for *Adat Perpatih* statutes and rules. These statutes and rules include the distribution of property, marriage, the choosing of leaders, the formation of families, and many others. The custom is described as a law that establishes the character of society according to the laws of nature (Saludin, 2009). This tradition in Minangkabau, which uses nature as a guide for life, has been around for a long time, just like the land where it started. Similarly, the role of women in *Adat Perpatih* has its uniqueness, which is likewise represented by nature as a metaphor for the traditional community's way of life. The image is conveyed by the visual and the location of the woman-associated design of *buah buton*. In reality, it is also regarded as a subject that leads to representation and is supported by philosophy.

This article aims to establish a relationship between the *buah buton* and women who have the right and power to determine customs and make leadership decisions. Such relationship reflects the interiority of a house by demonstrating how cultural elements and women's roles or influence are represented within the interior space of the house.

Exploring the placement, representation, and design of *buah buton* within the house and how it reflects the status, influence, and respect accorded to women who are custodians of tradition and leadership could be part of this inquiry.

### **Women's Dignity in Adat Perpatih**

The woman is the backbone of the *Adat Perpatih* community in Negeri Sembilan. The regulation states that a woman would get a portion of the estate upon its partition. She will receive the inherited property from her mother's ancestry. Hence, the woman who holds the property as a trustee will preserve the assets for future generations. This is the privilege of a woman in the *Adat Perpatih* culture, where the status of women is prioritised. This is expressed in the *teromba*<sup>3</sup> by taking nature as a metaphor for the concept of property ownership by women.

*Tahu mudarah jaga manfaat  
Mengenal laba juga rugi  
Tahu di onak yang menyangkut  
Tahu di ranting yang mencucuk  
Ingat di dahan yang menghempap  
Tahu di angin yang berseru  
Tahu di arus ombak yang bersabung*

[Know when to take care of the benefits  
Understand both profit and loss  
Know when to wade into matters  
Know when to avoid danger  
Remember when branches loom overhead  
Know when the wind calls out  
Know when waves collide and crash]

The matrilineal system, based on the mother's lineage, is the basis for recognising the descendants, known as *suku* or tribe in *Adat Perpatih*. The system demonstrates the female descendant from a woman in that customary as the tribe's link to the next generation. If a woman has a daughter, her tribe will descend to her children and continue to grow. On the contrary, a male descendant from a woman in the tribe will not pass on the lineage to their children and the link will come to an end. As a result, the tribe they hold must guard its reputation. This

<sup>3</sup> *Teromba* is a traditional poem used in the *Adat Perpatih* system as a guide and reference. The poem uses various natural elements as metaphors to convey its purpose and goal. The poem is delivered orally, without being completely written down, and is passed down from generation to generation. There is no specific creator of the poem.

is due to the importance of tribe for *Adat Perpatih* practitioners; the women need to know which tribe they belong to for their children's future. *Adat Perpatih* views women as beautiful and pure, the source of compassion, the backbone of marriage, and the saviour of this world and the next (Selat, 1976). This custom also represents women who are concerned with honour and dignity. As a result, every customary practitioner, regardless of gender, must protect the good name of their respective tribes. Islam emphasises the importance of protecting the status of women. Islam has elevated the status of women by placing a very high importance on the standards of women in society (Haji Hassan, 1996).

### ***Buah Buton* and the Influences on *Adat Perpatih***

The presence of *buah buton* in the traditional house bears witness to the life processes of its occupants. This is because the position and shape of *buah buton*, hung in certain areas, creates an essential representation of the occupants. Nature is believed to play an important role in shaping the image of this non-structural element. Various symbols and meanings were brought along by the Minangkabau to Luak Tanah Mengandung. Their principle is based on the *alam takambang jadi guru* [developed nature as a teacher] philosophy. According to Talib (2012), visualising this concept in Malay artwork requires creativity and inspiration to ignite the thinking process. This idea inspired craftsmen to create designs using nature as the subject matter.

Nature provides a source of inspiration for the *Adat Perpatih* community to process their ideas into hand-made works. Adaptations from flora, vegetation (fruit), and geometrical shapes of objects from the environment are incorporated into beautiful structures. For example, the shape of *buah buton* can be associated with and interpreted as fruit hanging on the branches of a tree (Nor & Shahminan, 2016). Philosophically, this relates to the natural attitude of togetherness among them, who are mutually dependent, just like a bunch of fruits.

Expressively, balance is also linked to *buah buton* that is hung strategically at a certain position. According to Latif (2017), the *buah buton* carved below the hanging pillar is placed in a specific order to align with the overall shape of the roof. This placement can be attributed to the personality of the *Adat Perpatih* community, especially in reminding the leaders to be fair and to never touch on sensitive matters that can jeopardise the peace in society. Decisions made should be based on *musyawarah*, which means deliberation or consensus before deciding what justice should be served. This demonstrates the nature of justice in a leader, which is translated in

the customary phrase *biar mati anak, jangan mati adat*, meaning a leader must be fair without favouring anybody. This fair nature creates trust among subordinates towards the leader who leads them, which eventually strengthens the leader's position.

### **The Influence of Ibu Soko**

To understand the significance of *Ibu Soko* in the *Adat Perpatih*, the context of leadership must be investigated to identify their relationship with men. In the administration of customary, men exercise authority over their families. For instance, the head of a family is the male on the mother's line, who is known as the *mamak*. This also pertains to *Adat Perpatih*'s pyramidal tier of male leaders. However, elder women or *Ibu Soko* determine a man's status in the custom for particular roles (Shahminan, 2007). In this case, the tribe's lineage could be traced back to their mother. If the mother does not produce a daughter, the tribe's lineage will stop immediately. According to Sahid (2018), women occupy a high status since the woman's womb is regarded as the only element that determines the future succession of the leaders in *Adat Perpatih*, such as *perut* [small group after *suku*], tribe, *luak* [area that practice custom], and *negeri* [state]. The *teromba* further mentions *Ibu Soko*'s distinguished position:

*Tiang seri rumah pusaka  
Pusat jala kumpulan tali  
Semarak dalam kampung  
Hiasan dalam negeri*

[*Tiang seri*, a traditional house legacy  
The center of net and rope collection  
Radiant in the village  
Ornament of the land]

*Ibu Soko* is very influential in the *Adat Perpatih* administrative structure, where she owns her unique authority (Saludin, 2011). The extent of her authority is unquestionable. The appointment of *Buapak* [the head of *perut*] or *Lembaga* [the head of *suku*], for instance, will be determined by *Ibu Soko*, who serves as a sign that a man is eligible to be elected to the post. The appointment would allude to *Ibu Soko*'s ancestry.

A woman is not chosen for the role of *Ibu Soko* based on preference among particular groups. *Ibu Soko* should be the eldest, smartest, and most responsible person in the community for preserving the tradition of their customs (Sahid, 2018). As mentioned by Shahminan (2007), *Ibu Soko* is a lady with experience and understanding of *Adat Perpatih* who has practised the custom throughout her life; as the

name *Soko* implies *pusaka* which signifies inheritance. Shahminan (2007) added that there are eight functions and roles of *Ibu Soko*, which are: 1) responsible for handling matters in a marriage where *Ibu Soko* and *Buapak* will be working together in deciding and approving the wedding; 2) acting as a marker and is responsible in selecting *Buapak* and *Datuk Lembaga* descending from her lineage; 3) joining every discussion regarding the custom, restricted in a separate room; 4) serving as an example to the followers by adhering to Islamic teaching; 5) protecting the heritage; 6) handling the land and heritage responsibly and acting as a trustee; 7) ensuring that her lineage becomes a well-civilised and wise society; and 8) continuing the expansion of her lineage through marriage by ensuring that married couples are good and noble.

The obligations and responsibilities of *Ibu Soko* demonstrate the position's influence. The role of *Ibu Soko* may be described as that of a person who works to maintain harmony among *Buapak*, *Lembaga*, *Penghulu* [the head of *luak*], and *Yamtuan* [king] (Abd. Jalil, 2003). This is demonstrated in *musyawarah*, where *Ibu Soko* would not behave imprudently or show favouritism. *Ibu Soko* should be fair and equal with all parties instead, showing that justice is also administered in traditional dwellings in Negeri Sembilan, particularly in Luak Tanah Mengandung. The separation of space in the home serves as a social border that requires systematic communication and the preservation of women's dignity, represented by *rumah ibu* or mother's house as the designated area for women.

### **Mother's House: The Honour of Women**

The honour of a woman is reflected in the construction of a traditional house. A special space was created for women's benefit, including their influence in *Adat Perpatih*. Mother's house is a room where women predominate (Ibrahim, 1993). The mother's house is located next to the porch, or *serambi*, and it is situated slightly higher than the porch (Figure 3). This arrangement demonstrates the respect shown to the women in the house. The area permits only males with close ties with the women to enter the area. In the context of *Adat Perpatih*, the mother, particularly *Ibu Soko*, would sit at the main pillar of the mother's house when the *adat berkedim* [leadership appointment ceremony] is performed inside the house. This layout demonstrates that *Ibu Soko* occupies a high position and should always be respected.

The space of the mother's house is highly correlated with the location where the *buah buton* is hanging. At least three pieces of *buah buton* are used to embellish the space with the three-dimensional carving. One of the *buah butons* must be lateral to the main pillar designated

for *Ibu Soko*. In addition to demonstrating respect for elderly and experienced persons, this placement demonstrates the privilege and position deemed significant in the custom arrangement. However, not all traditional houses feature the design of *buah buton*, particularly those suspended in the mother's house. These features are exclusive to houses with the strong influence of *Adat Perpatih* (Maamor & Taif, 2019).

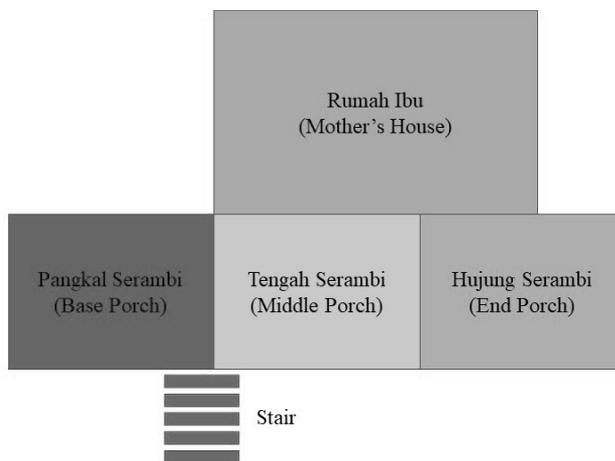


Figure 3  
The layout shows the position of the mother's house or *rumah ibu*, next to the porch or *serambi* (Image by authors)

### ***Buah Buton* at Luak Tanah Mengandung, Negeri Sembilan**

Fieldwork was conducted to investigate further the *buah buton* design in the traditional dwellings and its relationship with the women's status and influence. Not all traditional houses in Negeri Sembilan include the designs of *buah buton*. Based on the study by Nor and Shahminan (2016), six houses have *buah buton* design. However, only one traditional house in Luak Tanah Mengandung applied the design of *buah buton* in the space of the mother's house. Yusop (2017) also found in another house where there are six pieces of *buah buton*, of which three are hung in the mother's house. Referring to the two sources above, the field work took two houses in Luak Tanah Mengandung as the case studies, Ibah's house and Datuk Diwangsa's house. The names of the houses are derived from the names of the original proprietors in order to assist distinction and comprehension.

#### ***Buah buton* design in Ibah's house**

The position of the *buah buton* in Ibah's house is inside the mother's house (Figures 4 and Figure 5). Three *buah butons* are hanging in a row inside the space, each with a unique design. One of them has a floral design that hangs parallel to the house's hanging pillar (Figure 6) in the center of the room. The following description illustrates the *buah buton* design and its placement within the interior of Ibah's house.



Figure 4  
The front view of Ibah's house, which appears worn and abandoned (above), and the side view showing a part of the mother's house where the *buah butons* are hanging (below) (Photographs by authors)

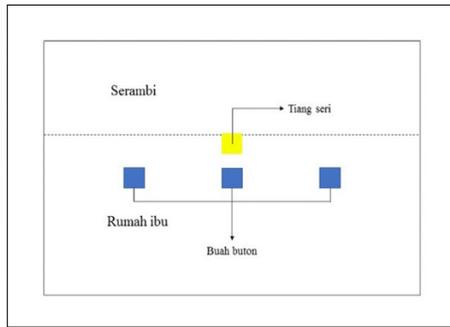


Figure 5  
One of the *buah butons* hanging in the mother's house of Ibah's house (left) and its position as indicated in the house layout (right) (Photograph and image by authors)

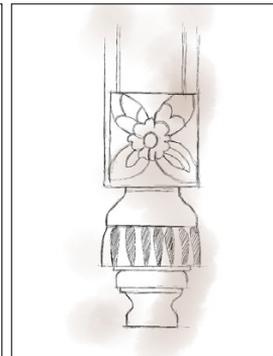
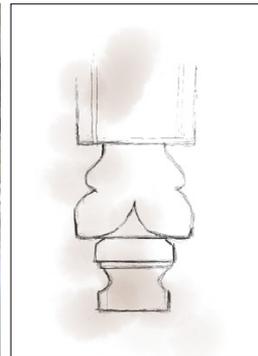


Figure 6  
One of the *buah buton* designs in Ibah's House with the floral motif, hanging in parallel with the main pillar (left), as illustrated in the sketches (middle and right) (Photograph and images by authors)

### ***Datuk Diwangsa's house***

There are six *buah buton* hanging in Datuk Diwangsa's house (Figure 7), which can be found in two parts of the house: the porch (Figure 8, left) and the mother's house. Each *buah buton* is lined up in a row, with one row on the porch and another in the mother's house (Figure 8, right). One of the *buah buton* in the area of the mother's house hangs parallel to the hanging pillar. Each *buah buton* located in the house has a unique appearance. A more geometric design produces a symmetrical appearance and is underpinned by a philosophy and significance (Figure 9). The following illustrations show the *buah buton* design and its placement within the interior of Datuk Diwangsa's house.



Figure 7  
The Datuk Diwangsa's house which has been relocated to Universiti Putra Malaysia's Malay Heritage Museum (Photograph by authors)

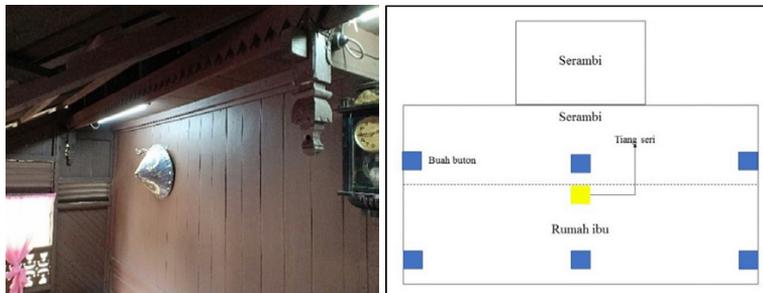


Figure 8  
Position of *buah buton* in Datuk Diwangsa's house hanging at the porch (left) as indicated in the house layout (right) (Photograph and image by authors)

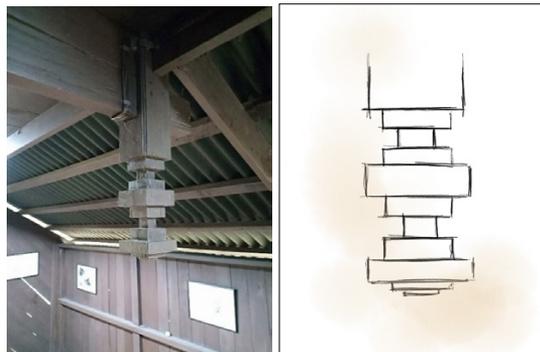


Figure 9  
*Buah buton* carved below the hanging pillar in mother's house in Datuk Diwangsa's house (left) as shown in the sketch (right) (Photograph and image by authors)

### **Buah buton and women in customary practice**

As a part of the fieldwork, some informants who practice the *Adat Perpatih* in Negeri Sembilan provided some responses regarding the link between *buah buton* and women. They address the function and role of women in the culture as well as their impact in the everyday practice in the house (Table 1).

Table 1  
Relationship between  
*buah buton* and  
women according to  
the informants

<b>Informants</b>	<b>Status/Role in the society</b>	<b>Responses</b>
<b>Informant 1: ZJ</b>	<i>Ibu Soko</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The position of <i>Ibu Soko</i> serves a crucial role in <i>Adat Perpatih</i>.</li> <li>• <i>Ibu Soko</i> has a unique position in a traditional house in Negeri Sembilan.</li> <li>• <i>Ibu Soko</i> sits on the main pillar for special events like weddings, the election of leaders, etc.</li> <li>• <i>Ibu Soko</i> is a significant individual who will oversee and ensure the success of an event.</li> <li>• Women in this customary become mothers, thus, as a result, women are valued and granted advantages within this culture.</li> </ul>
<b>Informant 2: AA</b>	<i>Customary leader</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Ibu Soko</i> has the authority to choose the selection of new leaders.</li> <li>• <i>Ibu Soko</i> is also responsible for overseeing the seamless execution of the ceremonial arrangements.</li> <li>• <i>Ibu Soko</i> has a particular position in the house.</li> <li>• In traditional houses, hanging pillars are a particular area for <i>Ibu Soko</i>.</li> <li>• Furthermore, these customs accord specific benefits to women, since they are the group that impregnates and carries on the tradition to the next generation.</li> </ul>
<b>Informant 3: SD</b>	<i>Traditional practitioner</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The main pillar is an important location for <i>Ibu Soko</i>.</li> <li>• The design of <i>buah buton</i> beside the hanging pillar represents its owner, <i>Ibu Soko</i>, as a symbol.</li> <li>• Likewise, houses with the designs of <i>buah buton</i> imply that the owner is a powerful member of <i>Adat Perpatih</i>.</li> <li>• <i>Ibu Soko</i> decides if the issue concerns the selection of a leader.</li> <li>• <i>Buah buton</i> with flower carvings is a clear indication that the theme is tied to women, particularly <i>Ibu Soko</i>.</li> <li>• The custom accords women's special rights.</li> </ul>
<b>Informant 4: SK</b>	<i>Customary leader</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women in <i>Adat Perpatih</i> link generations, making women have advantages in custom.</li> <li>• <i>Ibu Soko</i> is a person with the authority to decide the family head.</li> <li>• <i>Ibu Soko</i>'s specific place is in the hanging pillar and mother's house.</li> </ul>
<b>Informant 5: AKU</b>	<i>Customary leader</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Ibu Soko</i> plays a significant role in selecting a leader.</li> <li>• <i>Ibu Soko</i> chooses and arranges certain events.</li> <li>• In <i>Adat Perpatih</i>, women have advantages.</li> </ul>

The informants' responses generally indicate the privileges of women in *Adat Perpatih*. Meanwhile, *Ibu Soko* is considered an individual who influences in determining the leader. In that determination, there is a special space inside the house where a hanging pillar is a place for *Ibu Soko*. In fact, *buah buton* is also considered a representation of *Ibu Soko*.

### ***Buah Buton and Women in Adat Perpatih***

*Buah buton* is a manifestation of how *Adat Perpatih* represents a person's status. *Buah buton* contains influential symbols with a philosophy and significance that influences their design. The idea represented in *buah buton* is parallel to the understanding of women's status in the life custom that has granted them rights and enhanced their dignity in numerous ways, such as political power, property allocation, and the flow of lineage from their *suku*.

The fieldwork in Luak Tanah Mengandung reveals that there is a link between *buah buton* and women in this culture. The relationship concerns the women's political and symbolic significance of *suku* and lineage. Women who occupy the position of *Ibu Soko* are accorded a significant level of political respect. They are the actors that select who will succeed the current leader. If *Ibu Soko* affirms a candidate's qualifications, the candidate will occupy the position. If the response is negative, the person will not be nominated as a leader. This position indicates that *Ibu Soko* has the authority to decide who is qualified to assume a position in *Adat Perpatih*. In reality, the choice is made internally in conjunction with several parties. Meanwhile, *Ibu Soko* will sit in a designated area at the hanging pillar in the interior layout of a mother's house. This position is supported by the design of the *buah buton* that hangs next to the structural element.

The position of the *buah buton* in *Ibah's* house lends credence to the heirs' claim that the original owner of this house was an *Ibu Soko*. This is because its position, hanging in the mother's house's room and parallel to the main pole of the house, is where *Ibu Soko* sits. In this customary system, *Ibu Soko* would sit at the house's main pole, listening to the arguments and deliberations in the hall. *Ibu Soko* appoints leaders such as *Buapak* and *Lembaga*, and women in this position make decisions such as marriage. The two lines below refer to *Ibu Soko's* privilege.

*Baik-baik berhati-hati dalam berkata-kata  
Sebab kata putus dari aku*

[Be careful in what you say  
Because the decision comes from me]

The term *aku* which means 'me' refers to *Ibu Soko* as the decision maker. The women who take roles as *Ibu Soko* make the decision based on their experience as older women in this customary family.

Meanwhile, the *buah buton* located in the house of Datuk Diwangsa is more representative of the symbolism and lineage of *Adat Perpatih*. This case demonstrates more about the philosophy and significance that emerges from each *buah buton* in the house. This subject serves as guidance for the *Adat Perpatih* community based on prior experience. Among these experiences is the information necessary to ensure that successors develop and preserve the family history, therefore preserving the *suku*'s honors. Therefore, the acquisition of property in favours of women does not include inheriting the deceased's property, but as trustees who manage the inheritance for the benefit of their tribe. Therefore, many patterns on the *buah buton* of Datuk Diwangsa's home represent the lineage and the expanding *suku*. This also transmits the family's legacy to future generations. Therefore, women take a unique position as persons who are entrusted with caretaking responsibilities owing to their status in society. This is shown by the *buah buton* hanging in the mother's house, which demonstrates the philosophical framework conveying the fact of women's role in determining the next traditional customary practitioners.

### **Conclusion**

*Buah buton* as an interior element in traditional houses at Luak Tanah Mengandung, Negeri Sembilan, is a representation of women's role and influence in *Adat Perpatih*. The idea behind the creation of the three-dimensional wood carving reinforces this argument. The representation is further enriched with a connotation that women's position in the customary practice is equal to the dominating man who holds the reins of power. *Buah buton* not only becomes a representation of women who are often considered weak, but in reality, it is also capable of elevating women's dignity, as an implication in *Adat Perpatih* where women are granted advantages in achieving communal sustainability. The spirit of women in their struggle for survival and their determination to assert their rights at a global level shapes the sustainability of society. *Buah buton* is positioned within the interior of the traditional house as a reflection of the important status and influence of *Ibu Soko* in the decision-making process within customary practices.

*Buah buton* is more than just a piece of artwork; it brings an understanding of the women's bravery and strength. Its hanging position in an interior space, such as a gathering place for women, alludes to the context of protection. Beyond the context, there is the

women's aura and voice for the rest of the world to hear. The study of *buah buton* in relation to women's status suggests the need for further exploration of the psychological and cultural aspects of the mother's house interior within *Adat Perpatih* to gain a deeper understanding of the societal framework. This inquiry will shed light on the distinct ways these environments shape and reflect women's pivotal roles and influences in their society.

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