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# Pudu Jail's Graffiti: Beyond the Prison Cells

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Plymouth University

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**PUDU JAIL'S GRAFFITI: BEYOND THE PRISON CELLS**

by

**KHAIRUL AZRIL ISMAIL**

A thesis submitted to Plymouth University  
in partial fulfilment for the degree of

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

School of Architecture and Design Environment

September 2014

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*For My Family*



*In Memory of*  
*Dato' John Michael Gullick*



1916 - 2012

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## Author's Declaration

At no time during the registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy has the author been registered for any other University award without prior agreement of the Graduate Committee.

Work submitted for this research degree at the Plymouth University has not formed part of any other degree either at Plymouth University or at another establishment.

Relevant seminars and conferences were regularly attended at which work was presented; external institutions were visited for consultation purposes and several papers prepared for publication.

### Publications:

- Selected works, "Narrative in Malaysian Arts, Volume 2", Published by Rogue Art, 2013
- International Symposium of Electronic Arts (ISEA 2008)

### Presentation and Conferences Attended; where the subject of research had been presented:

- Invited Speaker, "Museums of Memory", Plymouth University 2014
- Guest Participant, "2nd Annual Prison & Correctional Facilities Asia" Conference, Kuala Lumpur 2012
- Paper Presentation, "Radical Aesthetics: Critical Dialogue", Loughborough University, UK 2012
- Paper Presentation, "Experiencing Prison" Conference, Poland, Warsaw, 2011
- Paper Presentation, "FIXED?" Conference, University of Plymouth, Devon, UK, 2011
- Invited Speaker, Badan Warisan Malaysia (Malaysian Heritage Organization), 2009
- Invited Speaker, Chai Art House PJ, Malaysia 2009
- Invited Speaker, Malaysian Prison Department, 2008 & 2009
- Paper Presentation, International Symposium of Electronic Arts (ISEA), Singapore 2008

### Exhibitions, where selected photographic images were presented:

- Singapore International Photography Festival (SIPF), Singapore, Selected Works, 2008
- International Orange Photography Festival, Contemporary Photography from South East Asia, Changsha, Hunan Province, China, Selected Works, 2010
- Tokyo Month of Photography 2009, Tokyo Metropolitan Museum, Selected Works, 2009
- "New Wave of Responsive Images", Istanbul, Selected Works, 2009
- "Last Voices of the Pudu Jail", Bastion House, Malacca Museum, 2009
- Singapore International Photography Festival (SIPF) 2008, Selected works  
2902 Gallery & National Museum of Singapore; Singapore 2008;  
Travelling Exhibition: Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok & Manila, 2008-2009
- Solo Exhibition: "live animals inside!", Wei Ling's Gallery, Kuala Lumpur 2008

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Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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## Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to examine and analyse the images of graffiti contained within the portfolio of 'Pudu Jail's Graffiti (PJG)', documented work from the abandoned prison facility in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, between 2002 and 2003. The objective has been to discover whether the 'Pudu Jail's Graffiti', has a distinct visual narrative(s) compared with other prison graffiti research, concluding that its qualities lies in the complexity of visual cultures brought within the space of the prison cells.

The prison graffiti retrieved from this portfolio has been analysed through a process of qualitative review; in order to find its thematic alignments based on comparative categorical contexts.

This research will assess the concepts of the proposed themes of the PJG (there are ten themes such as Names, Time, Food, Religious gates, God(s), etc.) noting that the graffiti's visual and textual narrative context was based on the local, vernacular culture, and social influences, which remained as part of the inmates' or the cells' previous occupants memories and the cultural embodiment that they had reflected onto the cell walls.

It will look into the PJG's significance and function, which contained a mixture of memories, events, places, professions of love, religious commitments and various tell-tale signs of messages that seemed to have been made exclusively for the inmates themselves. These personalised marks would throw light on the relationship between the inmates and the prison cells' embodiment of their narratives. Thus, this research represents a continued effort to obtain an updated description of prison graffiti by finding an alternative approach within prison graffiti research.

Combining both elements of the research, namely the meaning of the images and the acknowledgment of the space in which they reside, may lend greater argument to prison graffiti research and reveal the deeper connections that graffiti may have towards its cultural surroundings.

### ***Key Words:***

Pudu Jail, Graffiti, Prison Art, Cell Space, Visual ethnography, Photographic Documentation, South East Asia



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# Chapter 1

The beginning

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## Brief History of the Pudu Prison



Plate 1 - The Pudu Jail in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Personal photograph by the author, 2008.

Kuala Lumpur is located in the main state of the Peninsula of Malaysia, in the tropical South East Asia region alongside the Straits Settlements. This town was established in the middle of the jungle because of tin mining; tin was unearthed by Chinese miners, sent by the sovereign ruler, Raja Abdullah, a Malay-Chief who governed the land of the Klang Valley, in 1857 (J. M. Gullick 1994, 2).

The name of the town originated from the junction on the river, which splits here, going towards Gombak one way and becoming the Klang River the other way. Some think the town should have been called 'Kuala Gombak' instead, however the word '*Lumpur*' (directly translated as 'mud' or 'muddy') was preferred, as it could have also been a corrupt form of a Chinese word for 'jungle' (J. M. Gullick 1994, 4).

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With the mining boom of 1887, Chinese and Indian immigrants flocked to the town, now rising from muddy streets, to work. Like most mining towns, it has had its share of problems because of vagrants, with continual incidents of robbery as well as opium and gambling dens. Fear was always present as the secret societies and gang rivalries made it a dark place. Fire was a regular occurrence as roofs were made of palm thatch; according to the Australian Surveyor, Ambrose Rathborne, the residents were often too scared to run away or even open their doors for fear of both robbery and fire (J. M. Gullick 1994, 12).

The transformation of the town's buildings, using bricks and tiles, came about during the time of its influential administrator and town builder, Capitan Yap Ah Loy, who made it into a State capital helped by British and Eurasian administrators sent by Singapore's British Office, in March 1880. This led to it becoming a leading municipality by the end of the century.

By the 1890s, Kuala Lumpur had grown considerably, by now having its own government buildings, hospitals, administration buildings, shops and houses, markets, schools, exclusive clubs, mosques, temples, churches, banks and its own *prison*.

The style of the town was what would one would expect from British administrators, with classical Greek temples, as well as the influence of a brilliant architect R.A.J. Bidwell who imbued the town with North Arabic and Indian styles, known as the 'Mahomaten' / 'Muhammadan' or 'Neo-Saracenic' (J. M. Gullick 2012, 89). As most of the British engineers and architects in Malaya had come from Ceylon, they used designs acceptable to the Muslim population and authorities. This style of building was later encouraged and continued with the town's more modern architecture in Charles Edwin Spooner's time as the State Engineer in Selangor.

In 1883, land was acquired from the Colonial Office in Singapore, as indicated in a letter<sup>1</sup> to the British Resident, Sir Frank Swettenham, who was interested in land in Jalan Pudoh<sup>2</sup>, which



was owned by three locals: Haji Suleyman, Baginda Halim and See Bee Bee. He wanted to acquire that particular piece of land to turn it into either a jail or a hospital.

Chinese burials needed to be removed from the site but the local people were concerned that bodies or bones should be collected properly, with respect, and buried elsewhere. However, a grant was proposed by Sir Frank Swettenham to finance the keeping of European and other cemeteries of all kinds in decent order<sup>3</sup>. A further letter of 23 December 1891<sup>4</sup>, pointed out that the proposed jail site was beside the tile works<sup>5</sup>, which had been approved by the acting British Resident, Sir J.P. Rodgers, and would involve building on land occupied by five houses owned by the three locals mentioned above. Financial compensation for two out of the three proprietors was not forthcoming until after their houses had been torn down and agricultural land ploughed up. Payments were not honoured until the end of the financial year, 1891.

Pudu Jail was a remand and prison centre for decades until the Japanese occupation of Malaya in 1942, when it became a prisoner of war camp for the locals, English, Australians, New Zealanders and other foreign soldiers after the fall of Singapore to the Japanese. (refer to *Beyond Bars: KL's Pudu Prison 2010*).

The prison's cross-shape design was based on the Bogambara Prison in Ceylon<sup>6</sup> (now known as Sri Lanka). It was three storeys tall and had 240 cells. It was designed to house 600 prisoners of all types<sup>7</sup>, including juveniles, had a remand centre, and was licensed to administer the death penalty. Eventually, according to the Malaysian Prison Department, Pudu Jail had to close down because of the age of the buildings and the fact that it was overcrowded and situated in a densely populated area at the centre of the metropolitan city. Furthermore, the jail was right in the middle of an area of strategic development in Kuala Lumpur and was hindering any commercial development in the area.

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The jail ceased to operate on November 1, 1996 and its 1,578 inmates and 502 staff were transferred to another recently built modern prison facility outside Kuala Lumpur (Sungai Buloh Prison). From the date of its closure, it remained empty until 2003, when it re-opened as a remand and drug rehabilitation centre; this was done so as to have a temporary space in order to facilitate the city's image prior to the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) summit in Kuala Lumpur the same year.

However, the site was not free from the sound of construction for long. In 2007, it was pinpointed as a potential site for a business and residential district as was announced by UDA Holdings in 1984<sup>8</sup>. In October 2010, Pudu Jail was finally demolished to make way for a new commercial district (Poh 2009). Many considered the site to have been in the way of progress even though it had a long forgotten heritage. Its story would eventually be told from within its own walls.

Almost immediately a year after the prison had been vacated in 1996, a team of degree students from the University of Malaya, Faculty of Science in Architecture, had done extensive measured drawings of the prison space and its amenities. A segment from their report briefly revealed the existence of the prison's graffiti:

“Due to the nature of penal architecture, it produces an inherently clinical and **impersonal** (bold in original) environment. Lack of communication is prevalent among inmates; therefore the prisoners expressed themselves in the form of graffiti on the wall.

Although these graffiti, or sketches on the walls is not a part of the architectural element of Pudu Prison, we feel that it is appropriate to highlight these drawings because it contributes to the whole atmosphere of the prison. It also reflects upon the inherent psychological deprivation of penal architecture.”

(Inangda 1997/98, 22)

~

### Introduction: A Note on The Pudu Jail's Graffiti



Plate 2 - "Love is Dream", graffiti photographed by the author, 2002

The source of this research was derived from an old photo-documentation project, which I undertook during the six months between August 2002 and March 2003 at the Pudu Jail in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

This project was a commissioned work, which was authorised by the Urban Development Authority (UDA Holdings) to document the prison facility before the re-purposing of the defunct prison facility begins in late 2003. Being a freelance photographer at the time, in which later this project became a complimentary resource in another elaborated project with the

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Keretapi Tanah Melayu Berhad (KTMB), which I had spent another 6 months documenting an old defunct railway facility in Sentul Kuala Lumpur, which had its share of blue-collared workers' life, which had a hand in explaining some of the elements contained within the PJG.

The images of the graffiti were made from my own first-hand experience while navigating through the prison facility. I used an instinctive approach in documenting both the prison spaces and the graffiti found within the cells, being unaware at the time of a more systematic methodological approach or 'research process' for visual documentation and responded directly to the significant shapes and types of graffiti found within the prison's cells.

There was no direct contact with any known prisoners who made these markings, as the Malaysian Prison Department was a separate entity when I worked on this documentation, with permission from the city's Urban Development Authority Holdings. The previous occupants, the wardens and the prisoners were transferred to other prison facilities as it was officially closed in late 1996. Early attempts at making contact with the Prison Department proved difficult as I was an independent entity without any authoritative affiliation, and they had considered my request to contact past prisoners and wardens of Pudu Jail as a breach of security. At that point, the images I had in my hand were of no interest to the UDA holdings or the Malaysian Prison Department.

I carried on with the documentation until the middle of March 2003 as there were plans to use the prison facility as a remand centre. I walked away from the prison and the images of Pudu Jail and the graffiti within have remained quietly in my care since then.

It took many more months for me to process the films; some were damaged during development due to high humidity and the entire collection of images wasn't finished until the end of 2004. I had taken these images as a Masters project in a local university, which had

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given birth to the idea of the possibility that these images could become a concise form of portfolio.

It was much later in 2008, that the owner of a local art gallery not too far away from the prison, took an interest in this portfolio and exhibited some 60 images of the works. This first-time ever exposure had given a face to this unknown world of prison art. It was mentioned by the owner of the gallery, that the exhibition had attracted great interest from the public and it was even an exciting event for her, which gave greater exposure to her gallery. This had given me the desire that, one day; this portfolio will finally take its place as a retrospective of the prison graffiti found within the Pudu Jail.

The success of the exhibition, along with my being a lecturer in a government-funded University, gave me the advantage as a government servant to re-approach the Malaysian Prison Department a few years later, and together with the Malacca Museum as the exhibition's host, we had managed to collaborate to create a more approachable museum display of the remnants from the past of Pudu Jail. It was a good coincidence that we were publicising the exhibition in the public domain while the announcement that the Pudu Jail was to be demolished was the main point of discussion in the media. The reaction to the exhibition was overwhelming, attracting more than a thousand visitors a day, and the number tripled at the weekend, according to the headcounts done by the Museum. The exhibition ran for three months and gave very much the desired effect to both the Malaysian Prison Department and the Malacca Museum. This was one of the last times, as an exhibition, that Pudu Jail's Graffiti was shown to the Malaysian public.

The images that appeared within this portfolio showed many kinds of writing. Most of the anecdotes, quotes, and poetry came with very little in the way of bibliography. These graffiti were already anonymous despite the reclusiveness of information to the origin of the authors

themselves. I began to realise that there would actually be no need to try to trace the authors responsible for the graffiti if my proposed thesis was to take a visual ethnographical approach, in which will uncover the contents and contextual details remained within the prison graffiti.

I had avoided many times taking these images forward as a form of 'depictive' misery of incarceration. On several occasions, I have heard and listened to many horrors and sympathised with stories of the injustices that happen within prison. The worst were those seeking the world of ghosts and the paranormal, which I felt very reluctant to even take forward. Yet the work I intended to follow within this portfolio was removed from such subjects. What lies within this thesis about the art is not concerned with prison reform and social justice. These works may have some designs applicable to such subjects, thus giving it a probability to link of the localised culture, which surrounds the prison itself.

I had presented some portions of this documented works on several occasions (refer to Appendix n, page liv), both locally in Malaysia and to international audiences. Many questions were raised and support was welcomed. But there was one instance when I was struck dumb when asked; "What do you mean by understanding?" during an exchange of dialogue while presenting the research paper, as to why it should be shared with the world. That question grew exponentially and I became obsessed with finding the answer to such a fundamental question. What appeared to me was that the 'understanding' that I desired to resolve, was of no importance. Hundreds, if not, thousands of hours were spent looking at these images. I began to realise that there was indeed the need to continue to explain what these graffiti meant to me, as well as to consider the audience had their own capacity to read and experience these images as they saw fit without the need for them to be forced into any pre-conceived notion of 'understanding'.

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I knew the decision to proceed with this research would reveal very little information on the origin of the graffiti's authors; without knowing the number of writers or specific details about the past inmates, it would not be possible to fully explain the rationale behind the drawings' intentions. However, I believe this does invoke an inquisitive nature into finding a common ground on how these kinds of graffiti link the inmates with the devotional objects and subjects in their lives, while ignoring the existence of their crimes or confessions.

The drawings found were necessarily simple and repeated techniques used by those who are not exposed to the rules governing art drawings. Yet those hard lines on the wall define the spirit of their makers' will and certainly carried a different significance compared with the drawings done on paper. Over the years of abandonment, these drawings remained silently on the dark walls of the prison, and now, these markings will disappear completely from the world as the wrecking ball plummets into the bowels of the prison.

The graffiti is certain to disappear without any consideration on the part of the authorities with what is left behind, but what is certainly important is to acknowledge them.

~

## Experiencing Prison

To be alone in Pudu Jail for the entire six months was an unusually rewarding experience. Having been given permission by the UDA Holdings, the gatekeeper for the prison at the time, I was given access to the prison with the initial intention of documenting the facility soon after they had initially made plans for it to be demolished and turned into a commercial zone. For six months between September 2002 and March 2003, I had regularly been in and out of Pudu Jail carrying out the documentation.



Plate 3 - the hall way of the prison block (Block A).



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Almost on a daily basis, I would wait by the Main Gate for the gatekeeper, 'Abang Bob'. He was more of a gatekeeper than a guard, as he would just sit on a chair all day long rather than doing his rounds. This made me question my own safety if anything were to go wrong during my documentation of the prison. We did joke together every now and then, but light was too limited to waste time on idle chat, as I had judged it better to shoot within the prison blocks in the early morning and late afternoon as the sunlight slanted perfectly through the prison cells at those times.

I wandered across the prison compound, a large area with several blocks of buildings. Although it was barely seven years since it had been vacated, there were significant signs of dilapidation and vandalism of the prison's structures due to the constant cases of vagrants sneaking in to steal iron and steel as they are considered valuable materials. Many doors, and locks, to the cells were missing. Stories from the locals described a time when trucks were driving in and out, illegally, a few weeks after the prison closed down. The prison was ransacked for its valuable materials such as cast iron, teak wood, electric cables, steel pipes and various other materials, which would be expected in any old buildings. Most parts of the prison were badly dilapidated and certainly some were too dangerous to go through. On my very first day, as I recall, during my initial assessment, I almost got buried underneath one of the wood shops as it suddenly fell apart. However, the main prison building block still remained strong, with most parts of it still accessible.

The prison consisted of: a three part administration building, visiting block, the armoury, a large kitchen and mess hall which also functioned as a cinema, a block of barber's shops, several workshops which were usually used for woodworking, book binding, shoe repairs and metal work, and a clinic which sat next to a courthouse. The main prison block consisted of six sections of three-storey-high blocks; there was also the isolation block, a separate building for the women, a pre-release block, two large fountains which functioned as open air bathing for

the inmates, two large open courtyards with poles to hold nets for games (badminton or takraw games were common), wardens' quarters, a small mosque, and the gallows. (Refer to the prison layout in Appendix g, page xl)

The inmates were predominantly placed within the main prison block, with a few blocks for the women and the pre-release block, which was separate. The main prison was three storeys high and contained an estimated 900 cells; separated into six sections alphabetically, with the inmates being placed according to groups which were usually as follows: the locals, the foreigners, short-term convicts, juvenile, the mentally sick, the isolated block and death row.

With such a large expanse to cover, I decided it would be best to document the area sequentially, starting with the administration blocks, the workshops and finally the main prison block. The penetrating lights within the buildings were exceptionally harsh, filling the rooms with a range of high contrasts, which meant that I had to approach it as a challenge by applying various methods with black and white film. To try to document it with film was a difficult task as it introduced a very large margin of error, which could be avoided only with patience and knowledge. It was the instinctive approach to the available lights and calculated measurements to the time of the day were essential to rectify these problems.

Unfortunately such a large-scale area required various factors, which I could not fulfil with simple flash strobes and, without any electrical connections, artificial lights were impossible to manage, as most of the cables were ripped apart by looters. I decided to approach the documentation using available sunlight, which worked well for me as it projected the dramatic and powerful effect of the prison itself. With almost all electrical lights missing due to them being taken away by thieves, the passages were dark for most of the day and the place went absolutely dark when it reached dusk. At night, the prison's exterior was only illuminated by the city, so any possibility of documenting the area at night would prove to be impossible.

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Darkness seemed to embrace this prison well. The conditions required me to set up a tripod and sit still for quite some time to achieve each image. Some took minutes; some took hours for an image to be exposed. With luck and suitable lighting, I could manage as much as three rolls of film a day at most.

The first month went past with ease. I had stopped in every building and section within the prison documenting its architecture. On several occasions I encountered a few drug addicts snooping about the prison in order to get their fix or to steal iron from the prison compound. I had to avoid them and keep my guard up, as they were extremely dangerous when in need of a fix; I feared them much more than any paranormal activities within the prison itself.

Matters were made worse as thick bushes had grown tall and occupied most of the land of the prison. The darkness welcomed nests of rodents and crawling insects, with hundreds of mosquitoes constantly swarming around the prison area after rain, which at times made it a real challenge to document the cell spaces in peace. The climate in Malaysia is tropical. With its harsh, hot sunlight and humidity because of the constant traffic in the city centre, this prison quickly became an oven. When it rained, the building's treacherous surfaces and fungus trapped within the skin of the walls quickly made magnificent dark patterns. The prison lacked any form of colour and was suffused with the musk of rotten wood, the stale thick air of cement dust and the acrid smell of old urine from the corners of corridors; the peeling walls were covered with a thousand shades of shadow from such decay and abandonment.

As the documentation continued, I noted a significant number of graffiti, which had caught my attention while navigating around the prison blocks. Initially I began noting various wall writings, which ran into thousands in number, and I began turning my lens towards the walls, capturing those images instead as far as I could. It was fascinating at first, and then it turned into an obsession. Cell by cell, I managed to sit quietly and began to stare deep into each of the

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images I had documented. From gods to calendars, portraits to landscapes, maps, animals to trees and buildings, from familiar words to languages unknown; these forms of drawings and writings began to take shape on how each room 'felt' upon entering.

I recalled the fear of one room, which bizarrely chilled me every time I passed it; it was the room in Block A which had a large square drawing of a mermaid, fully rendered with all details (refer to Appendix o, PJG Volume 1, page 177). I remembered I would avoid eye contact with it every time I passed that room. It was something I could not explain. However, such fear gave me the inquisitive nature to explore further to seek the words on the walls and stare deep into each drawing I saw.

The graffiti within the cell spaces were predominantly done with carbon pencils, some with ink, and even markings which may suggest it was done with body fluids such as blood and feces based on observation and tactile nature of the graffiti (though this could not be proven at this point other than assumptions based observation on the latter). The walls were predominantly soft; as I recall there were a few of the cells' walls where it took only a very little pressure to leave one's mark.

Almost all the cells' windows in the first two storeys were boarded up, leaving very little light to work with which had caused me to adjust the hours I would need to capture the right amount of light. Most of my shots were done following the morning sun and in the late afternoon. Most of the time during the hot midday, I explored the cells, sometime stumbling across shredded documents such as work orders, scheduling and release forms.

Sitting within the dark cell, my eyes would adjust themselves to see in the dark. It was never immediate, but almost gradual and gave me a disoriented feeling of floating images or texts, which I began to see out of the corner of my eyes. There were times when I would find myself reciting the words on the walls, or staring blankly into the eyes of a portrait as I waited for the

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camera to fully expose, yet didn't realise its presence until later. This experience was oddly fascinating, yet I believe, gave me a platonic relationship with the graffiti.

The research into the origin of the graffiti, or to find the original authors, would be limited due to the lack of substantial information about the past occupants and the prohibition because of State regulations and the need for discretion imposed on the Prison's Staff and Warders (as explained by the Malaysian Prison Department). However, at least their cooperation had given me the opportunity to obtain access to a very few rare memos and letters from the British Colonial-Secretary in relation to the construction of Pudu Jail.



Plate 4 - "1895" - The gate to the main prison blocks. Photographed by the author, 2002



## Research Questions

Perhaps how it came initially to be a research project was through my wondering why a prison such as Pudu Jail appeared to be such an ominous and dark place during my previous visit. It seemed a remnant of an old past with very little to reveal about the stories of the previous occupants had raised few important questions which had started this research.

1. What are the common characteristics of the graffiti made in Pudu Jail, in relation to the prison's local visual culture and spatial organisation?
2. By looking through photographic archives, particularly in the case of the graffiti, which was found in this abandoned prison, what meaning and significance is embodied within the images and the cell spaces in which they were made?
3. Does the documented images of the prison graffiti found in Pudu Jail, from this portfolio, have its significance and influence beyond the mere gesture of mark-making which is able to transform the space of the cell or prison depending on the types and visual depictions of the graffiti, in relation to the local (popular or vernacular) culture of its site?



## The Significance of Prison Graffiti

Prison Graffiti, a part of inscriptional mark making, has had its share of anonymity as the inmates or the authors usually remained silent and were kept securely within their own private domain in their cells. However, as the reader begins to observe these, usually meticulous, scribbles, one begins to realise that such gestures go beyond the merely trivial. It is a kind of intentional ephemera, yet it is difficult to make connections from one research project to the next as the documentary process could only happen if the access to such places were not so secretly guarded, or, in many instances, destroyed, or ironically, contaminated with other kinds of 'outsiders' graffiti prior to their detection.

What will be seen later in this thesis is that it is a form of practice, which carries its own community codes, rules, internal hierarchies, means of communication, and certainly, memories of the condemned.

Prison graffiti is still at its infancy as a specific subject of study (refer to Wilson 2008; Constanzo, Bull and Smith 2013; Johnson 2009; Yogan and Johnson 2006; O'Sullivan 2009; Baer 2003; Hanes 2011; Koopman 2010), though prison studies have had their share of investigation within its relationship of art, literacy and inmates (refer to Muth 2013; Schrift 2006; Taft 1979; Gussak 2006; Clements 2004), which objectively studies on the inmates' resolve on depression and socialising skills. However, in the outside world, urban graffiti has its chance to tell of human desires, whether it is done by a group or individually, and has always remained within the boundaries of anonymity, disconnected from any recognition by the authorities. It has,

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however, been recognised in many instances in the past as the desire to contain memories on the wall so that it then becomes an intermediary space, a form of interlocutor.

It is difficult to imagine and to write on the desperate grasp memories of someone, which this particular study would be the inmates of the Pudu Jail. As the outcome is being devised and being presented onto something of a more tangible substance and certainly a process that simultaneously makes it become visible and corporeal at the same time, yet it is still part imaginary and part virtual of what may be the case explaining the graffiti found within the prison cells.



'Prison graffiti' endured as the term used in this research to describe the graffiti found within a given prison cell, just as it was similarly referred to in the various studies of Wilson (2008); Klofas and Cutshall (1985); Johnson (2009); Yogan and Johnson (2006); and Costanzo, Bull and Smith (2013). However, I wanted to use this form of identification, as it would give another way of looking at the idea of graffiti being created as a form of substrate; a medium, which had significance beyond mere gestures of mark making to be able to transform the space based on the shapes, types and even visual depictions of the graffiti.

Texts of mark making within confinement existed long ago, as Abel and Buckley wrote in their account of graffiti, which they observed in the Tower of London:

"...these inscriptions were produced by kings, queens, saints and scholars, many of them awaiting their deaths for political indiscretions or religious scruples. Mostly expressions of political or of religious ideals, these graffiti were written with nails or other hard object available at the moment."

Abel and Buckley, (1977: 6)

Graffiti exists in volume. The term encompasses informal methods of writing, in most cases a collective 'voice', given to those circumstances in which it could have been made by any



individual from a variety of classes who was in a prison cell and could resort to mark-making, as noted by Abel and Buckley (1977,6). Such a volume of text and illustration in a confined space serves as significant evidence of its presence and helps towards 'reading' its messages. In general, the volume of graffiti extracted from a correctional institute would certainly stimulate curiosity as to what could possibly be the 'inmates' reasons for leaving their marks.

However the reaction to prison graffiti plays out, there will always be a new discoveries of such graffiti, which are unearthed from time to time from dilapidated prisons, juvenile centres, and remand centres.

Yet, to accept prison graffiti by using a definitive approach remains problematic as it embodies many forms of institutionalised argument; this kind of work reflects the deep sense of identification and narrow spatial order within the cells containing graffiti, and shows its relationship with the entire segmented prison system. The dominance of graffiti within any cell space carries its own form of assertion, which, it was observed in the PJG itself, would appear to influence the rest of the graffiti within the cell space to gravitate towards it. It would be possible to suggest that the resonance from the 'breeding' of smaller, sometimes associated graffiti relies on the presence of larger graffiti causing the rest to expand. (This seemed to be hard to prove, given the prison graffiti that was observed in Pudu Jail in its full form). In the general observation of the PJG, it was noted that each graffiti rarely overlaps another, leaving it to occupy its own space. It is possible to suggest that this may reflect similar nuances of the 'broken windows' theory by Wilson and Harcourt (1982), which suggests that as soon as the wall of the prison cell is inscribed with writing or drawings, it may induce other inmates in the shared space or at a different time to leave their marks as well. This would be an interesting hypothetical suggestion, though not one to approach in this research, as that would require time-based observations and a controlled group environment.

The presence of dominant graffiti within an inhabited space that has been abandoned and decayed, is found by re-entering such a space; the shapes would then materialise to become visible, imaginations are re-imagined, which is all essential for this thesis to find out what makes the prison graffiti function.

It is a known characteristic of prison facilitates that individuals are removed from their normal position in the social structure and forced into 'controlled' groups with different sub-structures (refer to Berg and DeLisi 2006; Steiner and Wooldredge 2009; DeLisi, et al. 2011). This forces of inmates' self-identity that must accommodate the specific disciplinary and social routine and even the prison's environment, which leaves little opportunity for the inmates left to reveal their own previous narrative stories. Foucault's significant writings in "Discipline And Punish: The Birth of the Prison" about how the segregation of cell space illustrated many examples of the prison's mechanisms' ability to break and mould inmates into '*docile bodies*' (Foucault 1977, 136).

Foucault's (1977, 136) findings on '*docile bodies*' had taken into account the act of dominating, not only by authoritative presence and assertion, or through external influences in a contained environment, but also because of self-imposition. Conversely, the latter would be driven by the former's influence upon the affected individuals (refer to Lemke 2000). In this particular instance, I agree with Lemke's (2000, 4) assertion that individuals are driven by others to be dominating and they themselves (the affected individuals) would self-impose disciplinary and behavioural routines as long as they remained within a controlled space that is within the reach of an authoritative figure or a controlling group. The word '*docile*' exists in parallel with '*submission*' and, in this particular case, there would be a direct process of coercion imposing power and a dominating effect upon individuals, which, in this case would be the prison inmates (refer to Fox 1999; Mackenzie and Souryal 1995).

However, enclosure of the space would not be enough to explain the mechanism of the disciplinary process as Foucault had described it. He put forward the proposal of a strict and rigorously militaristic routine that would be essential for obtaining the power to observe, as it would bring the space to life. He put forward the idea of the prison in even more powerful terms: "Stones can make people docile and knowable" (Foucault 1977, 172). Docile, perhaps, is the key idea towards understanding the enclosed space.

The prison cells perhaps require to be given greater consideration as a spatial canvas. Rancière (2009) explicitly noted that in contemporary times it has been shown that individuals tend initially to justify preventing the space from being sterile, or, they would be in favour of its alteration, often destructively, as a way of asserting their own-moderated environment<sup>9</sup>. His assertion was that the occupants within the given space yearned to be isolated, yet their often misunderstood acts of individualism were never far from making them re-integrate themselves back together again with collective actions and inter-weaving of feelings, thus re-engaging themselves back again with their previous sense of belonging which they thought they had escaped (Rancière 2009, 56). The occupied body within that space, would then be seen as a merging entity, based on this synthesis.

To look at prison graffiti would be to synthesise between part art and part social science, in the sense that it has both analogies and its own unique visual aspects, as both art and science in a sense each require the processes of abstraction and concretion. The embodiment of texts and images onto the walls of the prison cells would be the key factor in looking at establishing the spatial and formal materials in which the prison graffiti were discovered. The greater content within that cellular space, covered by art, transforms the function of the space in a far more complex way than the raw materials of the place itself, as it would reverberate with other aspects of life, based on the graffiti being conceived.

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The prison itself is an integrated space of separated substrates; the ancient construction of the prison would be similar to the construction of a vessel. Norman Johnston (2000) illustrated a few early cases of the prison system's genesis from early settlements, which had constructed their own forms of entrapment underground. Most accounts of early prison chambers revealed that access would be through an oculus, or opening from above, though most incarcerated souls put in that kind of containment would be condemned to life imprisonment (Johnston 2000, 7). The designs of such entrapments are usually meant to function for a collection of human bodies rather than for individual segregation, which happens later in progressive designs of prisons in administrative punitive situations.

Prisons are designed to ensure the secure custody of individuals. Micheal Kerrigan (2007, p.17) had noted it was in 1280 that King Edward I of England introduced the idea of prison whereby the conditions of the cell spaces for prisoners were cramped, claustrophobic, unpleasantly designed to concentrate the mind, along with a measly and meagre diet. Such conditions were often aggravated by lack of light and by disorientation (Kerrigan 2007, 17). Modern prisons have certainly evolved since these forms of gothic punishment ceased. However surviving solitary confinement still depends on the occupants' endurance of their own physical ordeals.

The function of the prison space continually employed the techniques of monastic practice, as the ideals of spiritual penance derived from the use of cellular seclusion as a refuge for spiritual betterment through strong asceticism and anti-worldliness (Johnston 2000, 17), would be used predominantly as a corrective contemplation. However, prison graffiti revealed, in many instances, that the ideas from the inmates' past that emerged from within them revealed different kinds of identifiers, which would form a common appropriation of the space so as to hold further accounts of meaningful inscriptions. These types of graffiti take on their own logic of appropriation, manifested through their own depth of arguments, ideas, actions, interventions, inversions, which extended onto the walls of the prison cells. Such systems

within the graffiti, by their own accord, become a more sophisticated way of communicating the metaphorical intentions of the inmates with each other (Gallardo 2009/2010, 19).

The structures of prison graffiti are restricted to the possible combination of words, which the inmates were able to conjure up, and, despite these restrictions, construct narrative values; however, limitations would occur, as could be seen, during the graffiti's making. Gallardo's (2009/10) paper had stated that his research would be based on letters from prison, which adhered to rigorous laws of language but the message requires further re-structuring due to the limits of what could be written in prison letters; this was due to this kind of writing within the prison being subjected to a rigorous process of censorship from the authorities. Hence to read the letters requires a parallel approach: direct reading and finding what would be hidden from sight. The latter would certainly prove to be a daunting task, as it would be essential to carry out more research to ascertain the author's background, his associates, the environment, the current affairs relevant to a letter's date, and the intent behind it. However, he made an exception in the treatment of the letters as objects of interest, finding more crucial and substantial ties by reading them as temporal informational nodes<sup>10</sup>. This would necessitate a better way to look at such matter as material history, by going beyond the history of the material itself as this would provide a way to make a conceivable meaning out of the writings.

What would make prison graffiti different from street art would be its own particular infrastructure, materials and symbolic space, zones of authority, and its own very reference to the contemporary within the boundary of regulatory force. Although there is certainly common ground in graffiti asserting itself as marking the boundary of space, Martin Irvine (2012) had suggested a series of arguments on the material form of the wall to be what allowed it to be considered as a form of reception. He alluded to internalised ideas, which have survived through history, that walls were built as a form of matter in sustaining, protecting, and causing hierarchical space. Thinking of them in terms of metaphors: *intramuros* and

*extramuros*, allows Western culture to visualise them despite structured boundaries and regulations (Irvine 2012, 243). Perhaps to decipher the texts in Pudu Jail's graffiti might not take such encrypted measures, which might severely disassociate one from the actual reference to the source of the prison's graffiti, as these graffiti would most likely be sourced and extracted by the inmates from local spaces and settings near to the prison space, or at the most, from the inmates' personal experience.

To understand space within the prison's cellular space, such as in the case of the PJG, it exists as an entity, which dominates the body within the confinement of four walls, the ceiling and the floor. With only a lateral access and exit through the hard wooden door, it becomes somewhere to both place and segregate bodies. This form of cellular space, as Foucault (1977) pointed out about segregation through the prison structure, was based on Christian absolutism, which acts to encourage the unusual, foreign environment cast on the people affected by it. This in effect would cause the individuals (the inmates) to start to rediscover their own consciences and spiritual conversions (Foucault 1977, 122). What is interesting is that he continues to describe the prison cell as a '*space between two worlds*', by which he considers it as a kind of active place to restore the state of the subject that had been lost (Foucault 1977, 123). What kind of two worlds did he mean here?

The described '*space*' is perhaps the key, integral to understanding the phenomenon of prison graffiti. Tim Creswell (1996) had evaluated that space is a continual constructed arrangement, which is the basic foundation "of all things natural and mental" (T. Creswell 1996, 152). It was emphasised that space is a value which should be understood with very little need for verbal or even written instruction, yet it still requires some dependency on the visual arrangement which allows the affected bodies to respond to it.

Creswell (1996) notes that the sense of self, through self-affirmation, becomes like a buffer against a threatening event, a protective measure. Self-affirmation, through memories and cultural familiarities becomes a mechanism with which to control the space one occupies, or to control whatever illusionary effect it may have upon the body residing in it<sup>11</sup>.

Dependence on the visual to understand space is almost absolute (T. Creswell 1996, 154), what was apparent in this case was the need to define what was excluded and excludable within the experienced space. Visibility of space seals itself as a form of marker, whereby structures and boundaries are manufactured, based on the fundamental notion of association.

Creswell (1996: 41-42) noted that various bodies from among the authorities considered street graffiti to be the work of the ill or the mad. This unconventional idea was raised as a response to looking at street graffiti as being the anti-establishment, which would 'harm' the order of civilisation, perhaps including the maker, or the body of the maker who would go to such extremes for them to be treated as 'mad'.

If graffiti itself, in general, breaks or even moulds the function of the prison cell, that would then strengthen the qualities of graffiti to defy the prison cell's original design of making the body 'docile' as Foucault (1977) put it. However, what prison graffiti is could be seen to have become the heuristic experimentation of discovery. While the body embraces the vessel it has been engulfed in, the expectation of extending the self lives through the memory of the walls. This in itself embraces the notion of the prison's cellular nature being, as Foucault puts it, a 'space between two worlds'; what prison graffiti reflected would be the interweaving between them.

Separating these two arguments, that the walls and the preconceived structures around may be able to make our bodies 'docile', and that the reflection of graffiti could be said to conjure

reflexivity which the inmates wanted to find, would then disrupt the flow of the spaces of the cells as a part of the disciplinary mechanism.



## **Methodology: Research Design and Procedures**

The graffiti was photographically documented as a visual archive; the collection of images was then evaluated in ways shaped by the images of graffiti themselves, and in terms of the cultural contexts of the site – Pudu Jail, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The images of graffiti selected for analysis (from a very large number) were among those taken from the prison cells by the researcher in 2002-03, initially as an objective record.

The making of a photographic record had taken place, therefore, prior to the intended research, and before I decided to register for doctoral research. I have approached the subject via this form of photographic archive to look in retrospect at what was depicted on the prison walls.

I considered viewing the prison graffiti in the PJG as overall undiscovered images, fully complete images from within the prison cells, as they were no longer in use and the prison inmates were already long gone. These original authors, the inmates, the prison's previous occupants, were dispersed and quite anonymous to me; in a way they were a missing link, which is an unavoidable condition of this research. This sets a different precedence compared with the rest of prison graffiti studies, as definitions and evaluations usually take place with the input and narratives of the prison inmates on the graffiti they have made (refer to Wilson 2008a; 2008b; O'Sullivan 2009; Rymhs 2009). The larger question here is what to do with a collection of images of diverse characteristics but all made in the same setting, relating to a number of local languages and cultures?



Following this line of thinking, I have considered approaching this research as a qualitative study, in order to assess the archive of images, asking how Pudu Jails' Graffiti (PJG) portfolio had been assembled by many individuals over a longish time. I also noted the potential of groups or themes to be identified through quantitative measurements as in Klofas and Cutshall's (1985) unobtrusive research methods with graffiti in correctional facilities, a parallel way of looking at this using a content analysis method. This initial approach might confirm the variables that exist in the PJG, although this method would not be the end means for this research, as I believe this would establish the required precedence for a qualitative review at a later stage.

Images would then be assessed with the entire collection laid out, shuffled and grouped according to the relative meanings that the texts and images represent – as a wall-mounted display. I expected that the images and texts of the graffiti would shift between themes, as each of the plates contained more than one type of graffiti, probably made by multiple authors either sharing the same cell space or at different times.

I selected 10 themes (refer to the earlier list in this chapter) within the PJG based on the preliminary review done in an earlier observation. In addition, a follow-up clarifying these types of groups and themes was conducted based on photo-elicitation, which I would support with various studies and research into the subject in question which should provide evidence to suggest the types of graffiti being made. I would also compare the data analysis with other research on the subject, which would help me to start to understand the findings.

A sample was chosen from each of the different themes as a typical example that reflected its group. This did not, however, discount the rest of the graffiti as being any less prominent in its role of defining the theme. Based on the research methods revealed later in this chapter,

detailed descriptions were needed in order to begin to process and clarify the subject in question.

I anticipated that ongoing data analysis would take place throughout the study. All of the reviewed materials and notes were organised around different topics and themes found in the PJG. These materials, organised into groups of printed images, were displayed on an available space such as a studio wall or a gallery space, thus giving a broader perspective and providing a greater advantage than just viewing images individually on a screen or by pages in a book of the collection.

Connections between categories and themes were used to further my understanding of the graffiti found within the prison cells of Pudu Jail, and to shape the organisation of the data for its portrayal in my final thesis.



The mark-making mentioned does not rely on the actual process in a traditional aesthetic sense, such as when reading poetry written on paper or looking at paintings or drawings on canvas; it is however, provoked by the sense of what existed within the moral and cultural values of the previous occupants of the prison, expressed via the graffiti found on the walls of the prison cells.

It is a known fact that prison removes individuals from their former surroundings in a social structure and forces them into a 'controlled' group with different sub-structures. The self-identity of these individuals has to readjust to accommodate the specific routines and environment and there would be little opportunity to enquire into their own personal histories. Foucault's (1977) significant writings on the segregation of cellular spaces give many examples of the ability of a prison's mechanisms to break and mould inmates into '*docile*

*bodies'*, and had begun to question whether the existence of graffiti was expected to be part of the intended space.

What I saw on the walls of the prison cells were seemingly incomplete, incoherent stories, which always fell short of being substantial or coherent narratives. These jumbled messages, often inter-twined with other images or text, had to be unravelled into individual images of people, places, and objects, mostly existing outside the walls of the prison, and some of them, conveniently, locally situated.

What were seen initially to be fragmented occurrences of these inmates' lives, have now been revealed as bodies of narrative and have become the subject of my research and the reason for this thesis. What the graffiti gives or tells would be the complicit nature of the makers' past experiences and previous identities, unravelled into their own patterns and constructions.

Through direct reading or translation, it was obvious that these small acts of scribbling should not be looked upon as trivial subjects. Every mark made by these inmates carries its own intensity, as it required considerable physical pressure with the hands to scratch these significant markings, which shows a greater intention to leave the intended messages behind than the more casual methods of recording by writing on paper. The walls, which had been created as a barrier between themselves and the world, had now become the medium and the keeper of such messages.

Many of the graffiti, once analysed, had been shown to be individual narrative experiences. Patterns had emerged in the early stages of examining them, from the process of identifying subjects and objects, right through to separating and segmenting them into categories. These actions, however, do not complete the act of reading. They redefine difficult variables, frequencies and constants, which form a part of social science's methodology in seeing quantitative measurement, which would only bring about reasonable features as indicators.

Reading these images, however, required different methods to be applied, as the quantitative measurements taken earlier of both text and images had shown that they were almost evenly spread across the prison cell populace. Although distinctions could be made between short-term prisoners' cells and those of the life-sentence prisoners, it was noted that the graffiti of the latter tended to be in the form of images rather than text<sup>12</sup>.

With the opportunity to look more closely at such graffiti, I had begun to extract information from the various patterns and subtle arrangements, while conscious that they might contain deeper meanings than first appeared. This method helps to construct messages, with their own echoes of intention in their own way, re-enforcing the projection of imaginary planes, which had existed within these inmates, making them into valuable examples of aesthetic experiences.

There are many ways of approaching the study of graffiti, from photography, ethnography, visual anthropology, and even through criminology. The emphasis of this research was to view Pudu Jail's Graffiti (PJG) through a process to find its thematic alignments based on comparative categorical contexts. After considerable selection and observing the available resources, the approach of visual ethnography (utilising content analysis to determine the thematic suggestions and context analysis via direct observation to discuss the selected images) would be apparent in dealing with the PJG. This in turn, would produce a strong visual communicative discourse that would prepare the way for planning the curatorial design for the final stage of its exhibition.

In the first stage of the methodology, it would be essential to have a general idea of what was at hand. The entire series of the work was compiled, catalogued and transcribed. In the preliminary observations, the measurements revealed dominant values of themes which references to deities, names, dates, places and so forth, throughout the categories, which are

familiar to the areas and communities surrounding the Pudu Jail. This had given me the chance to have a look into the possibilities of how the images might be arranged.

In the most common graffiti research, both methods of quantitative measurements and qualitative approaches were usually applied, such as Abel and Buckley (1977); Rhyne and Ullmann (1972); Klofas and Cutshall (1985); Green (2003); Jacqueline Wilson (2008); Gallardo (2010); MacDonald (2001); Constanzo, Bull and Smith (2013), in elaborating graffiti accumulatively and worked towards their respective objectives. Their studies encompassed what one considered to be the lenses of social anthropology, visual ethnography, all the way towards gender studies; from the restrooms of campuses to the prison cells, what was common ground between them was the quantity of the subject of their studies. These studies revealed that these mass markings had each had their own methods in terms of measurement to provide the context required for their hypotheses, and this had provided the basic groundwork and perspective for approaching the research into the PJG.

To look at this portfolio, it would be crucial to compose and prepare the entire collection in an organised format. It would be practical in a case such as this to have a digital library and a proper arrangement of the PJG portfolio.

A yearlong process of hi-res scanning, digitising and indexing resulted in a collection in a four-volume catalogue. In the next stage, the application of relevant keywords and their context would give a better way to facilitate the retrieval process and adjust the structure of the collection. The reward would certainly be to learn a great deal about the segregation of the graffiti's categories and their dominance of one over another.

The application of quantitative research methods, as proposed by Webb et al's (1966) 'unobtrusive' methods, was to have an idea of what there was in terms of cluster groups. Further using Collier and Collier's (1986) qualitative 'direct analysis' would determine how

representative the assigned categories were. These research modes would give the proper order and the necessary measurements to combine the two disciplines in investigating this visual phenomenon.

Collier and Collier's (1986) method of study involved judging the quality of objects being depicted in the images. Their arguments on the usefulness of photographs were based on the necessary amount of interpretation needed to produce a description based on their own linguistic terms. Familiarity with the culture associated with the subject of study would be an important factor in offsetting what would be functional 'in-situ' evidence as to what was observed from photographic images. This goes back to another related study in John Collier's (1957) paper, in which he noted that the function of photographic images relies greatly on the observer's and researcher's sensitivity and reactions towards cultural circumstances, thus he hypothesised that the association of the conditions of subjects and objects acts as a form of 'accurate reportage' (J. J. Collier 1957, 844). Though this would not be the case in evaluating the PJG, as indeed the image evaluation does not represent a sense of scale in terms of the quality of the types of graffiti observed; this method would not seem possible as the PJG's images are of images of graffiti, or images within images. Thus it required a different method more suitable to evaluating the texts and images based on what they meant, demonstrated and depicted.

Thus, what would be left would be an interpretive statement, or rather the reflexivity of my own take on the PJG. Sarah Pink (2001) discussed the underlying issues in 'reflexivity', a method of directing the outcomes of textual narrative strategies using both visual anthropology and visual ethnography. Though Pink's (2001) paper was more directed at narratives in video as the paradigm she attributed to her arguments, in which she debated the matter of how what remained in the documentation she composed was an assertion of truth, a quality that presented various challenges to the idea of recognising the appropriation of

commentaries based on individualised interpretations of personal truth. Truth perhaps could be applied towards the PJG, as I do take comfort in finding that the appropriation demonstrated by the graffiti of the PJG must be based on the embodiment of localised cultures, places and identities; this would require research in other fields to support the gathering of my research on the PJG. This perhaps gives the necessary clues and a deductive rationale for studying the PJG.

By surveying and noting the graffiti within the collection of the PJG, it would be possible to determine each and every visually observed (seen and if possible, unseen) graffiti to find its category and distribution. It was decided that the segregations of the graffiti would construct its taxonomy as the preliminary guide to understanding the categorical 'voices' within the graffiti.

The process of using content analysis was a reasonable consideration at this particular stage. Lutz and Collins (1993) explained, this categorical method of research is a significant process in visual methodology, as they point out in their study of the collections of photographic images published by the National Geographic Magazine for three decades, this way of coding categories revealed a small amount of empirical results, which would avoid them being overwhelmed by the sheer mass quantity of images.

Content analysis is a widely used method in social, political, psychological and communicative sciences (Weber 1990), as it consists of screening any kind of document, article or text for the frequency of repetitive keywords which can be grouped together depending on the similarity of their meaning. It was important to consider as well that this concept relies on the association of the keywords' ideas being explained by the purpose of the contents that were discovered. Weber (1990, 10) claims that his methods would be best suited to both a quantitative and a qualitative approach. However, it was noted by Weber's (1990) introduction

of content analysis that this was intended for textual data, which would clearly leave visual data out of the frame for consideration.

A central idea in content analysis is that the many words of the text are classified into much fewer content categories. Each category may consist of one, several, or many words... Depending on the purposes of the investigator, this similarity may be based on the precise meaning of the words (such as grouping synonyms together)

(Weber 1990, 12)

It would also be important to note that there is about the same amount of visual graffiti in the PJG as there is text graffiti. This means that the exclusion of visual input from the considerations of this thesis would significantly affect the study. However, the relationship of images to texts in the PJG ran parallel with the way the proposed categorical themes intersected. Thus it was at this point that the process of indication, representation, and interpretation of visual images within the PJG required a different method of visual analysis similar to that of Malcolm Collier's (2001) methods, based on Collier and Collier's (1986) research.

Collier's (2001) method had warned that the method of direct analysis of each image would need thorough investigation:

The volume of possibility important detail generated by detailed analysis may overwhelm the investigator, hiding the true meaning of visual record. For this reason, analysis is best completed with open re-examination of all the images before the conclusion are made.

(M. Collier 2001, 44)

True meaning, as suggested by Collier (2001), is highly subjective and even biased in some degree if left unproven. Looking through images objectively, he imposes rigorous steps to ensure that evidence is supplemented to avoid or reduce errors in the initial opinions made of images. This would provide the appropriate context for reading and understanding the images.



Reading and analysing images at this point involves a range of interpretive measurements. The process relies on the importance of contextual analysis on the part of the image reader, or in this case, on my own perspective, as to what is required for both indirect and direct analysis when reviewing photographic images. Collier's (2001) research revealed that the familiarity of subjects and objects illustrated in photographic images provided the distinct correlation of personal and external knowledge of the subject of interest. Collier's (2001) methods were sustained in order to pursue the study of the image as the subject, rather than as a supplementary tool. I agree strongly with this particular perspective, as this may revitalise the approach of looking at images, which would be a necessary step to take in resolving this research. So I used the two methods, Weber's (1990) content analysis, which provides thematic groupings based on the general overview of keywords (such as names, time, deity, etc.), and Collier's (2001) direct analysis, which provides the way of reading them. Collier (2001) noted the responsibility needed to address the search for meaning within images:

The challenge is to responsibly address the many aspect of images, recognising that the search for meaning and significance does not end in singular 'facts' or 'truths' but rather produces one or more viewpoints on human circumstances, and that while 'reality' may be elusive, 'error' is readily achieved.

(M. Collier 2001, 35-36)

Although the way Collier (2001) observed the extraction of meaning and his assertions about it does have its own omissions and views about reflexivity or photo-elicitation, what is significant here is the issue of pragmatism. The effort of being productive in order to move into visual analysis does require one to be as creative as possible with the practicality of progress, which requires identification to be part of associating visual images. By this assertion, context will always be open to challenge, as the variety of information and newfound opinions based on other forms of evidence will trigger the re-establishment of the existing context. From this particular issue, to be involved beyond a personal level, I had taken the necessary steps to look at other research, which was based on subjects being assessed, in order to explain the PJG

images (such as the topic of graffiti of onomastic names, the diversity of religious symbols and deities, etc.). The primary reason for comparing the thematic types of graffiti presented in this thesis would be in order to organise and maintain a good contextual analysis and annotation so as to achieve the goals of this research.

Collier (2001) referred to two methods for engaging with images: direct and indirect analysis.

The basic observation, which he suggested for direct analysis, has four stages of focused examination, which Collier (2001, 39) outlined as follows:

- The first stage is to observe and analyse the image, along with taking note of any form of response, which could characterise the subject and objects seen in the image within the limitation of the observer him- or herself. This perhaps, in my opinion, is a kind of photo-elicitation process (M. Collier 2001, 45-46), an identification process that places items, people, known landscapes and familiar activities in a rapid succession in the commentary of the observer (refer also to Harper 1986; 1998; 2002).
- The second stage is making notes and an inventory of the image of interest, which will define the necessary categories of the subject.
- The third stage is structuring the analysis. This involves fine tuning the details of the photographic analysis with thorough measurements of the subject, objects, relation of distance between them within the image and more detailed and statistical analysis as needed. This particular step is detail-oriented.
- The fourth stage goes back to the first stage, but now armed with the analysed inventory and information that has been discovered, to support the context, which defines its entirety. This may or may not support the suggested analysis and will re-establish the context as a whole.

The first stage as Collier (2001) suggested was to pay attention to the construction of the image, which involves constant and repeated viewing of the image of interest. This would be what he refers to as 'open viewing' (M. Collier 2001, 40), an immersion in questioning and maintaining a thorough cultural familiarity and possible identification of what we think we see. This is what Collier (2001) claimed to be the foundation for the rest of the stages.

The other part of Collier's (2001) method is the indirect photo-elicitation process, in which, as Collier (2001, 46) himself suggested, this particular method would be biased and could even possibly produce irrelevant variables with regard to the data. This relies heavily on the photo-elicitation process based on the description of the images and depending solely on other viewers' personal perspectives, opinions and familiarity with the viewed image.

This may seem closer to accumulative opinions, which may constitute statistical agreement, as this approach might open up narratives, which may give the researchers undiscovered ideas, or related features that could be explored. This particular method seems to be more suitable for crowd sourcing, thus creating similarity and an anticipation of agreement over certain keywords. However it would be the former method, 'direct analysis', which Collier (2001) proposed, which would seem to contribute more towards uncovering the underlying information that lies within the PJG.

While Weber's (1990) content analysis offers a broader scope for effectively uncovering the potential source of keywords and thematic groupings, it would be possible to note that this particular methodology could be used to cluster and group the collection of the PJG, as a way of separating out the images.

At a later stage, the thematic elements would be assigned to develop the visual components, which in turn produced the frequency of the assigned categories based on either absolute or relative groupings depending on the transcribed texts and what the illustrated images might

signify. Although the simple frequency of numbers and percentages from the content analyses might be incapable of explaining the reflexive context of the graffiti, there would be a collision course of both views at some point, when the theoretical part would need to return to the broader logic of empirical literature to validate its categorical themes.

In order to visualise the relationship, the statistical analysis could be extracted to see more than one a pair of variables exists at a time from each of the images. This useful statistical tool would not be the method for testing the hypothesis for this particular thesis, but would be used to facilitate the next stage of the analysis.

As the analytical process continues, what comes next would be establishing the context for discussion. The process of re-reading the images becomes a compositional interpretation by becoming immersed in the possible suggestions of cultural relevance, based on the potential familiarity with the locality's context. The initial study of keywords, recurring texts and/or illustrations would then begin to come together as key themes; this would then later take the form of a component analysis identifying the construction materials for the groups' assemblage. What had existed as clusters now becomes a proposal for the transition into the study of spatial arrangements that it requires.

Moving the elements of graffiti from the original correctional facility into the spaces of a studio/gallery shifts the graffiti into a different spatial container. The question of finding the unifying theme, and what shape would evolve from the categorical frequencies, would then be taken into the theoretical establishment to ascertain the underlying common visual denominator.

The major aspect of this part of the process was the focus on what should be done with the materials in hand. A photograph, as a means of observation, is a three-dimensional material

that embodies two-dimensional reality, which was based on another sphere with a three-dimensional plane.

This particular object is constructed from specific sensual qualities with its own properties of dimension; it has tactile qualities, with its own weight, volume, dimensions and reflective illumination. Gillian Rose (2007, 219-20) had made extensive provision for this issue as a 'corporeal' process, which involves the elements of using photographic materials as visual objects.

Choosing the appropriate experimentation and examining the collection, studying the spatial arrangements and the photographs based on its contents, and understanding the volumes of components it contained, became the source for aligning the strategies needed to formulate the dimensions it inhabited.



## Conclusion

What had existed originally as fragments has now become a whole subject and moves into a study of spatial arrangement. The flexibility of viewing these sets of images helps to reveal the reason behind the pictures.

Moving the main elements of this graffiti from their original position in a correctional facility into the space of a studio or gallery becomes a different spatial experience. The need to find a unifying theme and shape from the different categories would lead to establishing a theory about their common visual denominator.

The major concern about this part of the process was what to do with the available materials. A photograph, when observed, gives a three-dimensional representation from a two-dimensional reality, which in turn comes from a three-dimensional plane.

What is important at this stage is to consider how to bring the various methodologies mentioned here into a single workflow in order to achieve the objective of this research. Chapter 1 reveals the genesis of the research and explains the research methods; in Chapter 2, I will begin to explain three elements of the subject of this research: graffiti, prison settings, and images of the graffiti. These three will be the basis for an explanatory chapter which moves towards the understanding of the relationship of graffiti in confined spaces, as in the case of prison cells such as those of Pudu Jail.

By approaching this research as, in effect, reading a record of identifiable collective experiences, Weber's 'content analysis' revealed the assessments required on a collective

scale. This is evident given that the PJG's images amounted to 460 plates, the majority of which would have numerous examples of prison graffiti within them. Numbers may suggest themes and produce the keywords needed in order to establish the types of graffiti made by the inmates. The research must progress to question the rationale of what has been made, applying interpretive and functional approaches when looking at graffiti and how its linguistic discourse tends to favour examining the human actions which surround it, a debate on how it could be used to shape one's own or others' view. This would be the place to use Collier's (2001) method of context analysis, which he called 'direct analysis' and on which his paper was based in his collaborative research, Collier and Collier (1986). It would be this choice of method which I would begin to employ in this research into reviewing the PJG.

While it could be considered that graffiti exists in the cellular spaces within a prison, such as Pudu Jail, it reveals an assemblage of simulated spatial arrangements through drawings of familiar visual journeys, which one could identify, and possibly locate, in the outside world. This leads to contextualising the graffiti, which prompts questions about moving these images, taken from the cellular space, into a different medium such as could be done with this collection of the PJG; would that raise different implications of de-contextualising it from its original source?

Tim Cresswell (1996, p. 41-42) has discussed this matter in terms of the disruption of boundaries between public and private metaphysical containment. Thus, de-contextualising urban graffiti by declaring that the graffiti is intended only to disrupt authoritative spaces, gives the 'illusions of disorder' (Dickens 2009, 60). Luke Dickens' (2009) research revealed the idea of moving to a different containment, from the marks' original space into another, citing such an additional move, deemed as the 'death of graffiti' by Cresswell (1996), to be a circulation of various elements of the texts and the spaces.

Dickens' (2009) case study of graffiti and its application in the urban parts of London had shown a significant shift of direction in graffiti art movements, particularly looking at it from the visual phenomenon of the streets turned into art, which he referred to as 'Post-graffiti' (a term which Dickens (2009, p. 66-67) used, referring to Creswell's (1992; 1996); Austin (2002) and Hoban's (2004) studies). He discussed this phenomenon with various insights surrounding the question as to what might trigger it being seen as a commercial appropriation, how it should be viewed and understood. This is simply a rational expectation created by the audience as to how this form of visual work should be perceived, received and tolerated. Such interdependencies do not carry the same features as prison art, particularly in the case of prison graffiti. At this particular point in time, prison graffiti had yet to receive the same features and attention to be perceived in commercial zones although documentation of it may have its place as giving more of an insight into this world (refer to O'Sullivan 2009; Pugliese 2002).

The question here that was posed was whether moving the images of the prison graffiti into a collective archive would change its meaning, or would it remain the same as it was intended to be? This might be difficult to prove either way, yet to approach this objectively to understand whether these marks had changed their meaning, points to contextualising as the key to unravel the PJG as more than just passing marks. However, I regressed towards Jacqueline Wilson's (2008) arguments that comparative features of prison graffiti carried a different paradigm, as she noted that such a phenomenon exists in a 'quasi-private sphere' (J. Z. Wilson 2008, 70), in that the mark-makings were left to occupy the leisure of the authors themselves, ignoring any authoritative imposition if possible, as these marks were made without any intended audience.

The Pudu Jail's graffiti closely resembles a diary's daily entries: a mixture of memories, events, places, the professing of love, religious commitments and various tell-tale signs of messages



that seemed to have been made exclusively for the inmates themselves. Thus these personalised marks would suggest it differed significantly from those of urban graffiti, giving it a different form of discourse.

The subject of interest here is prison graffiti, thus it is important to note how the placement of graffiti within the prison cells has a different association from and certainly condition compared with urban graffiti. As I will explain in Chapter 2, what I will be reviewing is the prison space as a factor that contributes to the types of graffiti made. The association of the space does define the integration of the cultural backgrounds and social relationships, which developed within the small cellular space in which they lived.

In the same chapter, I will also introduce the meaning of mark-making graffiti. This particular informal method of writing does have its place as more than just communication or even self-affirmation; it does in fact, bring more 'baggage' to its function as it is also evidently able to 'act'. This is an important note as it introduces another level of function into the cellular prison space.

Combining both elements, the meaning of the images and acknowledging the space in which they reside, may lend greater argument and reveal the deeper connections that the graffiti may have towards the cultures surrounding it.

Choosing the appropriate method and examining the collection, the study of prison graffiti arrangements and the association of its cultural references, became the starting point for considering how it should be dealt with.

## Chapter 1 Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Letter to the British Resident written from the office of the Colonial Secretary in Singapore 1957/0002124, 13th January 1883, paragraph 2. (Documents retrieved from the Malaysian National Archive)

<sup>2</sup> Letter from the Selangor State Colonial Office, which mentioned that the discussion had already taken place between the 6th to the 22nd of December 1882. It also mentioned a specific date for the inquiry about land for a Prison or a Hospital on the 17th December, 1882. (Documents retrieved from the Malaysian National Archive)

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, paragraph 4

<sup>4</sup> Letter from the Land office of Kuala Lumpur to the Government Secretary of Selangor dated 23rd December 1891. This letter stated that two of the three land owners, Haji Suleyman and Baginda Halim, had petitioned the Government Secretary's Office in Jalan Ampang in the month of July and October, (Documents retrieved from the Malaysian National Archive; Ref#: 1957/0028574 and 2/7506/9; letters addressed to the Ag. Resident of Selangor), with regard to the compensation of the land which was agreed at \$25 per lot. (Documents retrieved from the Malaysian National Archive; Ref#: 1957/0028896 and 73351/91).

<sup>5</sup> In 1892, Mr. Nicholas, a Crown Agent, who had been appointed as the clerk of works, was given the contract of \$28,700 to build the administration block of the Pudu Jail. It was noted, in a letter (Copy of file # 11307/92 - Documents retrieved from the Malaysian National Archive; Ref#: 1957/ 0040604). Minute report from the Governor, **NOTE:** missing page no.2 (3-page report), that the Resident of Selangor was displeased with the way in which Mr. Nicholas was handling the construction (*Ibid*, two contractors were hired for the building, Mr. Nicholas of Crown Agents and a local contractor, Tambusammy Pillay).

<sup>6</sup> Refer to Colonial letter 1969/92, dated 11.2.1892; "Forward Tracings of the plans of Bogambara Jail, for consideration to CS Spooner". Retrieved from the Malaysian National Archive.

<sup>7</sup> There was no mention of Pudu Jail being occupied until a letter from the Selangor State Engineer, C.E. Spooner, an elected official British Resident of the time, to the Gaol Secretary of Selangor on 19 July 1894 (Documents retrieved from the Malaysian National Archive; Ref#: 1957/ 0050742, PWD 3661/ 94, "Re: Working of Prisoners at New Gaol, Pudo"), which stated that the prisoners in the new set-up were 'systematically' idling or pretending to work. Spooner said that the prisoners refused to do their share of a 'fair day's work'. This led him later to introduce hard labour and training workshops as mandatory activities to address such problems.

<sup>8</sup> Refer to "New lease of life for Pudu Prison", New Strait Times, 20th Dec 1984, p. 7

<sup>9</sup> Jacque Rancière mentioned that the operating space within the community was the key to its own form of deconstruction from expected social bonds, surprisingly from within its own population. The idea of an integrated community, with its own norms and expectations was considered to be appalling, which, oddly enough, made the action to segregate, or impose isolation emanating from the prison space, seemingly much more appealing with its own version or guise of solidarity. (Rancière, 2009: 53)

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<sup>10</sup> "Every scrap of prison letter must speak directly for itself to us and thus we have the responsibility of situating it."

(Gallardo 2009/2010: 19)

<sup>11</sup> Refer also on self-affirmation as a protective qualities in expressive writings by J. David Creswell et. al. (2007)

<sup>12</sup> Preliminary Content Analysis from Research Draft, January 2012, accumulative indicators of the graffiti's distribution was based on the corresponding types.

# Chapter 2

Literature Review

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## **Introduction**

This first part of this chapter will engage with the definition of '**Graffiti**', in terms of its origins and its application, which can be traced back over centuries. I will refer to various research projects which discuss the methodologies used in assessing ancient graffiti and also acknowledge contemporary urban and prison graffiti research which has been done. I will look at how these two separate timeframes, ancient and modern, relate to each other by assessing the graffiti writers' association with the space they occupied, their sense of common origins, and their material or symbolic attachment depicted through informal wall writings or drawings which relate to my examination of the Pudu Jail's Graffiti portfolio.

The various issues and questions that arise in this chapter deal with locating graffiti within the context of its definition, based on examples found in ancient ruins, as well as urban settings, private spaces and prison institutions. Most of the preliminary data about the prison's graffiti were missing: the actions of the inmates creating the graffiti, substantial evidence of interviews with the inmates, the inmates' background and cell allocations, the timeframe of refurbishment of the cells during the prison administration and the unfortunate events surrounding the demolition of the prison in 2010, which prevents any further attempts to return to the site. This, however, did not diminish the value of the collection of this work (the PJG portfolio), which I had accumulated during my six months' venture into the Pudu Jail in 2002-03.

The second segment of this chapter deals with the '**Prison Settings**', describing and distinguishing the characteristics of the graffiti produced in such a restrictive environment. It looks at how the materials and tools used to create the graffiti, or the lack of them, led the prison inmates to persist on leaving their marks with an even greater intention, and physical

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force due to the hard surface of the walls, and examines the detail of the drawings and writings right down to their basic message. This leads to a discussion of space itself, and an attempt to identify what drives the inmates to do what they have to do to satisfy their need to adapt to the prison cells.

The final part of this chapter, '**Working with Images**', describes the methodologies which will be applied to the PJG portfolio, which in turn relate from the content analysis to the direct analysis methods which speak of personal, yet identifiable collective experiences that engage with my own personal ties and knowledge of the PJG portfolio.

## Graffiti

I shall begin by considering Pudu Jail's Graffiti (PJG) as inscriptional art that was based on the inmates' cultural background and personal knowledge, expressed through the action of inscribing onto the prison walls. As their memories were transcribed in graffiti form, this would act as a window into 'culture' itself (Rawlinson and Farrell 2010, 362). Having the works located within the prison walls provided a unique opportunity to see the differences between the writings and drawings on the surface of the cell walls, as these would begin to appear as quantifiable groups, which would require qualitative measurement as well.

For a basic view of writing, which is how I refer to graffiti, it would perhaps be appropriate to look at how Jaques Derrida (1978) touched on writing with his 'analytical graphology' in which he suggested that inscriptions could indicate the presence of the writer's spirit, through which it could throw light on the author's character (Derrida 1978, 290). Derrida posed three concepts in the final parts of "Freud and the scene of Writing", namely *psychopathology of everyday life*, *history of writing*, *becoming-literary of the literal*; he talks of a view suggested by the genealogy of morals implied in Melanie Klein's analysis of good and bad objects. According to Derrida (1978), this genealogy begins to illuminate the *archi-trace* (in which he refers to the inherent parts of selfhood in the authors, or writers, revealed unconsciously within their writings). This depiction of the writers' self-presence, in a spiritual sense in these markings, would be a rather romantic depiction of the traces and markings that were left on the walls of the Pudu Jail, suggesting they are the remnants not only of the memories of the inmates, but also a part of the spirit or soul of the inmates.

With subtle reference to writing, Juliet Fleming's (2001) study on "Graffiti and the Writing Arts of Early Modern England" discussed Jonathan Goldberg's (1990) take on Derrida's call for the



investigation of all forms of *graphie* (graphic writing in its widest sense), taking into account not only how and where it appears, the instruments used, the technologies, economic or historical details involved, but also considering the psychological investment in the reading and writing being considered (Fleming 2001, 25).

Fleming (2001) based her model on domestic graffiti found in 16th century English houses, where the written words represent a spiritual presence within the minds of the readers. She claimed that the truth was contained, not in the letters themselves, but in the human's heart (Fleming 2001, 139-40). This 'truth' was demonstrated by the decorative elements based on mottoes and manuscripts taken from the Bible, which was usually to be found in country homes. Though the use of words taken from passages of religious text may, or may not give us moral instructions on how we should be good, they carry the implication that, 'by reading them, we are indeed being good' (Fleming 2001, 140-41). Simply expressed, the religious texts and images trigger memories and remind the occupants of the virtues of salvation and the various moral lessons embodied within these texts. This was how Fleming (2001) puts forward the view that wall writings would not only serve as a reminder, but would eventually represent more than just words acting also as an agent of change or re-enforcement. As the texts were being read and people were constantly around such writings, which eventually influenced the readers' behaviour, there is perhaps more to the graffiti on the Pudu prison walls than just doodles or scribbles.

Ancient and historical graffiti are not just defined by their content or subject matter, nor by the surface they were made on. In examples provided by J.A. Baird & Claire Taylor in "Ancient Graffiti in Context" (2011) concerning archaeological graffiti, the authors claimed that the appearance of graffiti gave a distinct insight into the communal way of life of the previous occupants, based on their knowledge of written accounts of site inscriptions. The decision to treat graffiti as a distinct and defined part of ancient or historical categories has been seen as

transient, informal, or to some extent unsophisticated (Baird and Taylor, Ancient Graffiti in Context: Introduction 2011, 5). Baird & Taylor (2011) suggest that such treatment was because no one considered the integration of the graffiti with its geographical and topographical surroundings, and some even refused to see it as part of the embodiment of space. Ignoring graffiti like this restricts people's understanding of how surroundings can provide insight in a spatial context in archaeological studies.

Ancient graffiti in particular is still a developing form of study, insignificant scribbling that could give an insight into the raw lifestyle of the past. It may, or may not have been affected by the changes that transpired during the time it was done. What it does provide, however, are clues about and indications of the opinions and spontaneous thoughts of those who made it.

Based on reviews and articles about Pompeii's graffiti, it would appear that the use of 'graffiti' implies, hypothetically, an illicit urban phenomenon (Baird and Taylor, Ancient Graffiti in Context: Introduction 2011, 3). This method of ornamenting plaster surfaces within urban settings, was done by scratching onto the top surface of the plaster to reveal the contrasting surface underneath. This technique, called "*graffito*" (a type of scribbling usually referred to in archaeological research) applies also to a rather refined decorative Italian art of the 15th and 16th century found around windows and doors, showing pilasters, colonnades, and caryatids (The Columbia Encyclopaedia, Sixth Edition 2008<sup>13</sup>).

This demonstrated that samples from the past provided a better way to establish a proper classification of graffiti as it is referred to by the authors. In another case, Baird (2011, 49) reports on the collection of graffiti in Dura-Europos in Syria, ranging in legibility and done in various languages on the Western walls. Baird (2011) pointed out the problems, due to uncertainties both in translation and legibility, of determining the taxonomies to establish if this was a form of language throughout the town.

In addition Stolba (2002) and Lang's (1976) study of "Graffiti & Dipinti" (*dipinti*, which is an Italian word meaning painting), revealed an enormous amount of quantifiable data from Athenian markings on pottery, which they had analysed using grid patterns and systematic scales, which led to calculative and quantifiable methods for revealing the structures in the ancient Greeks' social cultures and movements of the past. Working out the origins of all the inscriptions was difficult on account of there being such a mass of languages and their variants along with such a large amount of information. The examination of graffiti, especially when it involves a significant number of anonymous writers, is problematic, especially when it comes to determining cultural values. The fact that people move around, and inscribe at different times, make it difficult to determine what is most important.

What is interesting is how Baird & Taylor (2011) described Milnor (2009)'s observations about Pompeii's graffiti as a form of 'act', rather than just illusive texts (Baird and Taylor, *Ancient Graffiti in Context: Introduction* 2011, 7). Such a description appeals as it elevates how we look at it as more than just another form of communication. It would be helpful to see how these images and texts relate to each other and to their surroundings by going beyond a simple reading of the images and texts inscribed on the walls. Baird and Taylor (2011, 11-12) referred the common misunderstood on graffiti is usually associated with 'informal' and 'low class' but this seems not to ring true for archaeological graffiti, as it is obvious that even the political and literary elite used graffiti in various spaces. Such assumptions were perhaps to be expected that such written accounts or time spent writing them would be by those of a lower class or from the lower ranks of society. Baird and Taylor (2011), however, claimed that higher social class individuals would consider making wall writings. Making graffiti does require motivation. In this particular case, within the prison, compared to a public space, which would be very different from an enclosed or private space, the motivation to make graffiti would be the

result of depriving the body of basic needs, of foregoing social status and expectations, and would reveal a much deeper connection with the writers themselves.

Defining graffiti seems to be the major concern, particularly graffiti found in archaeological sites. How does it relate towards the space it embodies? How it is done and its substance seems to be secondary to a broader understanding of its (the graffiti's) cultural context.



The term *graffiti*, within archaeological practice implies the action of engraving, scratching or scrawling onto a surface, along with the other variant of inscription made via a painted surface. Another form of inscription, *dipinto* (Stolba 2002, Lang 1976), is an Italian word for a painted surface (as opposed to an engraved one) usually found on ceramic objects and vases; the marks are a sign of ownership and are sometimes personal notations. The results of the markings are determined by the various methods used to make them with different sets of tools and even varying intentions behind the markings.

The study of graffiti itself has influenced numerous studies covering various disciplines such as sociological networks, anthropology, semiotics, linguists, and even archaeology. The definition of graffiti, an English word that originated from an Italian verb, which means *to scratch*<sup>14</sup>, simply describes methods of ornamenting walls or permanent surfaces. The action of making the graffiti is done with objects or hand tools that have the capacity to leave indentations, scratches, and markings.

Examining the term 'graffiti', one finds that it started to be picked up as major research subject in the middle of the 20th century (Rawlinson and Farrell 2010, 361). This led to a widespread and growing interest in various forms of debate, mostly favouring quantitative studies from an ethnographical perspective and in the social sciences generally. Since the late 1970s, scholars

have begun to move beyond thinking of graffiti as a functional instrument for transmitting information, drawing attention instead to its symbolic and metaphorical aspects as a religious application (Plesch 2002; Kupfer 2011), constitutive theory (Fieni 2012), facilitating coordinated actions, and even as a simulation of organisation itself (see Barnes 2005; Taylor 1999; Klofas & Cutshall 1985, Rudin & Harless 1970). Organisational graffiti combines words, pictures, drawings, and symbols to express individuality, attitudes, values, needs, desires, aspirations, or perceptions (Taylor 1999, 291). Subsequent scholars have adopted a wide range of approaches to the analysis of organisational debate and have realised its relevance to organisational interpretations, actions and subjectivity, in a variety of ways, within the issues of gender and masculinity (Macdonald 2001; Wilson 2008).

Within a 'deviant' subculture, in a broad sense researchers have used youthful delinquent behaviour as a way of observing graffiti being written within urban spaces, in order to gain an insight into the different legacies of the social sciences, which approach graffiti studies as ethnographic observations (MacDiarmi and Downin 2012), rhetorical analysis of visual artefacts found in the city (Srivathsan et al., 2005; Halsey & Pederick, 2010), insights into discursive tensions (Rodriguez and Clair 1999), or narrative analysis with a criminological perspective (Ferrell 2009).

Critical approaches perceive graffiti as a relationship between power and knowledge, embodied with the subjects' identities while the structural approach views it as a mixture of communicative action and deep reflection, brought together through linguistic choices between local and foreign influence. This was shown in Giovanni Depau's (2012) paper, '*How graffiti provide evidence on the relationship between writing, orality, and identity*', in which he reviews modern graffiti that he observed in Caligari, Italy, which he saw as having conceptual diversity in its choices of a language that, generally, reflects long standing divisions between socially meaningful and structural-based theories in sociology (Depau 2012, 191-192).

However, applying interpretive and functional approaches when looking at graffiti and its linguistics discourse tend to favour examining the human actions, which surround it, the debate on how it could be used to shape one's own or others' view.

In Nancy Macdonald's (2001) writing on "The Graffiti Subculture", she evaluates graffiti to a much greater degree as something that reveals the territory of the subculture behind it, noting that it is a part of an interweaving, complex social class. Comparing two prominent urban settings, London and New York, she uncovers and follows accounts of individuals who use the act of making graffiti as a 'rite of passage' (Macdonald 2001, 228), a journey towards adulthood. Taking an ethnographical approach, Macdonald (2001) puts herself into the space with the writers; she reveals various accounts and perspectives from selected individuals that show their actions as a series of writings, not only as a sign marking their existence, but also to compete (whether among themselves, or just for 'bragging rights') to earn their status as senior, experienced graffiti artists. This is interesting as it presumably bestows on them the title of 'king' within the graffiti world (Macdonald 2001, 77-78). Claiming fame is perhaps a driving force behind the production of graffiti; this would hold particularly true if it was in the public domain.

While the idea of competing for fame and notoriety is part of the spatial dominance within the confines of graffiti, this does not appear to be so when it comes to prison graffiti. There are some similarities in accounts of graffiti within the domain of 'private'; between anonymous, or random authors (if any identities are indicated), crude observations or exchanges of sarcasm and, often, insults. These would typically be found within public toilets, which often feature a type of graffiti coined by Alan Dundes (1966) as "*latrinalia*" which is more elegantly put rather than "shithouse poetries" (Dundes 1966, 92). However, that term is perhaps now redundant as Abel and Buckley (1977) put it:

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In place of the more colorful *latrinalia*, we shall use the term *private* to refer to those graffiti found in the toilet. One reason for this preference for the public-versus-private dichotomy is that the two themes common to private graffiti—sex and excretion—represent biological activities that are so personal that they are almost always performed in relative privacy, especially in America. Likewise, the genitals are sometimes called privates to express the strength of the taboo against mentioning or observing them in public. Similarly, the toilet is often referred to as a privie to emphasize the privacy of the acts of elimination for which they have explicitly been set aside.

(Abel and Buckley 1977, 16-17)

There is a significant problem with defining graffiti, as it is referred to so generally within the context of deviant acts and assumed these writings were associated with a form of criminality, political resistance, vulgar depictions; in a sense, it carries illicit, illegal expressions which always have been constituted as vandalism by today's legal definition (see Ouzman (2010, 3) on Phillips (1996).

Sven Ouzman (2010) questions whether the intersections of graffiti that was found on the walls in ancient cities should be treated as found artefacts in the same way as those found on the walls of modern cities in contemporary times (Ouzman 2010, 4)<sup>15</sup>, though he may have argued that there should be a distinct value attributed to which ones should live through as 'artefacts'. As he observed in the case of the South African sub-culture of graffiti, Ouzman (2010) proposed that prison graffiti should be read in a similar way to gang tags and 'throw-ups' from street graffiti, as it contained the elements of artefact and practice. He pointed out as well the weakness of disregarding it, as it could lead to a false impression that the categorical stages of reading these writings would fail to reveal the nature of graffiti itself or the actual intention of the writing (Ouzman (2010, 30) on Daniel & Timothy Gross's (1993) three-stages of lexical approach in analysing graffiti).

There are also different forms of description about the creation of the graffiti depending on where it was found. Eleanor Casella (2009, 172) refers to these prison graffiti as 'institutional graffiti', which describes making graffiti as the act of coping with penal incarceration, which

indirectly communicates with themselves (the inmates) or their unintended audience (Casella 2009, 174).

However, Casella (2009) pointed out that 'institutionalised' denoted, in a general way, a private-yet-publicly-accessible space. This presumably, gives a clue and partial explanation for it to be a strong case of institutional graffiti. I believe the term 'institutional' in Ervin Goffman's (1961) book, *"Asylum: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates"*, contributes to Casella's (2009) 'institutional graffiti'. Goffman (1961) defined prison as a part of his group definition 'total institution', which described it as a breakdown of the barriers of activities: sleeping, eating, and recreational time, and the space of the affected group controlled under one authority (Goffman 1961, 16-17). The inmates, on admission, go through a kind of mortification process with their personal identification being stripped away, and any kind of self-image of themselves being assaulted in one way or another through a series of humiliating processes (Goffman 1961, 29-30). With such an expected norm of offensive behaviour in a total institution, what seem to be adjustments are in fact, an assimilation process; this massive deprivation leads to collective desires, as Goffman (1961) puts it:

"Understandably, inmate conversation often revolves around a 'release binge fantasy', namely, a recital of what one will do during leave or upon release from the institution. This fantasy is related to a feeling that civilians do not appreciate how wonderful their life is."

(Goffman 1961, 52)

In this particular indigenous model of the prison world, the inmates showed their solidarity by enforcing their own code of behaviour, which operated over and above any other expression of identity and assumed the greatest significance. This may be what these institutional graffiti might reveal on the walls of the cells.

Jaqueline Wilson (2008, 69-70) pointed out that graffiti research done on public toilets or in school grounds has limited application when it comes to the nature of prison graffiti because



of the function of the space in which the graffiti is found. But of course, they all belong to the outside world, which is how Wilson (2008, 69-70) puts it. Graffiti within prison cells, not to mention elsewhere in the prison compound such as latrines, mess halls, workshops, or where there are regular activities outside the prisoners' space, isn't intended, as it is in the outside world, to be seen by everyone, or to compete for notoriety or distinction as to who has more seniority as the urban graffiti does. Elsewhere graffiti within the latrinalia / private spheres, apparently dealing with issues of masculinity as it is in a space that only allows for a single gender, is an example of conversational writing with the idea of one person's writing dominating that of another (Green 2003, 283).

James Green's (2003) study on graffiti found in male and female toilets as well as study booths, is an interesting update on similar earlier studies (see Farr & Gordon 1975; Kinsey, Pomeroy, Martin, & Gebhard 1953; Stocker, Dutcher, Hargrove, & Cook 1972). By using neutral ground such as the study booths in a university library, where both sexes have an equal opportunity to leave graffiti, this graffiti was compared with that found within the restrooms. Green (2003) observed that it is possible to find quantifiable examples where there is an adjustment process in terms of the language and phrases used between the two genders compared with what was written in a single gender space such as the restrooms (Green 2003, 283). This is possible to achieve through repetitive observations and by noting the sample 'growth' of graffiti, which supposedly overcomes the issues of absolute-versus-frequency problems in previous researches (Green 2003, 286).

However, there will always be a problem with the arbitrariness that seems to haunt graffiti studies. Being selective towards what can be seen as apparent data, and hopefully understanding the writings and drawings on the walls seems to be the way forward:

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“The graffiti analyzed in this study were transcribed from the walls of the 95 general population rooms of this abandoned juvenile institution. The isolation cells where graffiti were etched into the walls with sharp objects, were not included in the data collection because of the problem of obtaining the data with reliability.”

(Klofas and Cutshall 1985, 372)

Klofas & Cutshall (1972) also noted this when they defined the biggest characteristic of graffiti as its arbitrariness. As graffiti arrives with very little observation and without the presence of an audience, though created in a shared space, the writers themselves, presumably, concealed themselves to an extent so as not to have to fully explain what they were writing or drawing. Most of their research is a continuous effort of observation and verbatim recordings set against the usual decay and damage associated with abandoned prison facilities. Arbitrariness seems to be a necessary evil in the study of scribbling, writings and drawings on walls as claimed by Klofas and Cutshall (1985). This is often true even in archaeological studies, although with these there is the advantage of being able to refer to written documents and architectural remnants, putting the inscriptions into a more meaningful context than that provided by the associated authors of the graffiti (Abel and Buckley 1977, 3-4). This is quite a significant point and a reminder of how such randomness, the incomplete features of the graffiti, which is a prominent part of the PJG, must somehow be worked with not just to give a direct reading of the graffiti, but also to reveal the possible considerations of the culture of the time of its making, be that dormant or still in use.

In a recent study by Belinda Costanzo, Melissa Bull, and Catrin Smith (2013), they argued that previous methods of prison graffiti studies had lacked any explanation of the context being manifested (Costanzo, Bull and Smith 2013, 217). Through triangulation, which they had evaluated by suggesting the importance of historical, social and political contexts in their interpretation, they had provided three broad general themes: identity, coping, and resistance. They had concluded how context through external review would add to the interpretation of graffiti from their visual ethnographic overview from the Boggo Road Gaol, Brisbane, Australia.

I would agree with some points of their argument, though they also lack an important crucial element, similar to my studies, namely the inmates who were responsible for making the graffiti. While the context would provide relevant details as to the shapes and the narratives, it would be impossible to justify an overall generalisation about the tone of prison graffiti, as this would negate the function of the prison graffiti itself. O'Sullivan's (2009) research might perhaps come closest to being able to analyse graffiti, as she had talked about the graffiti in her publication within the context of historical and political ties to the authors themselves.

In my current findings, every graffiti had its purpose, even in the most minute scribbling, to represent the issues of coping, identity and even resistance. However, what has also been proposed in this thesis is that some of the graffiti found in Pudu Jail had its own function of transforming the space, where the inmates had relieved the sterility of the space within the prison cells based on Creswell's (1996) take on transformation of space to accommodate various motivations from self-affirmations to protective measurements. This was different to them just viewing the prison graffiti as a way of declaring their own presence within the prison cells. What would be important here was to provide the necessary cultural and local practices and even religious dogmas, which essentially made the prison graffiti exclusively transform the space in order to mimic their beliefs and upbringing, and even to co-ordinate social movements within the confines of the prison.

Prison graffiti does, however, carry different values in its types of notation: some may be a minimal form of conversation, rarely found to be complete; in most cases there is no elegant, concise and universal conclusion as to what type of graffiti is found in such prison spaces. Wilson (2008) confirmed that this kind of phenomenon was due to the fact that the graffiti was drawn with no discernible audience in mind, which puts it into the category of a 'sign evidently intended purely as self-affirmation' (J. Z. Wilson 2008, 70). This takes us back to the point where prison or its graffiti is seen to be very different from its counterpart, public graffiti. The

need for an audience for the graffiti would seem to be much less necessary and it is aimed more towards the writers or inmates themselves. This, which will be shown in a later chapter, demonstrates that the different accounts of graffiti predominantly tell more about life inside the cells, where the inmates came from, and give descriptions of the incarceration routine, and are often never completed. Hence, the expectation that such writings and graffiti would live on beyond their prison occupational period seemed to be the case with the PJG.

Wilson (2008) looks closely at the variety of 'graffito' found in various prison establishments in Australia. What is interesting is that she implies that the relevant condition of such a form of graffiti would suggest the circumstantial conditions that are found within a 'quasi-private sphere', namely the residential area of the inmates (J. Z. Wilson, *Prison: Cultural Memory and Dark Tourism* 2008, 70). It is possible then to affirm that prison graffiti within these sorts of conditions suggests that general forms of graffiti within the prison cells could be described as brief self-notations, though some vary and are acts of dominance or are the result of various other factors that surfaced.



Prisons within the South East Asian region seldom get much attention paid to their internal proceedings, and certainly not from the perspective of the general experiences of their inmates (Dikötter and Brown 2007, 23). There are the occasional times when a glimpse of the internal life of such prisons might enlighten a curious public, such as in the case of 'celebrity' or political prisoners.

Pudu Jail has had its share of 'celebrity' prisoners; Wong Swee Chin 'Botak Chin', Maznah Ismail a.k.a. 'Mona Fandey the Witch Doctor' and her husband, Mohd Affandi Abdul Rahman, and their assistant Juraimi Hassan<sup>16</sup>, Jimmy Chua a.k.a 'Chua Chap Seng'<sup>17</sup>, Kevin Barlow and Brian Chambers<sup>18</sup>. The media with the aim of raising circulation follows popular "celebrity

inmates" cases within the prison. In many instances, the media tends to concentrate on the inmates' previous criminal life outside, rather than their experiences within the prison. Some may get a brief mention about their conduct within the prison, but that hardly serves to convey the experiences of the general population of the prison. To include these 'celebrity' criminal cases would not help to accomplish what is needed in this research.

Wilson (2008, 59) had come to a similar conclusion while reviewing the 'celebrity' cases from Pentridge Prison, Australia. What was important was to determine the value of the various narrative accounts that could be used as sources; whether they should come from the inmates themselves (which would be best), or from non-prisoners (ex-wardens, officers, executioners, administration staffs, tour guides and historians), rather than particular individuals or 'celebrity' criminals, all of which would build up a picture of the views and experiences of the prison itself (J. Z. Wilson, *Prison: Cultural Memory and Dark Tourism* 2008, 58-59). This was not to suggest that some statements should be discounted entirely, but it is important to examine the accounts from the regular prison population so as not to ignore the actual daily accounts of prison experience. Norval Morris (1995) used a full written diary of one prisoner, which gave an insight into the inmate's routine. What this revealed was that survival depended on the inmate's daily routine, which he had set up to include various activities to run in parallel with the grinding repetition of prison schedules so as to relieve the monotony:

"...if you expect the usual prison tale of constant violence, brutal guards, gang rapes, daily escape efforts, turmoil, and fearsome adventures, you will be deeply disappointed. Prison life is really nothing like what the press, television, and movies suggest... though you have to be constantly careful to avoid situations or behavior that might lead to violence... For me, and many like me in prison, violence is not the major problem; the major problem is monotony. It is the dull sameness of prison life, its idleness and boredom, that grinds me down..."

Morris (1998, 203) on "One Day in the Life of #12345"

Morris (1998) stressed the current predicament of the prison system in general, from political disruption, healthcare, prison education, to the strain produced by the constraints that,

ironically, 'shackle' the prison administrators. Given that the ratio of prisoners outnumbers prison staff (Morris 1998, 221), the constant monotony of the inmates' routine seems to be a continual problem which many have tried to alleviate with rehabilitation, rather than punishment, if only to allow the inmates some opportunity for self-development.

Examining the writings of regular inmates, Deena Rymhs (2009) noted that the long-term writings of inmates demonstrated a form of re-fashioning of the prisoners themselves (Rymhs 2009, 102). Re-fashioning, in this case, is defined as a reforming of the process by which they came to understand the conditions of their oppression, done through just the description of their senses and feelings in their writing, without the need to adopt any sort of 'romantic' bias in their text:

Alan Ginsberg advised this hopeful author about how to become a better writer. Urging McWhinney to cast off his "corny poetry style," Ginsberg told him instead: "don't write poetry, write little fact descriptions of what you see & hear around you with your own senses, with simple real knife & fork & spoon & napkin & cup words . . . forget 'Beauty' but write about real details of a fence or bed or wall or moon or hand or daydream or car exhaust noise or cough, if you want to communicate to others"

(Rymhs (2009, 102) on The McWhinney-Ginsberg Correspondence)

It is interesting to look at what it is about prison that generates an interest in writing, even when writing implements are limited within the prison cell, as it increases a feeling of empowerment to take graffiti from context into text (Rymhs 2009, 103 on Frank Guiney). What Rymhs (2009) pointed out was that prison graffiti writing is a way of mapping the memories contained in prison cells. Whether it remains as a part of the outside world, or an expansion of it, remains undecided within the social analyses of these hypothetical questions. Although some may arrive at a better fulfilment in such an ethnographical research approach through interviews (refer to Wilson 2008a; A. Wilson 2004), or examples of historical evidence against the found graffiti (refer to O'Sullivan 2009), what remains of the PJG portfolio would be just visual artifacts. This perhaps requires explanation as not only was it done by me as I explored the prison space, it is also necessary to include the rationale as to why these graffiti were

chosen to be observed and included in this process. Conceivably, the relationship of the prison space might be the starting point for this research. The actions of the inmates to transform the blank wall spaces into ornamental and personalised spaces and my curiosity about that, compared with simple functional spaces, is what had attracted me to document them in the first place.

This resonates with Werner Sedlak's (1999) enquiry into the relationship of social space within a South African prison, where he cited and referred extensively to Henri Lefebvre's (1991) text on "An Appropriation of Space", which talks about modification within the prison cell space in order to adjust to such a dominating environment. This situation, where graffiti applies, is described as the need to modify the space, in this case, to appropriate it as a deliberate act to dissipate or replace the feelings of domination (Sedlak 1999, 190). Sedlak (1999), in the case of Ruth First<sup>19</sup>, observed these acts as a two-sided argument, firstly as a personal gesture and secondly as a collective one whereby the presence of graffiti within the cell acts as a gesture towards improving the protection of both self and personal territory (Sedlak 1999, 192). Isaac Ndlovu (2012) looked at how Ruth First's autobiographical writings, along with those of Emma Mashinini and Breyten Breytenbach, used memories alongside new narrative accounts while in solitary confinement:

"...the limited space forces First to spend most of her time lying on the uncomfortable bed and makes her realize how self-consciousness is reliant on things that unrestricted and healthy people may take for granted. She suddenly realizes that people who are confined to bed, whether by imprisonment, as in her case, or by some physical ailment, can have a radically changed perception of the self and of the world."

(Ndlovu 2012, 27)

Ndlovu (2012) pointed out, in First's case, how the lack of any kind of cultural element within the prison space seemed to intensify First's consciousness of the self which contributed to her experiencing solitary confinement as a void, a nothingness where time eventually stops (Ndlovu 2012, 28). He indicated that First's narrative is a product, after the event, of her

experience of confinement; when the narrative begins, it evolves into different narratives that may influence her combination of autobiographical and structural elements. This could lead to rather erratic accounts from an inmate where reality contradicts narrative. This echoes Robert Gaucher's (1988) assertions that prisoners are able to provide 'the real stuff' of prison living and attests to the fact that a human being can survive the onslaught of imprisonment with his sense of humanity intact:

How else can one explain the marvellous flow of his passionate indignation but by recognizing that here is a man who knows human suffering as a human being, and who experiences life as life even within the systematic degradation and oppression he so ably analyses.

(Gaucher 1988, 5 on an inmate writer, Yves Bourque)

The initial action of writing, either names or descriptions of the environment, is, hypothetically, an act of de-territorialisation of the prison cell's space (Rymhs, "Here the country is uncertain": Canadian Incarcerated Authors Trans-scribing Prison 2009, 103). On the collective side, it is the accumulated writings, usually of inmates coming from similar geographical backgrounds, racial groups or gangs, that act as a re-enforcement of the space to counter isolation, and result, beyond just the actual act of writing, in a representation on behalf of the inmates' community (Rymhs 2009, 106).

Rymhs (2009, 111-112) argues that prison writing (graffiti, letters, or poetry) that occurs within prison cells is more like an act of repurposing the context of writing. Knowing that the result of their writings will be seen by an audience, prevents an understanding of the common aesthetics and raises questions as to how it should be read, let alone be translated. Any attempts to do so prompts the reader and researcher alike to ask: what will be the benefits of recognising such literature within prison graffiti writings?

To answer this question in parts, misery and contempt for the space is perhaps part of private graffiti. As Carol Hagen and her colleagues (1999) have shown through their graffiti content



analysis, when a community is hit hard after a disastrous event, graffiti soon begins to appear, yet it seems to be directed initially towards themselves (the writers) or the community as its own audience, before telling the outside world to take note of their misfortune, if it ever gets posted or seen in the media. Hagen et. al. (1999) were well aware of the statistical trend that experiencing isolation from help, in the aftermath of a disaster or catastrophic event, could produce a different type of graffiti than that which appears in the aftermath through humour and sarcasm. The representations of these have coined an interesting term, namely "*catastroffiti*"<sup>20</sup> (Hagen, et al. 1999, 154), which seems to empower in the same way as reflexive text. Although the temptations to have different terms or taxonomies of graffiti for those found in prison seems to be relevant to the PJG, I would prefer to leave it with the simple term of '*prison graffiti*', as it would be best to leave the decision as to what term would suit such a category until a larger amount of research has been thoroughly done in the future on graffiti found in prisons.

As these forms of graffiti seem to be created in private space, this act of concealment highlights the relationship of the graffiti to the writers or other inmates who have cordoned themselves off from the outside world in the same way as the prison cells do to the inmates. An audience for the writings or graffiti would begin to take shape from those around the writings, in other words the cellmates themselves. Whether the intention was to make these for a future audience is impossible to determine, as there was no guarantee of the survival of the graffiti. Hence, the consideration whether any of these graffiti would ever surface beyond the prison walls (via publication or a series of documentations), would depend upon what opportunity might arise for a researcher as to what might surface on observation.

Another part of the answer to this question of prison graffiti involves a degree of demystification regarding the inconsistent nature of prison graffiti being looked at as a traditional aesthetic. Rather than suggesting that the particular nature of the graffiti could

have aesthetic appeal like the art and craftworks produced by the prison for commercial purposes, there is a frailty inherent in suggesting that aesthetic should be used to describe it. Thus, in approaching the PJG by having a broader appreciation of the various sources of the Malaysian and its surrounding nations' material culture, the concept of looking into the space in which the graffiti 'resides' would arguably provide the necessary approach to this form of research.

Melissa Schrift's (2006) study on an Angola Prison's art, gives an intriguing example of looking into prison art that falls short and is somewhat compartmentalised into the category of 'outsider art', a term that most research cases tend to apply to tattoos, autobiographical drawings and paintings, soap arts, toilet-paper sculptures and so forth, usually in a non-traditional art or craft (Schrift 2006, 258). Art produced within a commercially driven segment may respond to the needs of the inmates for something therapeutic and all the more so if it has an achievable goal of employing 'folkloric' aesthetics to meet this consumer demand. This is especially interesting if its appearance fits with the themes of redemption or a form of religious renewal (Schrift 2006, 270) within the incarceration process. What is interesting is how Schrift (2006) observed that the alteration of the inmates' work was solely dependent on what the audience (in this case, the buyers) wants or desires to look at: more religious symbols or texts, patriotically themed, and with less dark subject matter. This is not to discount the practice of art by the inmates for commercial reasons or to claim that their values are irrelevant when it comes to self-reflection, in the way that the Koestler Awards that occur yearly in the UK provide different types of contribution, and look at making art as a way of receiving acceptance by the establishment (see Cook, 2003).

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When inmates produce arts and crafts, they are constructing their own, equally intriguing and highly profitable realm of otherness within Angola's officially sponsored tale. Through their arts and crafts, inmates embrace their own collectively fashioned imaginary of life "on the streets," a vision fuelled by despair and destitution, vague euphoric memories, second-hand media, lingering loved ones, and glimpses of the outside world through the Arts and Crafts Festival.

(Schrift 2006, 273)

It would take more extensive research to place prison graffiti within this particular context, as the factors that contribute towards its making have no driving force of commercial value, let alone are likely to be accepted by the prison authorities themselves. Prison graffiti, in most cases, is discouraged, some was even absent in modern prison establishments, as I observed on several visits to new Malaysian prison facilities<sup>21</sup>. Graffiti, however, could still be found in some post-colonial prisons and detention centres in Malaysia, despite attempts to make it forbidden or cover up these marked surfaces, as inmates were not allowed to deface or damage any of the prison properties (refer to Malaysian Institute of Law 2006, Part 12, Article 122 (ss), 135). However, it is difficult to thoroughly enforce such a prohibition due to regulations and the very low ratio of wardens/prison staff to the inmates, or to attend to the cells' cosmetic upkeep.

Wilson (2008) discussed the 'battle' between the prison authorities and the inmates who were constantly scribbling in their cells:

"[T]he graffiti is seen as something out of place, which must be erased in order to return the social space to its proper condition. Removal is thus a way of *re-appropriating* the space, both taking back the space from the graffiti writer, and returning the space to a condition of propriety"

Wilson (2008, 68) on Hasley & Young (2002)

'*Re-appropriating*' (italicised in the original) seems to be the action of reclaiming and seizing back the control of the space. Space, perhaps, dictates the functions not only of the bodies that reside in it, but also refers to objects and in this particular case, the graffiti contained within it. What I believe this particular text refers to is an indication of struggle between two forces, the desire to write and the desire to fully restore the function of the space by having

the body and the mind rendered 'docile', or appearing to be so (see Foucault 1977, 135-6). Foucault's (1977, pp. 135-141) texts on 'Docile Bodies' describes how disciplinary routines, based on militaristic and monastic training, would be imposed on the inmates in order to bend their will and restrict their movements, thereby gaining the desired effect on inmates through obedience. Segregation in individualised, cellular spaces and the effects of enclosure on each one of them would render these inmates contained and manageable.

The function of the prison space continually employed an extension of monastic practices, as the ideals of spiritual penance arising from the precedence of cellular seclusion which became the refuge for improved spiritual betterment through strong abstinence yet anti-worldliness (Johnston 2000, 17), would be would be the principal means of corrective contemplation. However, prison graffiti, which revealed in many instances the ideas of the inmate's past emerging from within, revealed different forms of identifiers, which would be a common appropriation of the spaces holding further accounts of directive inscriptions. These forms of graffiti take on their own logic of appropriation, manifested from their own depths of arguments, ideas, actions, interventions, inversions, which had extended onto the walls of the prison cells. Such systems within the graffiti, by their own accord, become a way of communicating the more sophisticated, metaphorical intentions of the inmates with each other (Gallardo 2009/2010, 19).

The structures of prison graffiti are restricted to the possible combinations of words, and through these restrictions construct their narrative values, however, such limitations would occur as they arose during the graffiti's making. Gallardo's (2009/2010) paper stated that his research would be based on letters from prison which were subject to rigorous laws of language and the message would require further re-structuring due to the limits of what could be written in prison letters. This was because any form of writing within the prison was subjected to a rigorous process of censorship from the authoritarian administration. Hence to

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read the letters requires a parallel approach: a direct reading and finding out what was hidden from sight. The latter would certainly prove to be a daunting task, as it would be essential to carry out more research into the authors' background, his associates, the environment, current affairs relevant to the letters' date, and the intent. However, he had decided to treat the letters as objects of interest, finding more crucial and substantial ties by reading them as a temporal informational node<sup>22</sup>. This would require greater co-operation to look at such matter as material history, by going beyond the history of the material itself. This would create a way to give conceivable meaning to the writings.

## Prison Settings (the Space)

E. Shaskan Bumás (2001) plays around with the idea of the prison within the fictional story from Nathaniel Hawthorne's *"The Scarlet Letter"*, by comparing it with a similar reference from Foucault's (1977) *"Discipline and Punish"*<sup>23</sup>, in which he commented on the function of prison space:

"Punishment—the revenge ritual—is the actual goal of the penal system; but reformers have continuously deceived themselves with the goals of deterrence and rehabilitation. They have attempted to ameliorate or cleanse society by reforming its deviants; and since the late-eighteenth century, the primary method of reform has been imprisonment"

Bumas (2001, p.126) on Sullivan (1990, p.2)

Such discussion has led to a widespread and growing interest in such discourse, both in prison reformation studies and more generally in the social sciences. The discussion, which in most cases dealt with Malaysian prison inmates, was almost exclusively dealing with substance and drug abuse (Adam, Wan Ahmad and Abdul Fatah 2011; Townsend 2001), HIV-treatment<sup>24</sup>, and suicides<sup>25</sup>. This is understandable as in most cases the inmates were imprisoned because of narcotics-related crimes in Malaysia (van Zyl Smit 2013), thus any discussion needed to include proposals for care and support, which is something that goes beyond just the prison and flogging sentences.

But what is meant by the word 'space' in the Malaysian prison context? Or, asking questions about specific places, from whose social history would the Malaysian prison have been constructed? For the struggle over personal prison space is not only about re-asserting the body, but also about attempts to possess the imagination. Although previous research on such a topic is limited and would be difficult to produce (interview-based and social-observation studies), perhaps the answer lies in the outcomes of other prison research work done outside Malaysia on how space is represented, occupied and constructed.

Going back to the idea in the previous chapter of how all this might be relevant for answering questions about Foucault's (1977, 123) idea of the prison cell space as a transition between two worlds, Eleanor Chiari (2012) demonstrated how the Le Nuove prison in Turin, Italy, retained material remnants of the past by using the narrative and cultural histories of previous occupants, gained through conducting 45 qualitative interviews with ex-prisoners, prison workers, doctors, psychiatrists, prison officers, volunteers and prison directors (Chiari 2012, xxii). What derived from these interviews showed memories of 'restless bodies' that filled the empty space of the cells with mythologies and self-representations, describing the cell as a lived-in and remembered space (Chiari 2012, 3).

Foucault introduces the term 'Heteropias', which is the opposite of the non-existing ideal plane of 'Utopias' (Foucault and Miskowiec, *Of Other Spaces* 1986, 23), which was deeply rooted in phenomenological debate. Foucault (1986) suggests that such space, or place in this case, is a simultaneously interlinked space that remains interconnected and with a relationship to the community surrounding it, yet also remains separate from it (Cairns, McInees and Roberts 2003, 135). Actually establishing what heterotopian spaces meant was difficult as very few papers explained its meaning and most found it confusing (see Cairns, McInees and Roberts 2003, 135; Cenzatti 2008, 75-76), but suffice it to say it is about being both transient and ephemeral. It would appear that Foucault had borrowed the word from medical terminology, 'heterotopias', meaning 'strange/another/different places', usually involving misplacements of an organ or tissues within the human body. Human action, however, is effected through the simultaneous deployment of quite different kinds of semiotic resources. He gave several examples to illustrate this, one being that a cemetery functions as a transitory space, both religiously and through its very purpose; yet it remains connected to its social history and reflects the cultural practice which surrounds it (Foucault and Miskowiec, *Of Other Spaces* 1986, 25). In the obvious case of prison, which he categorised as 'heteropias of

deviation', he describes the allocated space as a tangible place, and refers to prison spaces as the primary site of punishment, the compartmentalised unit which specifically functions to deprive freedom, separate the body of the inmate from their family, restrict physical space and restrict any productive ability within the cells (Chiari 2012, 3).

However, the resistance of the space does come into play, as Anita Wilson (2004, 78; 2003) described how an inmate has 'the need to occupy and nurture his mind in order to retain a sense of social being'. It relates to a prisoner's desire to retain a sense of control over mental spaces when physical spaces are still held within the constraints of the institution. These mental spaces still hold to the culturally specific discourse and rules of the 'third space'.

To explain the 'third space', Wilson (2004; 2003) had conducted her research with inmates throughout England and Scotland in an ethnographic review of the inmates' efforts to keep their minds occupied through talking and socialising with the prison authorities, resulting in particular types of humour and personal improvement in the inmates' level of literacy. The 'third space', as described by Wilson (2003), was explained as a behavioural pattern and actions by the inmates conducted through 'non-institutionalised' behaviours and actions, with which the inmates attempted to re-associate themselves back into the outside world. These non-institutionalised behaviours vary from the languages (usually coded languages and writing); graffiti on the walls, pillows, bed sheets, or any surfaces within their cells; modification of prison materials into various functions (soaps, toothbrushes, appliances, etc. into shanks, tattoo machines, board games, artworks, etc.), most of which would not be sanctioned by the prison administration. However, the 'third space' moves closer towards the inmates' personal attempts to separate their bodies and certainly their minds from the prison spaces by re-appropriating the space in which they dwell:



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Third Spaces do not exist in a vacuum, occupying a neutral space between two worlds. They require sets of rules - in other words a form of discourse - which distinguishes them from other spaces with other sets of rules.

(A. Wilson 2003, 296)

This perhaps would be the best way of answering Foucault's (1977, 123) notion of the prison cell space as a transition between two worlds, as resistance through the prison or cell space isn't just about anti-authority, but it had become a series of attempts by the inmates to adapt, negotiate, and reconstruct their personal identity in order to deal with the prison, the prison communities, their personal beings and with the outside world which they had left.

This kind of source fostered a deep conviction that inhibited serious study into the complexities of prison research itself. The ethnographical approach in Chiari's (2012) study established that inmates' own experiences in prison formed a vital resource. Though it may seem to show that authors as sources are important as part of the research on graffiti, sometimes one would need to re-investigate the remnants of these mark-makings without the needs or influence of the authors. Such a display of images, like in the case of the PJG portfolio, would have the addition of latent content, which allows reflective interpretation.

Daily life, if discussed at all, acted as a witness to their ability to invoke their memories, alongside how they planned their time, food, activities and surroundings in an attempt to fill the empty space they occupied. Previous scholars, even though they have been concentrating on the actual prison space, its inter-political relationship, the part it plays in justice-system policies, continue to operate within this explanatory framework. Consequently, this evidence coming from the prisoners themselves becomes a powerful and contributing form of ethnographic research, which was mostly absent in previous research. This is important because relying on the perceptions and interpretations of prisoners helps to inform and energise academic analysts (Gaucher 1988, 2).

## Working with Images

Despite the simple immediacy of the images, it still remains unclear to what extent these are representative of visual imageries. Images could not be read as linear as with written texts. Rather, they are read “all at once”, and all their meanings are taken in with a glance. Such suspension of linear reading reveals itself in a flash, opening up a whole range of associations tantamount to my own familiar associations with the PJG's images and texts.

Some of these texts may stimulate the imagination; when I read, I began to visualise the associated images, a puzzle of visualisations emerging from the memory, which somehow began to be superimposed onto the text. Therein lies the empty space of the words: whether the images are bolder in the way they refer to the object depicted.

Confronted with written texts within the images, the imagination works not just to fill in the blankness of words, to determine what is being seen, but also what else can be seen since it has already been read during the viewer's glance. The inability to read images beyond the structured form is surely a kind of articulated social reflection, much like understanding children's drawings when it comes to reading images. In a visual ethnographic sense, it holds the self as both a viewer and a reader in a collective involvement, which may clarify these impressions.

In running through the various images from the Pudu Jail Graffiti, I have employed utilised content analysis on the PJG as a way of describing the collections of texts, whether written or drawn, located within the surroundings that are patterned by certain structural, inter-textual features and have both a functional and constructive effect on the reading of the PJG images.

In this sense, pattern can be seen as the raw material from individual texts while the images are both manifestations, and part of broader debates.

Interpretive approaches see graffiti as a communicative action, with the emphasis on a collection of images that were done in the past within a defunct prison in Malaysia which requires a functional approach to view it and addresses complex questions, such as its origins, the past and contemporary spread and treatment of memories and cultures. It also requires synthesising information within a visual ethnographical review, which pays close attention to the materials at hand, yet remains broad-based in its observations and the probability which ties to the culture to the illustrated graffiti, as these were about the gathered knowledge when communicating with a wider audience.

The first consideration would be the graffiti itself; the second would be its placement within the prison space. The third, which is significant, would be how it is perceived as a compilation of images as a collection.

Thus photographs should be seen in terms neither of scientific description nor of artistic aesthetics—although many critics have done and continue to do this—but as cultural documents offering evidence of historically, culturally and socially specific ways of seeing the world.

(Rose 2000, 556)

Gillian Rose (2000) takes the idea of assessment even further. She describes the framework in which a traditional problem-solving research project may be judged. The criteria involves demonstrating a problem and then proposing a solution that has been arrived at in a reasoned way. She insists that photographs cannot be used as neutral evidence of the way things looked, arguing that photographs involve complex practices of observation, production, reproduction and display (Rose 2000, 556). On the one hand, this entails the type of memory practices and personalisation associated with the photography collection. On the other, the images form part of an effort to create a collective set of memories of the past, which she

describes as a form of specificities connected with looking at images within the context of an archive.

As the process continues, breadth and depth will widen and deepen as cycles of exploration and reflexivity to take place, and as multiple and changing issues arise during the course of the project. I will have to place great importance on context of the described images that was selected, including the stance and reflexivity as an inquirer, making explicit the process by which the material and analysis are produced.

Rose's (2000) discussions contained various interesting points, as she refers to the way in which photographs contain particular visual and spatial forms of organisation. These are rich and various and possibly contradictory in the way that some of the visual and spatial elements fit the complex network of interpretations which photographs are subject to. This reminded me of Sarah Pink's (2011) argument on how the study of vernacular images has its own set of rules on how elements should be aligned, remembered and imagined as embodied and affective experiences associated with the moments in which images were taken, represented in the images as the present (Pink, 2011, 98; see also Pink, 2001). Though it would be necessary, more than usual, to look at these as indexical photographs (refer to Stewart 2010), and consider photography within the context of archive (Rose, 2000; Becker, 1992; Van House, 2011), there is a certain element missing from the PJG images that ideas about spatial gaps simply fail to fill such as the full detailed account of the size of the graffiti in relation to the space, the material used in making the graffiti, authenticating the timeframe the graffiti was made and by whom and so forth.

These questions carry an important consideration as they involve a different form of criteria and, certainly, methodological process, which would undoubtedly have an effect on the research discipline it refers to. The potential methods of using the unobtrusive or non-reactive research methodology as proposed by Klofas & Cutshall (1985), offered significant pattern

evaluation of correctional institution graffiti as indicators that would make up another form of variant for reading social relations within the correctional institution. Their collection of graffiti, inscriptions collected from the correctional facility, offered the analytical possibility of understanding the significance of the graffiti found in the Pudu Jail. Statistical or quantitative measurements may not offer a realistic condition, though it would be practical or pragmatic way of judging the inmates' cultural distribution or representation in a traditional ethnographic research methodology, especially when statistical significance is dependent on sampling size and validity. What might overcome this limitation would be finding the clusters that would show the ways in which they correspond to the mean values.

Thus, if, for example, a statistically significant difference is found between religious beliefs and language used, for instance the Malay language found in the preliminary count of the Pudu Jail's graffiti has a statistically higher presence in religious graffiti than Chinese characters (refer to Appendix a (i), page xxxi), this would not necessarily mean that the Malay inmates were more devout individuals than the Chinese, quantitatively. This, of course, would be a biased interpretation fuelled by the single-directional with a statistically significant objective, without it being worth noting what it referred to, collectively, in the first place.

In reality, it would be possible to find statistical procedures in social science for determining the differences in mean distribution for religious practices within correctional institutions. The general class of statistics that do this is called effect size statistics, and when used in a cross-cultural setting, such as when Stocker and his colleagues (1972) applied random sampling and different types of graffiti, this may present dubious results as there are too many possibilities that the results could be unreliable (Stocker, et al. 1972, 363). Judging by numbers, in the case of the PJG graffiti, this would reveal clusters of cultural or culturally material attachments, rather than giving a favourable conclusion just from one single graffiti.

Drawing on other elements, Darryn Crowe (2003) added to little-known ethnographical fieldwork by using photography in his travels in the Kalahari. He emphasised how the resulting documentation becomes a bilateral communication and a sharing of information and experience between him and his subjects (Crowe 2003, 475). This kind of alignment between himself and the act of photographing established it as a study and helped to underline the potential value of ethnographic photography. In a sense, the phenomenological and the empirical values within the images should be able to explain the ethnographic experience through a sense of reflection, as photography has been used to empower rather than to objectify the research subject material (Shaw 2005, 239). In that way, ethnographical observations were enriched by the existence of photography, and photographs themselves were elevated to a more valid position within visual-ethnographic discussion.

In some ways this would be agreeable, as Douglas Harper (1998, 29) suggests that the materiality of images is a social and technical reconstruction of visual traces, no matter how correctly or 'truly' it may relate to the world. Harper's (1998) arguments may have some point, if the materials, or photographic papers which the images were printed on, were to be looked at as objects themselves. A quantifiable measurement would suggest whether to record what is seen and what is written as valid material or whether it would be considered as questionable data. I believe this argument rests on the question of accepting whether the material object (the photographs) would be excluded from attempts to somehow 'false-caption' images, which would lead to a biased or skewed view that would certainly misrepresent what is shown. However, I very much agree with Harper's (1998, 30) view of ethnography via photography as a 'partial truth', certainly in the case of this research. This would certainly draw out the required narrative (in visual-ethnography *per se*) that would determine the personal point of view, and allow the researchers themselves to voice whatever their own opinions were about what the images provided. This claim of 'partial truth' would I believe rely on the rest of the

researcher's ability, knowledge or experience for providing the rest of the necessary information.

Harper (1998) presented his case in series of arguments on how ineptly sociology would view the case whenever researchers find that they can only get access by using photographic materials or making the effort to document things by using the camera. He showed examples where it was necessary to reframe the idea of photo-elicitation (see also Blinn and Harrist 1991; Heisley and Levy 1991) as a new relationship dissolving the borders between the visual ethnographic process and sociology, which he fittingly coined as 'visual sociology'. Perhaps the roots of this process are not too far away from Collier and Collier (1986)'s early process of photo-elicitation, which still recognises the relationship of the images presented with the researcher as an open-ended interview process. Consequently, I believe that looking through the PJG portfolio is valid, as it stands as a collective effort to extend one's own view by reshuffling these images into various visual clusters, thus demonstrating the actions taken to build them into groups depending on the memories of what the images and texts represent collectively.

Karen Cross and Julia Peck (2010, 127) claimed photography, archive and memory are intimately connected. This is an interesting point in the sense of to whom do the memories belong when captured by images? Memory and photography are fundamentally connected as Steve Garlick (2002, 295-96) puts it. This then becomes crucial in the process, which allows us to acknowledge our ability to record the experiences we encounter throughout our lives. Remembering functions, much like photography, to return to us fragmented remains of the past (Cross and Peck 2010, 136). They explore archival and contemporary photography as a basis for oral history, which is similar to the basis for photo-elicitation as Harper (1998) suggested, (see also Parker 2009) on the interpretation of context and induced meaning within

and through photographs along with the juxtaposition of image and textual narrative by recognising both aspects of the research study that they wish to highlight and discuss.

There has been an intellectual progression during which photography has begun to be used as the method rather than a support tool since John Collier's (1957) article '*Photography in Anthology: A Report on Two Experiments*'. To write seriously and ambitiously about photography, one must remember that the social implications and possibilities of new imaging theories in various sciences rarely move from the realm of specialist technical discourse into the broader field of critical theories of photography.

Collier (1957) discussed further how photography was, and is still being, used in various ways to record direct observation: in rapid surveys of ecological, technological, and socio-cultural patterns; as an aid to interviewing; and in the techniques and research possibilities of co-ordinating photographs with field notes.

"How can photographs function other than as illustration?" and "How can you apply photographic imagery to direct research?"

(J. J. Collier 2009, 843)

Collier's (2009) questions prompted a suitable reply by mentioning that the experience of photographing is certainly an important process, as, similarly, Susan Sontag (1973, 7) raised the argument that making images is an indication of 'giving an appearance of participation'. This is quite observant in this case in that the researcher can use this as an idea prior to making the image, or with the advantage of their intimate knowledge of socio-cultural history, to some extent they express the goals and biases of the photographer, the desires of the subject, and the photographic styles of the period (Ohrn 1977, 34).

Karen Ohrn (1977, 32) raised two particular assumptions about the practice of photography: first, as representations of reality, photographs are neither the result of nor subject to interpretation; and second, that scholars who work in the medium of words are incapable of



understanding or analysing photographic images. The latter is a harsh judgement to make about scholars who cannot justify photography to its full glory. There is certainly much to consider in the concerns about image-making, though it shouldn't be the means to an end to talk only about the quality of the image and the act of image-making. Perhaps it is now a known attribute of photography that it already has its place in human communication with its own complex integration with various editorial considerations. This echoes Karin Becker's (1992) discussion on the practice of photography as practised among field researchers up to the point where it is no longer mentioned and is expected to be integrated within their workflow (Becker 1992, 6).

In this context my research is an attempt to interpret a representation of a representation (the images that lie within the photographic image itself, i.e. graffiti illustrated within the photographic image itself). My justification is simply that the material is rich and offers the opportunity for such productive reflection that it demands what may be an unavoidably speculative reading. This is an important point as I will consider using this as a basis from which to expand on the methods of direct analysis as discussed by Harper (1998), Collier and Collier (1986) and J. J. Collier (1957).

This framework is a suitable way to look at the Pudu Jail's Graffiti (PJG) portfolio. The goals may be different: there is seldom a single problem or hypothesis to be studied, and multiple goals and issues are more likely to be appropriate. Initially, while information and knowledge are systematic and rigorous, they will be broad in scope though lacking in depth. Perhaps it resonates with how Harper (1998, 38) referred to Quinney's (1995) paper on looking through and using images:

"... a visual sociology not of direct formulation, not for testing of hypothesis, nor for the collection of data, but a practice in a living of a life"

Perhaps this is taking the idea too far as to how such images can dissolve boundaries by looking into the images too literally, as there is also my desire to find something new, evident in the study but now directed at the images themselves. As a researcher, I, too, want to find meaning, want to tell a story about what the PJG holds that has not already been told; that is the point of going there after all. Perhaps, I am actually looking for something that is 'out of order', something that lies beyond the closed doors or barriers, which goes beyond measuring the words and drawings of the prison graffiti; some method that connects these images with something that inspires me about them, that may have come out of odds and ends of information about Malaysia and its regional culture: words, phrases, songs, architectural or other sources. The PJG, then, is not necessarily an ordered grid of classified images produced by the randomness and arbitrariness of its authors. Its evaluations may be contradictory, its spaces breached by other avenues of research and photographs, and the researcher and the photograph may each offer their own resistance.

## Conclusion

So far what has been discussed here has been about graffiti, prison spaces, and looking at photography as a resource. What comes next is to observe the images of graffiti taken from the PJG portfolio. There were various choices, which had come about while preparing these images, ranging from visual ethnography, visual anthropology and content analysis.

However, the difference from other research done on prison graffiti would be the origin of the resource itself. The images of the PJG were taken in 2002/03 without any methodological consideration, driven only by my great interest in it, during that time, as a fascinating subject matter, an uncharted place, which I observed during my architectural photography research into the prison space. During that time, the building was revamped into a remand centre, which had then been demolished later in 2010 to make way for a commercial district. The PJG

here would represent a large remnant of graffiti retrieved from the prison cells. Although there was some evidence of other photographers, professional or amateur, entering the prison premises in between periods of demolition and taking images of the graffiti and the prison, I believe, at this point in time, that the PJG is the largest collection of graffiti images taken from the Pudu prison itself.

I considered it as an interesting topic especially as studies on prison graffiti are few and uncommon, yet remained obviously a small part of incarceration research as it is a research subject usually hidden from public view and difficult to access, as it depends on the prison administration's permission to carry out such research. There is also the possibility of it being erased, contaminated or censored by the administration itself as the graffiti may or may not reveal a less attractive side of prison life.

Similar researchers into prison graffiti such as Wilson (2008), Pugliese (2002), O'Sullivan (2009), and Johnson (2009) made their observations using photographic documents and interviews about the historical background of the inmates and the workers, and arrived at their various conclusions. Others such as Klofas and Cutshall (1985) employed quantitative measurements to determine unobtrusive research methods, and their results resonate with Klaus Krippendorff (2004, 45) as regards methodological considerations, semantic content and analytical procedures, by classifying signs according to their meanings. Curious about their approach, I carried out a brief quantitative measurement, in 2011/12 (see Appendix a (i) and a (ii), page xxxi-xxxii), to establish some sort of validation for this graffiti collection and consider how it would be categorised. However, the shortcomings of this method were quite clearly recognised as their methods of retrieving the graffiti were based on in-situ findings in the actual physical space, rather than by working on previous documentation from an archive of images. Although I would not completely dismiss their research methods, I would employ other techniques to find the core themes in the PJG portfolio.

In keeping with this, it would be interesting to look at what I had previously done, as I had carried out the documentation itself by going back to the collection, and I considered looking at it again with a visual ethnographical method through photo-elicitation as proposed by John Collier and Malcolm Collier (1986). Using visual methods of research often allows an approach of personal participation, which provides a privileged view for respondents about the use of data. It would be a situation where the images would be the starting point for telling their own narrative.

By taking images, it was thought, anthropologists could show peoples, their aspect and their actions: the expressive side of culture, but not culture itself, that had to be described in our own (linguistic) terms.

(Marazzi 1999, 393)

Antonio Marazzi (2010) recognised the potential in imagery when he advocated a 'cultural iconology' process for depicting images. This was a method he had used extensively, arguing that they acted as a means of communication, by comparing notes on images that originated with one purpose and were then revitalised in a different space that served a completely different supportive function; one example he cited was the case of Botticelli's 'Venus' being projected onto a cake (Marazzi 1999, 397). This form of displacement of a cultural image has a subliminal effect on the viewers. This was particularly true in many examples of the prison graffiti, which featured various iconographic images inscribed on the walls.

What is interesting is to consider the remnants of those images, to see if they conjure up more relevant meanings connected with the found symbols of religious rituals, use of dialogue, aesthetic, daily artefacts or any apparent type of human creativity which would suggest their own stimulating comparisons, through a careful and detailed search for their inner meanings and cultural codes.

More than half of the graffiti in the collection consists of languages from South East Asia: local Malay in Latin and Arabic scripts (*jawi*), Indonesian Malay, Chinese, scriptures from the Koran,

in Tamil, Iranian, and even some Spanish texts. These will require in-depth translation to consider their real meaning. With regard to the ways that the images would be stored and used, any interpretations made about identifiable images would be stored and indexed to make them more easily retrievable. Although the visual images and their captions would be linked to an analytical evaluation or interpretation, though it was uncertain of the risk presented on named individuals. While there might be reference to names, any impact is likely to be minimal within this reflectivity as the description maintained as direct observation, which had been noted to be lack of complete information to point out any specific individuals.

Though referring to the relevant named individuals (in this case, inmates named on the walls of the prison cells) might give rise to some ethical questions, yet it had been shown in various accounts of other similar research that referring to documented names was part of the research process, allowing a better understanding by having the names accounted for and leading to research papers with uncompromised results (refer to J. Z. Wilson, 2008a; 2008c; A. Wilson 2004; O'Sullivan 2009; Depau 2012; Farr and Gordon 1975; Klofas and Cutshall 1985; Hanif 2008). Perhaps the key issue here isn't about the propriety of including the names being referred to or the places that the graffiti might mention, but comes down to observing these graffiti as existing marks which were separated by the anonymity of the authors in the first place. Such arbitrariness and a lack of ability to trace to which inmates these graffiti refer, offered a different approach for looking at the PJG portfolio.

Examining the images again becomes an interpretative process as one tries to establish a unified and thematic organisation, taking into account as well the frequency of semiotic analysis that arises through initial studies of recurring texts and/or similar form of illustrations. It would then begin to form key themes, which would later lead to a component analysis of what would make up the eventual assemblage. The elements of graffiti would be transferred from the original correctional facility into images, which in turn would be moved into the

studio space which, itself, would become a different type of spatial container. By identifying a unifying theme and order from the frequency of categories the whole could then be examined to find the underlying common visual denominator.

These graffiti constitute a deep emotional association, implicating power in their ability to call attention to social problems (if that was the case) as seen or objectively hidden, through these images. Translating them and reflecting on the graffiti's visual narration is a concept that relies on related realities from my own perspective as a viewer, which would eventually suggest my own concept of familiarity. Such types of deduction as a viewer, or even as an interlocutor, would through the individual process of looking at these graffiti show them to be more than just mindless inscriptions.

### **Summary of the Method**

*(refer also to Chapter 1, pp. 28-30)*

- In the initial stage of the research, I utilised the content analysis method in order to propagate the thematic segregations (refer to Lutz and Collins 1993; Weber 1990).
- The types of themes were selected keywords; which were based on observation of the dominant representation of the type of subject matter images and texts in each of the plate. The results were made through initial quantitative measurements, which the overall review on the observed types of graffiti the PJG could be seen in the Appendices section: a(i); a(ii); a(iii); a(iv) (pp. xl – xliii).
- This process had raised the denominations of keywords as follow: Names, Time, Gods / Deities, Religious Gates, Food, Places, Portraits, Animals, Texts, and Luxuries.
- By having images in homogenous size (5" x 5") to accommodate to the given studio space to have a bird's-eye-view of the entire collection of the PJG, it became an easier process to shuffle, align, re-aligning the images from one group to another, in order to

view and review the selection process whether if the grouping had a quantitative values and qualitative presence within the PJG collection.

- In each of the thematic group, at least one image were chosen to represented and explained in detail which I felt it was visually strong and the best of the group to be described, transcribed, translated to English if needed, and explained how the shape of such images came to be based on localised research of the subject of interest.
- This would then influence the shape of the 'reflexivity' method, in which it had corresponded with Collier & Collier's (1986) methods of direct analysis, in order to clarify the shape and form of visual analysis of me being informed as a viewer to be familiarised with the subject by corresponding with the image.

## Chapter 2 Notes

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<sup>13</sup> "graffito." The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition, 2008. Retrieved September 05, 2011 from Encyclopedia.com: <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1E1-graffito.html>

<sup>14</sup> From the Italian 'graffito' (scribbling or to scratch), indicating the practice of drawing symbols, images, or words on private or public surfaces without permission.

[Italian, diminutive of *graffio*, a scratching, scribble, probably from *graffiare*, to scratch, scribble, probably from Vulgar Latin \**graphiāre*, to write with a stylus, from Latin *graphium*, stylus, from Greek *grapheion*, *graphion*, from *graphein*, to write.]

*USAGE NOTE:* The word *graffiti* is a plural noun in Italian. In English *graffiti* is far more common than the singular form *graffito* and is mainly used as a singular noun in much the same way as *data* is. When the reference is to a particular inscription, the form *graffito* would be etymologically correct but might strike some readers as pedantic outside an archaeological context. There is no substitute for the singular use of *graffiti* when the word is used as a mass noun to refer to inscriptions in general or to the related social phenomenon. In such contexts, both utility and widespread precedent justifies the use of *graffiti* as a singular.

The American Heritage Dictionary of English Language, Fourth ed., 2009

<sup>15</sup> Dr. Sven's permission for citation granted for his paper presentation, "Graffiti as Art(e)fact: A Contemporary View" (2010) on 04 April 2013

<sup>16</sup> After leaving the music business, Mona Fandey became involved in spiritual witchcraft activities and was known to be a *bomoh* (shaman), and began offering her services to clients, mostly from upper-class society.

She claimed to have provided political clients with a variety of charms and talismans.

It was reported that Datuk Mazlan Idris, a state assemblyman for the constituency of Batu Talam, Pahang, wanted to boost his political career and sought the assistance of Mona's services. The US-educated Mazlan was an ambitious politician from the ruling United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) party.

At that time, Mona worked with her husband Mohamad Nor Affandi Abdul Rahman, 44, and their assistant Juraimi Hassan, 31.

Juraimi, using an axe, chopped Mazlan's head off and dismembered and partially skinned his body which was later found in 18 pieces buried in a storeroom near Mona's house in Pahang.

It was alleged that the murder occurred between 10 pm and 12 midnight on July 18, 1993.

Refer to <http://www.capitalpunishmentuk.org/fandey.html>, retrieved 20<sup>th</sup> September 2011

<sup>17</sup> Jimmy Chua, real name Chua Chap Seng, was a Singaporean crime ringleader and a former member of the Singaporean police force. He was imprisoned in Pudu for murdering police constable Mohd Yasin Ismail in 1984.

On 17 October 1986, Jimmy and his six henchmen kidnapped skin specialist, Dr Radzi bin Jaafar, and medical technologist Abdul Aziz Abdul Majid.

The ordeal was over by 22 October 1986 with no blood spilled. Jimmy and his gang were charged under Section 3 (1) of the Kidnapping Act 1961, which carries a maximum death penalty upon conviction. They were hung on 10 October 1989.

Refer to <http://easycomeseasygoes.blogspot.com/2011/07/30-kindergarden-children-held-hostages.html>, retrieved 20<sup>th</sup> September 2012



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<sup>18</sup> These were the first two Australian citizens to be charged and hung in Malaysia since the introduction of the death penalty for drug trafficking (based on Malaysian Drug Act 1952, which carries a mandatory death penalty on conviction). Kevin Barlow and Brian Chambers were arrested at Bayan Lepas airport in Penang on 9 November 1983 as they were found attempting to smuggle 141.9 grams of heroin.

The Barlow & Chambers case made international headlines and considerably soured diplomatic ties between Malaysia and Australia when the Malaysian government denied an appeal of clemency from Australian politician, Bill Hayden.

Barlow and Chambers were transferred from Penang to Pudu in 1985 and hung at the gallows on 7 July 1986.

Refer to <http://www.sammyboy.com/archive/index.php/t-63820.html>, forum remarks by user 'kensington', on 22-06-2010, 04:02 AM; retrieved on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2012

<sup>19</sup> Ruth First was a South African anti-apartheid activist and scholar born in Johannesburg. In 1963 during the Government's crackdown, First was imprisoned and held in isolation without charge for 117 days under the South African apartheid government's ninety-day detention laws. She was the first white woman to be detained under the ninety-day detention law.

First, Ruth (1965). 117 Days. Penguin. p. vii.

<sup>20</sup> Functionally, this extension of sanctioned catastrophiti facilitated a community discourse and allowed residents to express their frustrations, sadness, hopes, and survival. It may also have reaffirmed the community ethos and promoted some form of community solidarity.

(Hagen, et al. 1999, 155)

<sup>21</sup> Based on an arranged formal visit to the Sungai Udang prison in 2012, accompanied by the Director General of the Malaysian Prison Department.

<sup>22</sup> "Every scrap of prison letter must speak directly for itself to us and thus we have the responsibility of situating it."  
(Gallardo 2009/2010, 19)

<sup>23</sup> Foucault began to move beyond the concept of prison as a functional mechanism to transform evil into good, and drew attention to the symbolic and metaphorical aspects of Bentham's Panopticon, a derivative design of a prison which had an interesting feature that supposedly asserts power over the lives of convicts, which it was playful of Bumaz (2001, p.130) to point out: "the prisoners had to have their souls righted by exclusive contact with moral administrators". Foucault (1977) stressed the elaborate nature of Bentham's design of the Panopticon to wield full autonomous power and total surveillance over the inmates, thus, effectively subduing the body so that it submitted to the idea of reforming.

Various scholars have come up with a wide range of approaches towards analysing the Panopticon debate and have acknowledged its connection with ideas about organisation (Murdoch 2005, pp. 38, 56-57), actions and the concept of electronic surveillance, in which the idea of the Panopticon popularised by Foucault seems to flourish (see Lyons 1994; Haggerty and Ericson 2000; Kietzmann and Angell 2010). Numbers of scholars have used the idea of the Panopticon, as the basis of a research model in many contemporary surveillance studies (Brunon-Ernst 2012, 12). However, Jan Kietzmann and Ian Angell (2010) cautioned not to overlook the causes of civil disobedience by concentrating too much on the surveillance angle derived from an archaic concept, as it is now clear that surveillance is used by irresponsible parties far beyond the original application of gathering data, with dubious and questionable manipulative motives.

However, that was only the first generation panopticon, which in order to direct social behavior, represented a reactive approach by authority to disobedience, and focused on punishment, or the threat there of. Little effort was aimed at either understanding the reasons for such behavior, or managing the motivation of social activities. Instead the emphasis was on conditioning behavior at specific locations.

(Kietzmann and Angell 2010, 136).

In a broad sense, the idea of prison space shifting from an idealised prison setting into political and social control in order to gain insights into particular phenomena, has found a richness and importance in the social sciences, spanning the fields of sociology, anthropology, psychology, political science and history, and this same richness and diversity is evident in the organisational sciences.

Though there was some evidence of the Panopticon's principles being used in the design of prison structures in Wilson's (2008) observations of the Australian prisons, it was never a realistic project due to its elaborate and expensive features (J. Z. Wilson, *Prison: Cultural Memory and Dark Tourism* 2008, 36-37). It was interesting how Bentham's Panopticon model, though idealistic in its construction, as illustrated by Foucault in 1975's *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la Prison* (later translated in 1977 as *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*), was based on the central idea of its construction of surveillance as a metaphor, which was to be expanded into the social and political space, rather than on its physical construction and application, which never existed. Attempts were made to try out the idea of it, but these were never fully realised. The Panopticon prison was never built, yet its very nonexistence reinforces it as a reality, and one where it becomes a symbol for the exertion of power over the many through the efforts of the few (Chae, et al. 2010, 42; Wilson 2008, 36).

<sup>24</sup> It was estimated that in Malaysia, prisoners with HIV infection is around 5% to 8% of the prison population at any one time. (Abdul Aziz 2008, 21)

<sup>25</sup> Refer to Reports by Aishvaryaa, Maniama, Hatta Sidia, and Oeib (2014, S97) on Azizul (2001) dissertation. Also refer to Wan Mohamad Nazarie Wan Mahmood's, Director of Security and Intelligence, from the Malaysian Prison Department's Conference Proceedings (2012) on improvisation methods dealt for suicide preventions among Malaysian inmates.

# Chapter 3

Images within the Pudu Jail's Graffiti

## Contents

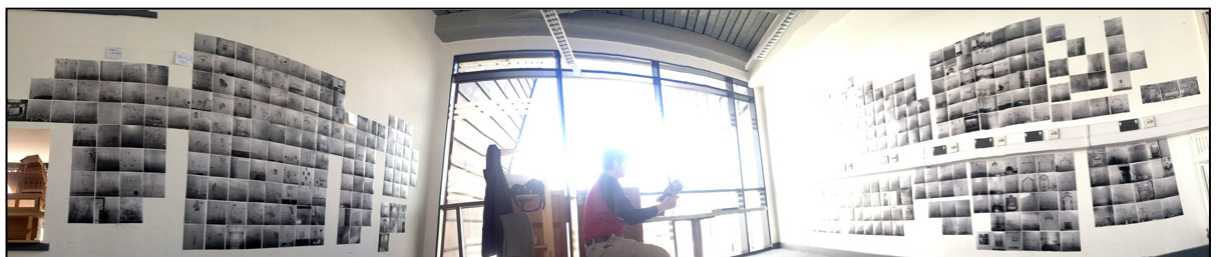
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## Introduction

In this chapter, the written accounts here were based on the methods as mentioned in Chapter 1 (pp. 28-30), and Chapter 2 (pp. 89-90). As each of the groupings of images were assembled and arranged onto the wall, I had selected the images from each groupings and themes to be analysed in descriptive, transcribed, and translated if necessary. The reflexivity, or direct analysis of each of the described subject for all of the ten highlighted categories were studied in relation to the related localised culture, as well as through prescribed studies from various secondary research sources.

Focusing on the types of graffiti, I found it was predominantly subjects connected with Malaysian and neighbouring countries' cultural materials and ideas that were prominent. I wish to reiterate that compiling the PJG had shown that such drawings and writings were based on the social and cultural configuration of these inmates, deeply rooted in contexts of identity construction, whether it was through their own memories, or through constructing new ones, and related to the prison space.

So, in this sense, I am identifying the need to see the graffiti as a form of cultural orientation to some extent, based on either the minority or the majority of racial ethnic groups that existed in those prison cells.



**Plate 5 - Arrangement of PJG images within the studio space**

The collection of Pudu Jail's Graffiti was laid out within a dedicated studio space, which was allocated to me for two months. The images were printed out as photographic prints,

measuring 5"x 5", and were arranged so that images of the prison's architecture were placed alongside images of the graffiti in order to compliment them.

What was revealing was the freedom of space, which I had had the chance to explore, helping me to see beyond the computer screen and affecting my decisions about selecting and arranging the images into appropriate groupings. As the images were laid out next to each other, the spaces, which had formed, helped to question and shape my thoughts. But the studio was not just a place for meditating. It was a place for being productive, and it was necessary to be flexible as well in order to overcome mental obstacles, which disrupted the methods of allocating the graffiti to the appropriate subject. As all the images were slowly assigned and compiled, patterns began to emerge with similar themes, which will be discussed in this chapter.



**Plate 6 : The images were assembled and divided into thematic sections. The images were divided up with red thread outlining the groups.**

## Types of Prison Graffiti within PJG

Looking at the Malaysian culture as a manifestation of patterns of language and thought expressed through different forms of activity and behaviour, it has the ability to transmit symbols, artefacts, ritual, heroes and values (Merriam and Muhamad 2000, 40). As Sharan Merriam and Mazanah Muhamad (2000) assert about the concept of the Malaysian culture, it is co-existent and inter-dependent, predominantly a blend of three races - the Malays, the Chinese, and the Indians containing, in essence, they argued, certain Asian values (Merriam and Muhamad 2000, 41). Perhaps, this explained why the graffiti that was observed in the PJG often reflected the experiential, a reflection of the inmates' lives directly connected with what they would have been doing (farming, religious affairs, relationships with their family, jobs), the experiences they would know and feel. This runs right through the graffiti, and although there is diversity in the symbols, icons, written words and drawings, it was possible to put them into groups as they contained similar themes.

The discussion of the Pudu Jail's Graffiti images is divided into the different themes observed in the PJG: *Names, Time, Food, Portraits, Places, Creatures, Presence of God(s), Religious Gates & Places, and Texts*. Though it wouldn't be possible to cover every single image among the 460 images selected, I had narrowed them down and concentrated on pre-selected images that would best exemplify the type of theme that each represented for its own group.

These themes identified in the graffiti images from the PJG portfolio illustrated the essential function of the texts and images that can be measured qualitatively through various hypothetical questions about the function of the space used by the original authors while also relevant to the eventual reader.

Initial findings about the PJG's texts and images show that they have no direct objective – that is, they have to rely on the eventual reader's interpretation. A text seen on a wall represents

an invitation, if not a demand, to try to understand it. Regarding something as a message implies that someone was trying to make sense of it. Acknowledging particular graffiti as data involved accepting them as a basis for subsequent concepts. As Curwen Best (2003) asserts post-reading of text does not exist without a reader: "*Poststructuralist approaches are more concerned with graffiti's multiple meanings, not locking into specific conclusive lines of argument, but rather, ascribing to graffiti the potential to mean anything that its wide audience wants it to mean*" (Best 2003, 830). Thus looking at graffiti as a message cannot exist without the act of interpretation, and data do not exist without an observer. In a content analysis, the methodological process would be to look at the PJG's texts and graphics as describing the textual elements of analysis, though the risks of conflicting interpretations of its texts would result in an expectation of understanding the meaning of it by taking various other arguments about the reading of graffiti and wider prison studies into account.

As an eventual reader, there would be nothing intrinsic to allow the reader to depict the exact world of the Pudu prison; the meaning of a text (or graphic) in graffiti would always be idealistic in relation to the cultural familiarities that take place within the prison cells.

It was quite an experiential process, as I began to see graffiti within the PJG to be "what is there", which relates to "why is it there?" as will be discussed later in this chapter.





Plate 7 - Author within the studio

### What is in the names<sup>26</sup>?

Self-identity may perhaps be a clue to the initial starting point in the conversion of the space. With their names replaced by prison tag numbers, the inmates would have to assert their identities, initially, with territorial marks, in a rare subconscious acceptance of the space. The question of whether it was an instinctive or conscious decision is impossible to determine, as the significance of the authors themselves is to be disregarded from this research process. Although the value and intellectual importance of a work would not change, regardless of who the author is, the work must still be recognisable as cultural material and an identifier. Therefore, the authors' (in this case, the inmates) function changes according to the type of investigation, as anonymity seems appropriate in this case.

The characteristics of each author's approach are evident in how it is interrelated with the types of classification and the significance of the art form. One needs to go through the process of finding out if the work is consistent with previous known cultural material of the time and whether or not there are differences in it that still suggest similar forms of cultural or material practice of the time. If they were found to be consistent, this would show a certain level of relationship and a possible link to a common background (culturally), which they would share with other works.

In the names that were discovered there would be existing structures and associations of different groups such as a company or individuals banded together, which is evident in Plate 8, "PEMBELA". This image refers to several versions of a criminal underground group, which came together as a result of their penal experience. PEMBELA refers to the Muslim Organisations in Defence of Islam, a Malaysian politically affiliated group which was set up to organise the Malays, who are predominantly Muslim, and which wanted to enforce Islam on non-Muslims in Malaysia (see Weiss, 20014<sup>27</sup>). However, it was never the intention that this politically affiliated group would be a leading organisation of criminal gang-members. Though it might have been the case that some of the younger members were delinquents and, to some extreme, criminal in nature, it is more likely that the membership came together with the unwritten rules of a brotherhood: a family unit with an altered perception of loyalty to fellow group members.

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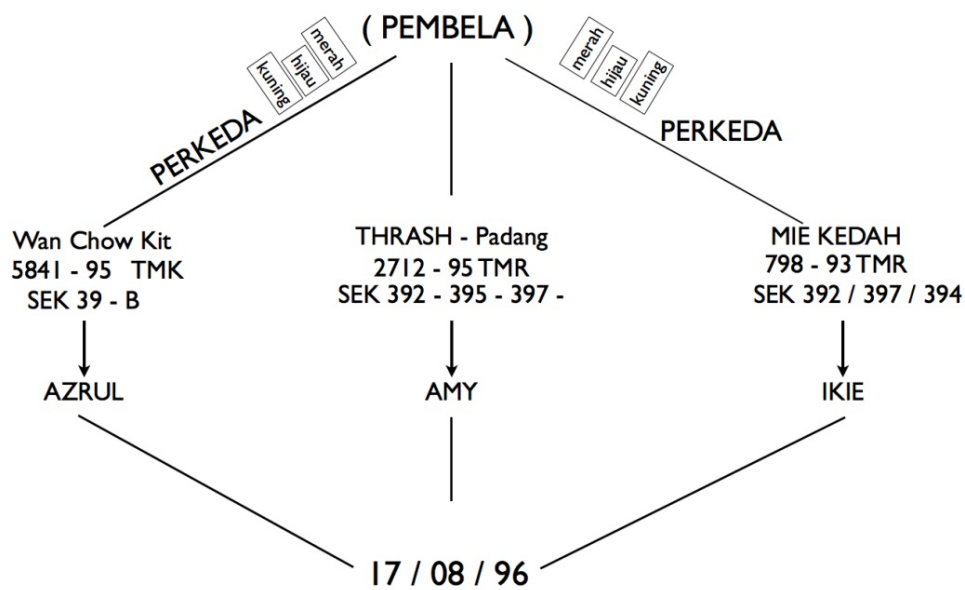


Plate 8 : PEMBELA, Appendix o, Volume 1, page 13, Ref: PJG\_11\_019-10

Figure 1: Plate 8 transcribed

PERKEDA, also known as PEKIDA<sup>28</sup> which has strong ties to PEMBELA<sup>29</sup>, has more than a dozen sub-groups under its banner and is recognised by three common colours: red, green, and yellow which in turn symbolise<sup>30</sup> blood (bravery, warrior, endurance), Malay sovereignty, and its Islamic foundation, as can be seen on both sides of the chart on the graffiti. The three lines indicating the colours also link to the hand gestures shown above the chart, representing a secret code used among the group's members allowing them to communicate with each other without being recognised. Though PEKIDA/PERKEDA has its own administrative processes for dealing with its own group members, they do seem to answer to the higher power, PEMBELA, which is also affiliated to another dominant political party in Malaysia, the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO).

It is most likely that some of the gang members from the various sub-divisions took advantage of the power and influence of the group, as there were incidents of extortion, fighting among themselves and sometimes even victimising innocent bystanders, but the six individuals named in the chart can be identified as troubled individuals. Three of the names: Wan (of Chow Kit), Thrash (a nickname used by his peers because of his liking for heavy metal music) from Padang (Padang Besar from Perlis, Northern State of Malaysia) and Mie from Kedah (another Northern Malaysian State) have been recorded alongside their prison tag numbers and criminal conviction codes (see the Malaysian Penal Code 574).

The other three names, Azrul, Amy and Ikie, are listed below the three names mentioned above. If the chart suggests the hierarchy of the organisation, it is probable that these three individuals would be subordinates. The hexagonal shape of the chart merges at the bottom with a date, 17th August 1996.

Though this chart cannot be taken as concrete evidence that either of the politically affiliated parties PEMBELA and PERKEDA did in fact constitute 'criminal dens', it at least suggests an affiliation of group members, from different geographical origins. This implies the action of

several inmates, with similar external group-membership affiliations, getting together as a form of self-preservation, as part of a survival strategy within the prison environment.



Names, tags, initials, street names and nicknames are perhaps some of the obvious common themes in most institutional graffiti (See Casella, 2009, 174-5). It is seen as an establishment of a social macro-context within a private space (see Whiting & Koller 2007, 38).

The inmates' tag numbers do not just represent a personal connection, but also act as confirmation of their place within a group or circle inside the confines of the prison. For example, ten sets of four numerical digits (See Appendix o, Pudu Jail's Graffiti, Volume 1, page 72, ref: PJG\_70\_034-11) define a group with obvious anonymity as to whom the numbers belong, or to which inmates they refer; nonetheless, they indicate an initial sign of territorial marking in a shared space. One set of numbers may not relate in an obvious way to the next but the allocation of prison tags to each of these inmates with some connection to each other reveals a unified group with a closer association which can be recognised as part of a subcultural group in a 'total institution' (Lambropoulou, 1999, 241; Goffman, 1961, 17)

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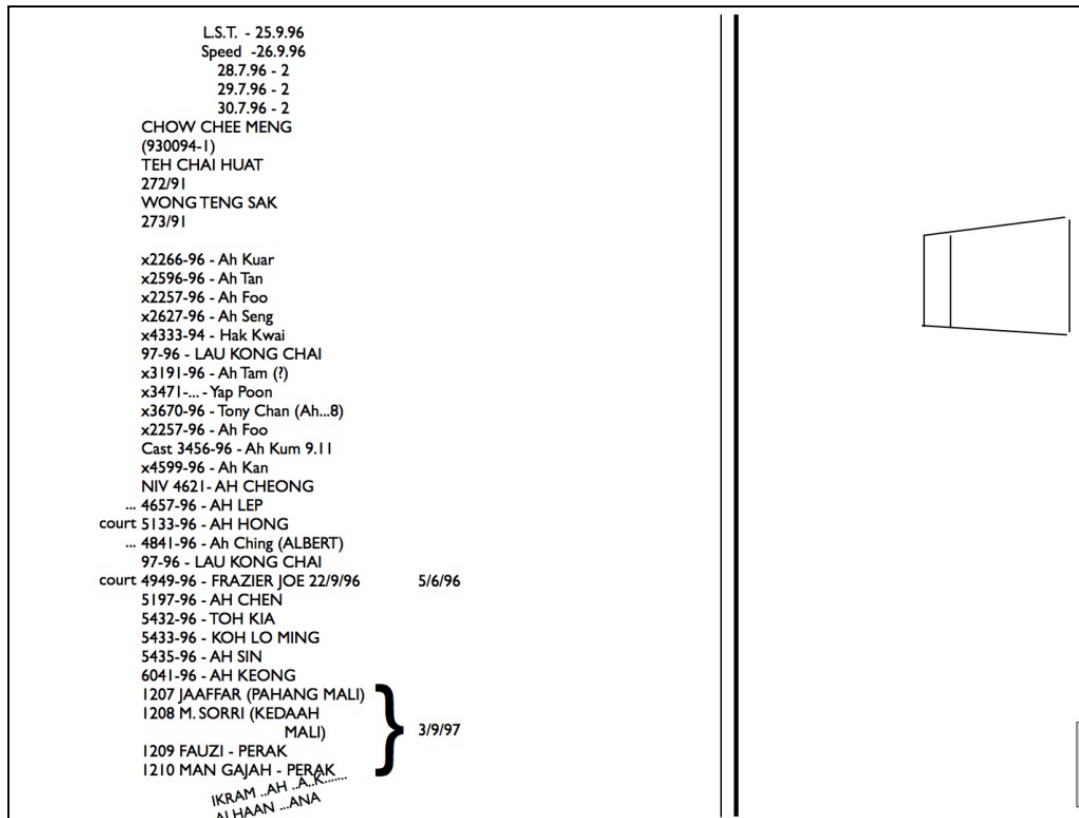


Plate 9 : Grouped Names

Figure 2 : Grouped Names Transcribed

A better example perhaps is another longer list of inmates' numbers which shows the actual name of each inmate next to their number (see Plate 9 & Figure 2 : Grouped Names Transcribed). A list of 30 prison numbers and the inmates' names were chronologically listed with the numbers in ascending order reading from the top. With two of the names assigned to the year '96-'97, it is not known if they are associated with any affiliated triad names<sup>31</sup> but such social connections would act as a tolerable and potentially cast-iron guarantee for any individual confined within a large group of people. Though we cannot assume that inmates are able to be selective about who they would choose as cellmates, it is quite common for the prison department to control the prison blocks by assigning inmates to different groups within the general population according to their racial and religious background. Though it is quite impossible to maintain such 'ideal segregations' within large volumes of inmates, the last six names at the bottom of the long list in question are of Malay or Muslim inmates.

The names of the inmates linger on some of the PJG walls, witness to what remains of the inmate, namely his name and memories of his known past. The prison's administration process would certainly be a radical shift in the inmates' *moral career* (Goffman 1961, 24). Goffman (1961, p.25-6) described exactly how the inmates would go through the usual standard prison administrative process (which similar routines still takes place in most Malaysian prisons) which would involve taking notes of their life histories, photographing them, weighing, fingerprinting, assigning prison numbers, listing and storing away personal items, inmates being stripped and bathed, given prison uniforms, having their hair cut, being given an induction to the prison's system and rules, and finally assigned to a prison cell. Inmates' names and where they came from are, perhaps, the last few assets they have left, immaterial items that could not be taken away. Regardless of the type of crime committed by the inmates, they all received the same process and treatment from the prison department<sup>32</sup>.

~



It is not surprising that the only thing left to them – to adhere to the daily repetition of prison life - emphasises the inmates' physical and mental nakedness. With the dispossession of their personal possessions and spatial surroundings, beginning to leave marks as a 'self-investment' became highly significant.

The inmates' names and their numbers may not be the only significant part of what was marked on the walls. Some wrote where they came from and where they grew up or made a living. Though there may not have been many geographical markers, they helped to reduce the anonymity of the graffiti and reflected the significance of the enigmatic texts not only to the author, but also to their cellmates as a way of coping with the large categories of inmates.

BOB TANJUNG KARANG EDDIE SRI SENTOSA NAN KAJANG MIE N,S APACHE KAJANG HIDUP NEKAD, MATI MUDA!	<u>Translation</u> BOB OF TANJUNG KARANG EDDIE OF SRI SENTOSA NAN OF KAJANG MIE FROM NEGERI SEMBILAN APACHE OF KAJANG LIVE A DETERMINED LIFE, DIE YOUNG!
--	--

**Figure 3 Names of the "Three Lines" members, transcribed and translated from Appendix o, PJG Volume 1, page 78, image ref: PJG\_76\_035 B LVL3-10, retrieved from Cell block B, level 3**

Figure 3, refers to the nicknames (or 'handles') of the five inmates, Bob, Eddie, Nan, Mie and Apache. Such 'handles' are usually adopted by young Malay men and contain no reference to their original given names<sup>33</sup>. This differs from the normal use of informal nicknames given to people as a result of a strong relationship with their family (see Malcolm Mintz (1987) introduction to Malay nicknames). The use of such names is usually based on certain salient characteristics such as physical appearance, habitual actions or behaviour, occupation and place of origin or residence (Mintz 1987, 87). Such instances usually help to distinguish the person being referred to from other individuals with the same name or even living in the same area. It is not possible to know exactly what factors determine a given nickname, as each is usually bestowed by the individual's community or peers. Though it may seem trivial that such

names were originally meant to distinguish one person from the next, they may also serve a different function of bringing together different inmates to form a group or 'clique'. This may be an accidental placement but in this case helps to unite some of the Malay inmates who perhaps share certain common interests so that they can live together.

These sets of graffiti give a glimpse into the nature of order and community cohesion in a prison setting, and what would be similarly organised around the key themes of common identity, sense of belonging, difference and diversity. Though it may seem that it would be a common trait in a prison for inmates to be split up because of race and religious differences (Phillips 2007, 77-8), there may be different motivations at play here from those of the external environment in that they may be forming their own group (Lambropoulou 1999, 244) not just because of their race or common religion, but to set up a unified camaraderie of people of similar race coming from different regions.

Personal 'loss of self' would become re-enforced not only from the prison's administrative processes, the way they were carried out, and what, ideally, the wardens expected of the inmates; the prison's practice of mixing inmates of various ages, ethnicity, racial groups and religious affiliations is usually one of the factors that lead to a given inmate feeling 'contaminated' (Goffman 1961, 36).

The last line of the list shouts "Hidup Nekad, Mati Muda!" ("Live a Determined Life, Die Young!"), which also echoes a similar graffiti in another cell (Appendix o, PJG Volume 1, page 143, image ref: PJG\_141\_044 c lvl1-06). This is an uncommon Malay phrase to chant and carries a similar sentiment to the slogan "live fast and die young" or faint nuances of "give me liberty or give me death". Though one can conjecture that this phrase may have come from James Dean's biography or 1980s Punk songs, it may have been the influence of Western culture on that of Malay which inspired the use of this phrase<sup>34</sup>.

The use of the word 'mati' ('die') normally occurs in terms and slogans such as 'death sentence', 'shot dead', 'sacrifice', 'accidental death', etc. Does this phrase 'die' imply a degradation of the human level? Apparently not. 'Die young' in such terminology and slogans remains neutral; it is only used as the opposite of the word 'life'. Hence, the use of the term, 'die young' does not degrade the human level.

Names, or nicknames in this case, extend beyond the narrative lines of "I exist...". They function more than just for asserting self-identity (Ochs and Capps 1996, 31). They register a desire for connection with a new, unfamiliar audience and an element of power in a place where the inmates' presence is merely temporary. Though it may echo how this form of graffiti seems to be "mirroring self" (Othen-Price 2007, 12), further subsequent observation of the PJG began to suggest that the writing of the names was too obviously legible and clean, and the elements of self-reflection in it moved away from the understanding of self (within their own name) towards an integration into the prison's culture. This is perhaps a sign of becoming incorporated into the prison so that its walls seem to begin to extend themselves inwards:

The prisoners may initially be the victims of a policy of forgetting, but once they are jailed, they also often become strangely forgetful of themselves, as if their own minds had proven powerless to resist the weight of the walls.

(Blix 2007, 43-44)

Being dispossessed of personal property in prison is a normal part of the prison administrative process; it goes along with the loss of one's full name and being given a prison tag. The inmates will also experience various mental assaults which damage their identity not just through the removal of their personal possessions, but also by changing their appearance (by means of prison uniforms and short haircuts), restricting their movements and ways of behaving, and by imposing the obligations of the prison's schedules and workflow on them.

Goffman (1961, p.31) gives detailed accounts of another aspect of the inmates losing their own self control through verbal acts of deference, where inmates had limited opportunity to

communicate with the wardens during various verbal confrontations, not just because of the way they were spoken to but the fact that they would have to debase themselves by begging for the use of amenities.

Figure 4 illustrates such an instance:

ILMU KESABARAN (JIAL)

1 –        ANGAPPLAH KEDATANGAN ANDA DISINI  
            SEBAGAI DATANG BERCUTI  
            DAN HARUSLAH INGAT HENDAK

31        BELA BADAN  
            SEMANTARA MENUNGGU HUKUMAN DIJALANKAN

-----

2 -        DAN JANGAN LUPA BAHAWA  
            SELAMAT PAGI DAN PETANG  
            PADA TUAN. HARUS DI INGAT HINGGA  
            KELUAR. KERANA HUKUMNYA WAJIB

Translation:

The knowledge of Patience (Jial) (Jail?)

1-        Think of your coming here  
            as a holiday retreat  
            and remember as well to

31        care for your body/soul  
            while awaiting for your punishment being carried out

---

2-        And do not forget  
            to greet "Good Morning" and "Good Evening"  
            to 'Tuan' ('Sir'). Remember this well until  
            the day of your release. As this is an obligation for you.

**Figure 4 : "Ilmu Kesabaran" (The Knowledge of Patience), Appendix o, PJG Volume 1, page 144, image ref: PJG\_142\_044 c lvl1-07**

As further evidence of this form of distorting the mirror of self-representation, an inmate's name prior to their life in prison seems to be used just as something to put on a form outside of prison life, and acts as no more than a means of identifying that person.

This raised some clues about various Onomastic names noted in the PJG:

Ibrahim Bandung<sup>1</sup>, Bustami Desa Bukit Lintang<sup>2</sup>, Kamal (Bakar Batu) Sentul, Hamba (Kampung Pertama) Sentul, Mamak (Kelompang), Mie (Kelang)<sup>3</sup>, Rusnie Satu Kota Belud Sabah<sup>4</sup>, Nan Jasin Melaka<sup>5</sup>, Nenas Boy Pahang<sup>6</sup>, Awie Jerangau<sup>7</sup>, Abu Zarim Bt. Caves<sup>8</sup>, Wahyudi Jember Indonesia<sup>9</sup>, Yusri Aceh<sup>10</sup>, and Harry Cowboy<sup>11</sup>.

**Figure 5 : Samples of Onomastic Names, Monikers, Nicknames & its attachment to the inmates' origin**

Names are an important aspect of a nation's culture, in this particular case the Malaysian Malay culture, and as such require a particular understanding of their history, characteristics and special features before adequate rules can be set up for their cataloguing (I. Ismail 1961, 6). What should be appreciated here is the fact that there is a code of practice for the cataloguing of Malay names.

First names frequently demonstrate the normal practice where the choice of name is linked to the social origin of the bearer. Most are derived from Arabic and refer to various benevolent qualities, or natural elements, and have a symbolic connection to historical figures of the Muslim tradition, which gives them a contextual perspective, that of the myth which transposes the actual life context found in their names.

Nicknames are usually a shortened version of a given name, or an indication of salient characteristics. The introduction of nicknames as seen in the PJG gives a small indication of someone's nature (see Mintz 1987) as a new kind of relationship to other inmates in particular. However, the very use of those names shows that the social practices and ideas that gave birth to them are still active, not only at the semiotic level, but also to have a function as an individualised social role.

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<sup>1</sup> Appendix o, PJG Volume 1, page 190

<sup>2</sup> Appendix o, PJG Volume 1, page 145

<sup>3</sup> Appendix o, PJG Volume 2, page 192

<sup>4</sup> Appendix o, PJG Volume 1, page 46

<sup>5</sup> Appendix o, PJG Volume 1, page 83

<sup>6</sup> Appendix o, PJG Volume 1, page 124

<sup>7</sup> Appendix o, PJG Volume 1, page 136

<sup>8</sup> Appendix o, PJG Volume 2, page 62

<sup>9</sup> Appendix o, PJG Volume 2, page 65

<sup>10</sup> Appendix o, PJG Volume 2, page 111

<sup>11</sup> Appendix o, PJG Volume 2, page 115

Thus, most of the names observed within the PJG appeared to have their father's name (*nasab*) missing, even though it was expected that that would be present in Malay's Arabic Islamic onomastic terms<sup>35</sup>. Instead, they were replaced by the person's place of origin or where they lived which was an interesting phenomenon, obviously carried over from their pre-prison life. It would interesting to do research, in the future, into the study of onomastics in Malay names as it would give an insight into over-emphasising the description of a person as a means of distinguishing that person. Though this usage gives an interesting view of nicknames ("*gelaran*" in Malay), they would never be used by the individuals themselves outside of their prison life, nor would they be called directly such nicknames by their peers (Mintz 1987, 89). These nicknames functioned well as a means of immediately identifying an individual if referred to in a third party conversation.

A much more interesting question is why would they prefer to be addressed by their nicknames rather than their actual full name? It was evident that some names would be derogatory or insulting in some way, and might not refer to the origin of the individual but merely imply '*kampung mari*' (a closer translation would be 'village boy'). It would give a different insight into another level of close relationships.

The term '*kampung*' in Malay could be translated either as a negative assessment in general, a less than positive mental outlook as a result of urbanisation, or as an essential rural community that has sustained its own agricultural idyll by remaining in its own bubble, integrated and unified by its social, economic and cultural situation. I am assuming the latter by noting Eric Thompson's (2004) paper, which observed '*kampung*' (village) in parts of Malaysia as a place where;

Social interactions among residents increasingly resemble a 'world of strangers', rather than intimate ties mutually reinforced through kinship, occupational similarity and frequent interaction. The social reality of the *kampung* contrasts sharply with the nostalgic rhetoric of rurality.

(Thompson 2004, 2358)

The incongruity of its overall characteristics puts Thompson's (2004) view of *kampung* (village) as an interesting argument by depicting it as a marker for a different kind of network.

*Kampung* goes beyond the usual depiction of a rural place which might appear to be anti-modernisation, or to be a slow, uneconomically viable place, yet has survived as a qualitatively viable and powerful community which functions in a better way than its urban counterpart (see also Merriam and Muhamad 2000, 54).

This tightly knit aspect of a *kampung's* network supports my hypothetical argument for the names presented in the PJG not only being a written account of names indicating distinct individuals, but also representing a kind of network among the prison inmates, membership of which is due to more than just a similar racial or religious background but, rather, could be closely tied geographically as well. Though this is not to say that the culturally shaped values imbued in names and nicknames were internalised elements of the social pattern norms observed in PJG, but rather that these graffiti may serve as an early indicator of the likelihood of how prison inmates would group together in such an environment.

Additional studies into race or ethnic relations based on how inmates might group according to where they came from, which they revealed through graffiti, clearly needs more validation than the findings described here in order to provide insight into the suggested concepts.

Certainly, these findings would not be sufficient to provide a micro-level explanation of whether it could have been the cause of any prison violence arising from the racial, religious, or ethnic diversity in a prison population (see Steiner and Wooldredge, 2009); nor can it assess the inmates' ability to adapt to their prison life (see Morris, 2008). It does, however, resonate with Kristie Blevin and her colleagues' (2010) views on John Irwin and Donald Cresseys (1962) arguments that inmates bring with them their own organisational and behavioral conduct as an 'importation model' prior to their entrance to the prison (Blevins, et al. 2010, 149).

"...the idea that the prison produces its own varieties of behavior represents a break with the more traditional notion that men bring patterns of behavior with them when they enter prison, and use them in prison"

(Irwin & Cressey (1962, p.144), as cited by DeLisi, et al. 2011, p. 1187)

Matt DeLisi and his colleagues (2011) had used the 'importation model' proposed in Irwin and Cressey's (1962) book in their study based on the inmates' background, and had calculated the probable risk factors, which led them to an empirical assessment based on three forms of measurement: the family background, the inmates' background, and their recorded misdemeanours in prison. Their findings had indicated a higher possibility of continuing risky behaviour throughout the period of confinement, because of the factors of coming from undeveloped social and economic circumstances (DeLisi, et al. 2011, 1201). They used the 'importation model' to measure and correlate the probability of the 'risk factors' that might accompany the inmate into the prison population. (Berg and DeLisi 2006, 632).

Within the PJG, it was noted that, overall, the graffiti seemed to refer to the outside world, from songs, poetry, music lyrics to buildings and places. There were very few examples, which showed any narrative about the prison or events within it. The preference, within the PJG, seemed to be that the depictions of the inmates' memories on the walls should be about their past life and subjects with which they were familiar. Although the 'importation model', which was discussed in the Berg and DeLisi (2006) paper was more directed towards behaviour and the social patterns of the inmates, it would suggest that the inmates' visual memories and literacy would contribute to it as well.

Various researches had shown that the relevant factors in the model (i.e., classification, proceeding situation) are dynamic variables; when examined in the prison system they correspond with inmates' behaviour with programming and risk factors (Arbach-Lucioni, Martinez-García and Andrés-Pueyo 2012). The delinquent behaviour that may contribute to the inmates' misconduct acts as a sort of 'coping' mechanism (Morris, et al. 2012, 195), which



in turn is similar to the model of Robert Agnew's (1992) General Strain Theory (GST), which was based on Durkheim's theory of anomie and Merton's strain theory, an extension from Durkheim's theory (Gullion 2006, 9-12). The GST focused on both negative relations with others and negative experiences; it expanded on the types of strain that individuals encounter which both present negative stimuli and remove the positive stimuli that is a part of the rehabilitation process, resulting in failure to achieve positive goals (Morris, et al. 2012). This in turn revealed that the inmates' individual values, beliefs, and behaviours external and prior to their institutional lives remain as a strong factor which has to be adapted or assimilated to the prison environment (see also on '*Prisonization*' by Clemmer (1958), as argued by Clear and Sumter 2002, 130).

Although results vary on the circumstances of prison violence and whether the reason for it may or may not be attributed to racial or ethnic differences (see Berg and DeLisi 2006), it is suggested that an importation model would have its own set of preconceived results based on the idea that innate characteristics of economically or literately challenged inmates might account for prison violence, whether they were racially motivated characteristics that existed before being introduced into the prison environment and re-created within it, or whether it was a condition developed during the prison process (Worrall and Morris 2012, 426).

Nonetheless, the results of the inmate population's control of their acts of delinquency or violence may or may not be equally attributed to the prison's systematic administrative rehabilitation process or the influence of the wardens' relationship with the inmates in their efforts to achieve positive goals during their rehabilitation process (Hepburn and Crepin 1984).

Going back to the idea of the '*kampung mari*' (village boy), this would be an interesting way to look at the potential use of onomastic nicknames, embodying both the inmate's name and the place of their origin as was found in the PJG. '*Kampung*' in its original sense would have been a rural community; one of the common waterfront settlements located at the fringe of the city,

surrounded by mountains, which had cultivated its growth by means of human integration with nature, its social and natural environment (Widodo 2010, 6-7).

'*Kampung*' by definition and through the images it conjures up illustrates an idealistic, almost too literally, utopian fantasy. It may represent human survival in both mortal and spiritual worlds, reconciling the power of nature and the desires of human beings (see Maliki 2008).

Mari Fujita (2010, 12) also coined the idea of returning to the rural home, or '*Balik kampung*' (return to the village) signifying a return to family values and Islamic ideals played out in the confines of the *kampung*. Indeed, such a variety of customs and traditions do exist in the Malay Peninsula, which has developed in a uniquely different way in terms of local language, architecture, game designs, administration, and culinary traditions (Wiryomartono 2013).

Bagoes Wiryomartono (2013, 5) depicted *kampung* as carrying a sense of place in the context of neighbourhood that progressively improvises its own level of socio-cultural cohesiveness with its multi-ethnic populations, usually consisting of three different races and religious practices: the Malay-Muslims, the Chinese-Syncretics, and the Indian-Hindus, who are always in constant negotiation over social events and economic practices through their informal interactions in public places.

While the term *kampung* generally suggests backwards or economically challenged, and is used as an extremely derogatory insult in day-to-day conversation, particularly if the ambiguous term of 'kampung mari' (came from the village) is used, in the PJG this term goes further than just the inmates' declaration of where they came from. It functions as a kind of demographic association with the other inmates of different origins and unites them as a subgroup within the prison cells.

Why would many different inmates from different demographic origins group amicably together? It would be reasonable to assume that the Pudu Prison was segmented according to the typical races, ethnicity and religious practices represented there (refer to the Pudu Prison

segregation plans, Appendix b, Figure 24, page xxxvi). The Malay, the Indians, the Indonesians, the Chinese with their affiliated triad or *kongsi* (secret societies) would gather in their groups (see Lee, 2004). This however, presumed that the Malays would gather together even though they came from different places, but with the intention of creating what seemed like a secret network, group or clique where the inmates would congregate during their prison term (see Musa (2001, 3), on the Malay's involvements in the secret society groups and Hanif's (2008) dissertation on the neighbouring country's Singaporean Malay inmates, who were involved in the Omega *kongsi* which are still highly influential and embedded in Singaporean society).

Certainly, it is still unconfirmed whether grouping occurs because of a strong sense of attachment or camaraderie brought about by considering the inmates' homeland as the actual reason for their grouping together. The attachment of their nicknames and place of origin in a cluster found on the same wall with the same writing style (thereby assuming that it was written by the same inmate) would lead to this assumption. The term '*kampung mari*' or '*budak kampung*' (village boy) is demonstrative of the inmates declaring themselves to be from a cultural habitation, rather than declaring themselves to be a 'city boy' (or '*budak bandar*') which would be sneered at by their fellow inmates as someone not fit to survive among the '*kampung mari*' or '*budak kampung*' inmates who were assumed to be better conditioned to the hardships of life. It would be quite common for affiliations based on loyalty or strong ties to the home state to appear to be more important than social class in demonstrating and expressing the inmates 'Malayness' (see Jerome, 2013, 100).



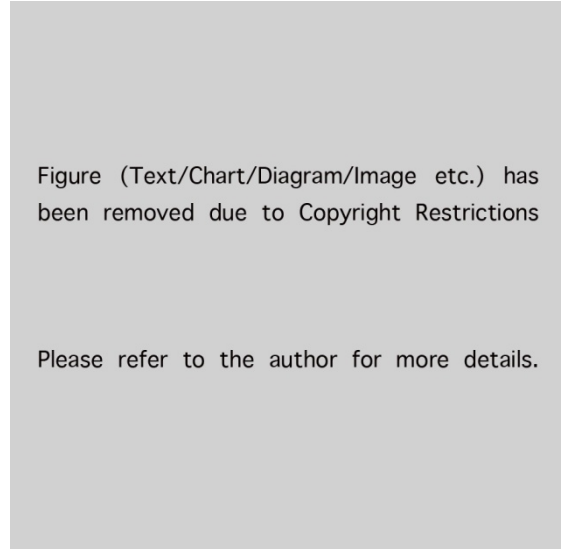
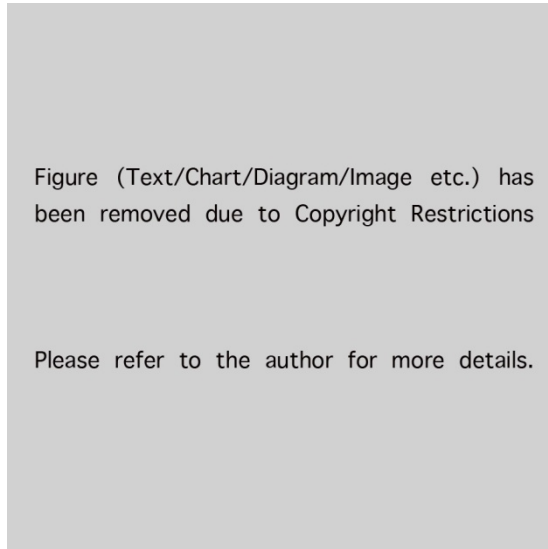
## Keeping Time

The appearance of time, or at least the concept of it in the graffiti, became an important element to consider, as it results from the repetitive duration of the inmates' confinement in a single space. It appears to be an instrument of measurement, which acts as a literal count or record of the days they were in prison and the days still to come. Three types of recognisable formats for keeping time were noted in the PJG – Gregorian calendars, tally marks, and schedules.

The Gregorian calendar was a functional creation, which was traditionally used to refer to days in advance. The majority of Gregorian calendar designs found in the PJG took the form of a series of numbered spaces, each given its own numerical digit (from 1 to 28/29/30/31), to represent the date of the particular month, set out in four or five columns or rows, with each row or column indicating the days, either written in full or as acronyms. Most of the calendars were written in the Malaysian Malay or Indonesian Malay language, which appeared to be translated in a way similar to an English counterpart. Any varieties of this were just another type of calendar from the usual design of a reformed Gregorian calendar (see Genung, 1904). Not all of the Gregorian calendars were in a grid structure as some inmates just made a record by directly listing days and dates (see Plate 10 and Plate 11).

Some of the calendars were specifically marked with a circle or with a note on a particular date (e.g. court date, start of imprisonment, and in some, release date). One common assumption with this Gregorian calendar format was that there was a desire to organise the units of time to reflect the needs and preoccupations of the inmate, and, it was assumed, to organise their time leading up to this expected date. In several of the plates, it was noted that, in addition to

-serving a practical purpose, this process of organisation presumably provided a sense, however illusory, of controlling time itself.



**Plate 10 : (Right) Gregorian Type Calendar 1994**

**Plate 11 : (Left) Gregorian Type Calendar 1996**

There was a thought that the Gregorian calendars were a form of 'Skeuomorphism', which means the use of a similar appearance or shape, to represent the tactile or graphical qualities of an object that goes beyond being a metaphor for a real object but which performs the same function because of its design. This would also include its graphic elements, even non-functional ornamentation, which make its appearance a literal imitation of the metaphor's source. This term, perhaps, could refer to most modern designs that appear like and function similarly to the objects they resemble (e.g. the design of calendars in computer tablets or smartphones). And to some extent, this may be true, as the purpose of a skeuomorph is to allow people to adopt new tools by relating them to a familiar process, function or design. Although it may seem an improbable suggestion, skeuomorph objects transform the function and original purpose of the object into another which they then try to emulate (a terminology that is quite common when applied to craft objects in archaeological materials, (see Hurcombe 2008), and nowadays applies to technological apparatus (see Knappett 2002).

The second type of calendar uses a method similar to the 'five bar gate' system - etched or drawn vertical lines, with each fifth line usually slashed across diagonally. This *tally mark*<sup>36</sup> is a simple method for keeping track of each passing day and is often seen in most institutionalised buildings<sup>37</sup>. It differs from the Gregorian calendar in that it functions as a cumulative count rather than a structured day-to-day record. It is common folk custom in the area used as a method of keeping track of a game or as a child's way of counting.

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Please refer to the author for more details.

**Plate 12 : Tally marks in graffiti.**

Keeping time had a close relationship with the number of days an inmate stayed within the cell space. The available documentation did not reveal any actual data or information about the inmates who had been in a cell but some form of keeping time would have been expected, by the prison authorities, of the inmates during their prison sentence.

Another related way of thinking about structure and the connection with the inmates' pre-occupation with time revealed the way in which everyday human activity creates space and place, and not the other way round - as is the norm in most modern urban planning and prison

administration. This showed how their 'real life' is experienced and expressed at micro-levels, which is to be expected just as the acts of graffiti within the prison are inevitable, as the inmates had outgrown the existing space and begun to explore with a deeper insight into their pre-occupations or even their aspirations, in order to stave off the ultimate psychological assault, boredom (J. Z. Wilson, *Transgressive decor: Narrative glimpses in Australian prisons, 1970s-1990s* 2008, 334).

Although power and authority flow from the top down, the inmates are not passive in the way they relate to the places they inhabit. Indeed, a defining characteristic of their everyday life is a form of resistance. Their daily life might be framed inside a grid of restraint, but it is comprised of their own tactics, creations and initiatives (Baer 2005, 215). These help them to effect a kind of escape out of the prison space and lets them make countless 'journeys' into different places and situations by responding and conforming to the prison's discipline only in order to evade it (see also Vinthagen and Johansson 2013). Leonard Baer (2004) talked about his personal experience of navigating his way through six young offender institutions which he described as complex cultures on account of the many trails of 'visual imprints' left by the inmates within their cells. Though Baer (2004) described the decorative elements as an act of transformation of the space, it could also be seen as an act of modification, and therefore a general acceptance of the cell/prison space. This would be a positive way to look at something essential to the inmates' own managed expectations, which would normally be prone to disintegration because of the constant repetitive schedules and activities, but could be regenerated through their struggle to adapt to the prison's environment and culture by re-enforcing their space through personal exercises of mind and body, whatever the cost of staying idle or lethargic.

A key idea here is about the partial existence of their memories; a narrative or story-telling research done through unearthing the ways in which individuals develop their sense of self; a possible conclusion on how they arrive at accepting who they are and their place in prison life.

Keeping track of time, or days in the case of the PJG, had become a type of abstraction and a basic classification of the graffiti's cuts. Such basic categories are those which carry the most information, possess the highest validity and could be looked on as having a quantitative value, and yet represent the theme most differentiated from one another within the PJG.

<u>Regular Daily Routines at Pudu Prison</u>	
0700 -	Doors unlocked for the prisoners to empty their waste pails (there's no toilet/water facilities in the prison cells, so the nominated cell inmate would have to empty and clean the pails first thing every morning). The inmates would then return to their cells with the clean empty pails and wait for the 0800 release.
0800 -	Prisoners released from their cells for breakfast at the Prison Kitchen. The meals usually consisted of porridge, with some alternatives such as salted fish, meat, or chicken ground into the porridge.
0900 -	Inmates would disperse and go to their chosen workshops.
12.00 -	Inmates break for lunch.
1300 -	Inmates would take their afternoon break; the Muslims would gather for their <i>Dzuhur</i> prayers at the Prison surau (a small mosque, a place of worship for Muslims).
1400 -	Inmates continue with their workshop or other preferred afternoon classes.
1700 -	Inmates return back to their cells and are locked up till next morning

**Figure 6: General Daily Schedule of Pudu Jail inmates. Excerpts from conversation with several Prison officers at the Prison Symposium, Kuala Lumpur, Personal notes, 2012**

Timeframes and schedules of the inmates' activities may vary from one prison institution to the next, and are usually also affected by events that happen outside the prison, such as a complete lockdown for a week before Malaysia's General Elections. This is ideally to secure the



prison against any breakouts or riots due to the election results, as was shown in one example (a conversation with a prison officer in the Kajang Prison, prior to Malaysia's 13th General Election, 2013). This would result in the inmates being confined at all times, with their food, court papers or letters sent to their cells.

The actual experience of time may differ from one inmate to the next. Their responses would vary from one to another as to whether time passes slowly or quickly but that could not be determined without having a conversation with one of the inmates. Anita Wilson (1999, 2004) discussed the context of time within the prison space as an actual event that goes beyond the autonomous entity of the prison as a *third-space*<sup>38</sup> as previously noted in Chapter 2, page 75. Again dealing with the perspective of time, Wilson (2004) argues that the use of time within the context of the prison space would be a case-by-case scenario; it would depend on how the inmates decided to occupy their space, how they perceived it, and how they used it for literacy-based activities different from the usual way we perceive 'literacy' as producing written works with artistic merits. It goes along similar lines to comparing a 'book-smart' and a 'street-smart' paradigm, which both contain merit when it comes to learning. Wilson (2004, 87-88; 1999) perceived it (how the *third-space* exists) as a way of sustaining the inmate's own identity by surviving it rather than just existing within the prison's confinement.



### **(Prison) Food for Thought**

The prison's weekly meals, as seen in Plate 13, not only showed the reality of the inmates' daily diet, but also revealed that there were often appalling schedules of poorly prepared meals which provided just enough to live on, but left little for them to enjoy. Diets were based on the requirements of the Prison Act 1995, Prison Regulation (2000), Act 537, (pp.169-175) (refer also to Appendix j, pp. xliii-xlix) which stated that their daily protein (chicken/beef/fresh fish), should be 150 grams, with 300 grams of rice, a biscuit and a slice of fruit. Though ideally the meals should have varied from one day to the next, the inmates were in fact served daily with a ladle or two of porridge, mixed with ground-up meat - chicken, or usually cheaper servings of protein. However, very down-to-earth notes about the routine, which the inmate put at the end of his daily remarks on the meals that he received, shows that he probably knew that the meals would just repeat themselves and almost none of the menu would be any different from one week to the next. This monotonous routine gives us a glimpse of their apparent expectations and crudely depicted their intense desire for something different to satisfy their appetites<sup>39</sup>. It would not be uncommon for the inmates to take a creative approach by illegally preparing their own meals inside their cells<sup>40</sup>.

Food and diet for the Pudu prisoners could be observed, interestingly, as a strategic tool used in an effort to make problematic inmates cease from their delinquent behaviour. Difficult inmates could be put in isolation cells for no more than seven days at a time, and no more than ninety days cumulatively in a year, whether for a minor or major offence, and it was thought that dispensing "Half Rations", which consisted of only bread and water, would be an effective way to curb their behaviour (see Omar 2001, 341-344). Some inmates joked that the unfortunate inmates who were going through these disciplinary and punitive procedures were going to the "*Genting*", which refers to a nearby casino hill resort, on the outskirts of Kuala

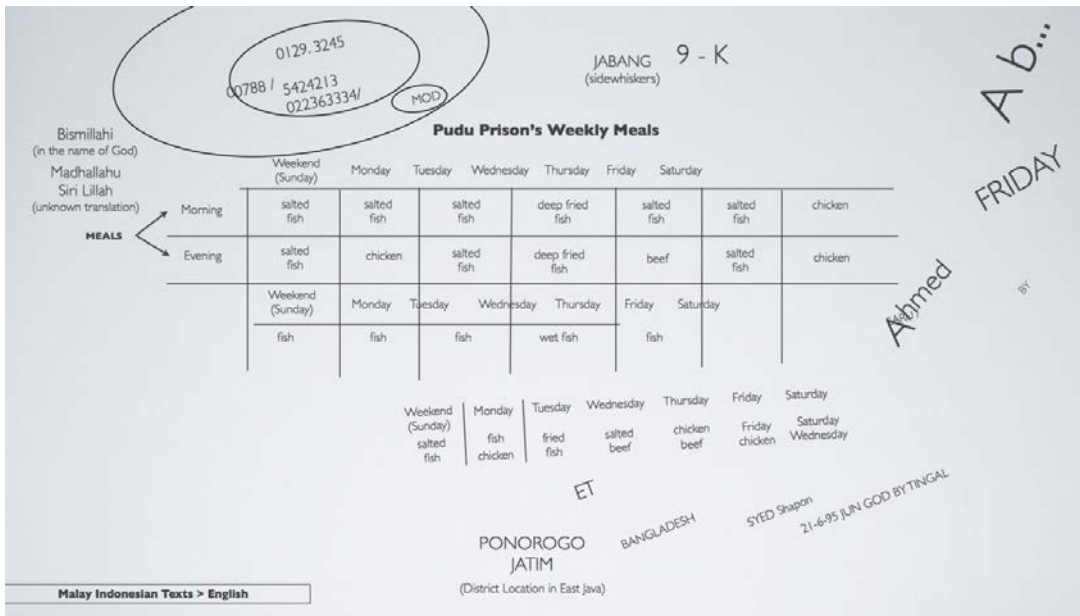
Lumpur (Beyond Bars: KL's Pudu Prison 2010, 0:13:10 min), which was certainly not the case, as it was without doubt a gruelling experience to go through. Their meals could be cut severely into tiny portions and they could be placed in smaller and usually darker and dirty cells, and isolated from any contact with other inmates, although none could be left without supervision by the Officer-in-Charge, who had to observe the prisoner and make sure he was able to take such punishment and would not succumb to any unwanted incident (Omar 2001, 344).

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**Plate 13: Pudu Prison's Weekly Meals**

K. Ismail (2014)  
Chapter 3  
Images Within the Pudu Jail's Graffiti  
Pudu Jail's Graffiti: Beyond the Prison Cells



**Figure 7 : Transcribed & translation: of Pudu Jail's Weekly Meals**

Plate 13, written in Indonesian Malay (the word schedule, is spelt '*Jadwal*' instead of '*Jadual*' in local Malaysian Malay), was the only graffiti showing an actual account of the Pudu Prison meals and giving an example of the inmates' routine diet<sup>41</sup>. This was fish served three to four times a week, interspersed with either beef or chicken, and served along with carbohydrate (which is always rice or porridge), anchovies, vegetables, a piece of fruit, half a salted egg, a slice of bread and a piece of potato. The inmates would have no choice as to what they ate as they would only be served what had been prepared. The only exception would be slightly more provision for those who were HIV-positive, were pregnant, or were a child or infant of one of the prisoners (Malaysian Institute of Law 2006, 169-175). Although the diet was claimed to be balanced and to give the necessary nutritional requirements, the inmates would still be able to purchase a restricted choice of food and drink from the canteen, the cost of which would be debited from their prison account, from the money the inmates earned through their vocational work in the prison (Foreign & Commonwealth Office 2013, 12), which was usually RM0.40 to RM0.50 per day (GBP 0.08 to 0.10)<sup>42</sup>.

It would be interesting to look at the diet in this Malaysian prison setting in the context of the dramatic distance the inmates were from their home surroundings, or their lives prior to prison. As prison authorities do claim (see Omar 2001) dietary consumption must be regulated with regard to the health of the inmates, which has to take account of the inmates' condition - for example pregnant women or those with HIV, what their religious practices were (for instance the Hindu inmates would not take any beef, the Muslim inmates would be served meals in their cells at dusk and just before dawn with nothing during the day during *Ramadhan*), whether they were vegan, young or juvenile prisoners, a devout Hindu (no beef), a child/infant (delivered by the women inmates during their incarceration), or an HIV-infected child/infant (see Omar 2001, 342; Malaysian Institute of Law 2006, 170-175).

Although the PJG revealed some information on diet, it lacked essential details from the inmates themselves. Other research, such as that by Gill Valentine & Beth Longstaff (1998), uncovered that food had immense value for prison inmates, because of their limited access to monetary and material goods. Through in-depth interviews with British inmates and selected focus groups, they showed the various effects of tension between minority and majority ethnic groups, food preparation, to the delinquent behaviour of the inmates. Dissatisfaction about food was certainly an obvious complaint ranging from its poor taste to the type of food, as most were given English dishes, rather than the more familiar meals that the Asian and the Ethiopian inmates were used to (Valentine and Longstaff 1998, 137).

Tension also arose on account of the reluctance to assign ethnic minorities to work in the kitchen as the white inmates and the prison staff deemed that they did not know how to "handle the food cleanly", or were undeservedly spiteful about the fact that they were "coloured people", an attitude echoed even by the prison wardens themselves (Valentine and Longstaff 1998, 136-137). This resulted, in some extreme cases, in the food that was served by them not being touched by the white inmates. What is interesting is the perception of time,

which was raised as an issue concerning the need, on the part of the inmates, to adjust to meal times:

Through the meal system the prison regime can therefore literally be inscribed upon the bodies of the inmates. The timing of the meals – inmates are fed earlier than most of them would choose to eat on the 'outside'... There is a 16-hour gap between dinner and breakfast so new inmates must learn to eat when they are not hungry in the morning and afternoon and to control or suppress their bodies' demands for food during the evening.

(Valentine and Longstaff 1998, 137)

What was interesting was that this way of scheduling meals affected the prisoners overall.

Their control over their appetite would no longer be on account of their bodily hunger, rather they must submit to the control of the prison's assigned meal times and fixed monotonous diet. The meal-time routine, a part of their lives when synchronisation occurred and they had to force their bodies to adjust to the food and the quantity of it, led to the inmates becoming much more strained, which would likely affect their judgement and mental state. In Malaysian prisons, the context of the prison meal was part of its actual punitive measures<sup>43</sup>.

In the case of Pudu prison, the food prepared would certainly be *halal* (food preparation prescribed according to Muslim law), as the majority of the prison population would be Muslim in proportion to the non-Muslim, but would it be another case where the preparation of meals led to discrimination as well? Even though the inmates did not exactly look forward to the daily meal itself, it was at least something regular and highly likely to be something that affected the social relationship between the inmates<sup>44</sup>.

Meals were not just limited to what was served from the kitchen: the inmates could opt for more food from the prison canteen, though it would be limited and strictly controlled food. By purchasing via a credit system, with money, which they earned through working in the workshops available to them. Although the prisoners would have to work extra hours as the

daily pay was low<sup>45</sup>. Another way of getting food, which inmates would be allowed to have only from the prison canteen, would be for it to be purchased by their family (who would be allowed to visit from once a week to once a month depending on the inmate's stage), or because of religious festivals<sup>46</sup>.

Although one could go deeper into the exploration of meaning and uses of the prison's food and how its variety and quantity may or may not contribute to the inmates' behaviour (see Rauch 1986), it is important to consider the negotiation and production of social relationships, material culture, inmates' networks and the relationship of power (see Valentine and Longstaff 1998) on the role of food in the material culture of the Pudu prison by focusing on food being a symbol of the complexity of the relationship of power between inmates and staff, and between individuals and groups of inmates, as it would provide a different take on institutional dietary control.



### At the Edge of the Religious Gates

This part of the chapter deals with the literal and figurative echoes of religious places found in South East Asia, which, although physically absent would often be referred to in the places, performances and stories in which the inmates described their ordinary lives. These sites would become shared objects in the formation of identity, particularly through the inmates' own identification with their past. Religious groupings among inmates may exist as an imaginary social group, but they also require physical, mnemonic devices like temple gates, domes of mosques, towering columns, and places of retreat.

In the case of the Malay inmates, their boundaries of ethnic, religious, and cultural identity could only be those allowed to practising Muslims; no other kind of religious declaration would be tolerated. As stated in the Constitution of Malaysia, a social contract within Malaysian terms:

Constitution of Malaysia; Article 160 (Clause 2, p.131)

"Malay" means a person who professes the religion of Islam, habitually speaks the Malay language, conforms to Malay custom and

(a) was before Merdeka Day (*Independence Day*) born in the Federation or in Singapore or born of parents one of whom was born in the Federation or in Singapore, or is on that day domiciled in the Federation or in Singapore; or

(b) is the issue of such a person;

Figure 8 : Malaysian Constitution on the meaning of "Malay"

When inmates in Malaysia initially go through the prison's administration process<sup>47</sup>, they would be assigned to a religious group, for instance a Malay inmate would be designated as a Muslim, regardless of any other alternative as the Federal Constitution of Malaysia dictates that, as far as the inmate is concerned, no alternative would be considered. To change religion within any Malaysian prison, particularly to change from being a Muslim to another religion, would be a real challenge for any convict because of the restrictions and the fact that changing



to the other faith desired by an inmate could be seen as him trying to escape from prison discipline<sup>48</sup>.

Though it would be a distraction from this actual study to explore the religious ordeals or political arguments that might have been discovered in the Malays' narratives, it has been partially included in this study to demonstrate how one could not enter into the prison system without conforming to some religion, and it would be likely in the case of the Malays, as one of the *bumiputera* (Sons of the soil) or of any other countries (Indonesia, Bangladesh, etc.), that they would not be regarded as anything other than a Muslim inmate, and subject to rules that would be different from those of non-Muslims (such as adhering to the fasting months, the expectation of compulsory daily prayers, attending and participating in weekly sermons, and being assigned a religious councillor as needed). This is not to say that the accounts of the non-Muslims showed that they were free from the usual prison methods of physical and mental discipline; it is more to point out that Muslim prisoners would be observed strictly by the prison warders to ensure that they were complying with Islamic customs.

The drawings of religious gates within its space caused a cell to be re-formed as a healing room, or alternatively, allowed the cell's punitive nature to begin, ritually, to disappear. However, outside this ritual space and context, the more exclusivist narratives about the inmates' identities might well reassert themselves by trying to account for the different forces that represented the sacred within the space of the shrine.

In this section of the PJG theme, there was a union of images of place united by two-dimensional forms of architectural religious devices and the cell space. The shapes and drawings of the mosques and temple gates appeared like a phantasmal embodiment onto the walls, and acted as an idiom for remembrance developing and weaving into the present time of the inmates' space. They were not drawn in a haphazard way, but in a semi-lucid way that might exemplify a rational assessment of evidence and the inmate's attempt to reproduce

their religious textual material. This had its own links to the mystical ritualism that characterises the memorialisation of places of worship. This way of depicting a memorial (mosques, temples, and churches) became a kind of device taken from sites, iconic texts and rituals, which provides both a sense of history and a personal ritual system that would be evident among the Pudu prison inmates and constituted one of the important features of the PJG's own thematic components which identified its historical associations.

In other words, these sets of images investigate how discursive and ritual acts of identification and naming, particularly those carried out as a servants of the shrine, temple or places of worship by the inmates, are connected to the wider rhetorical strategies that seek to build relationships in a sacred exchange. The ritual practices enacted at the shrine ultimately serve as a means of constructing new internal configurations that enable the inmate to believe in self-identify on a number of different levels. The least implication of this process is that the believer is not restricted to the confines of a religious community such as existed within Pudu prison and its related activities, but rather, becomes more open to any number of ways of professing his religion. Much has been written about the generally accommodating atmosphere of religious shrines in Malaysia (see Aveling 1978; Sinha 2003; P. D. Goh 2009; Tan 1983); on the whole, they have acted as cultural integrators, drawing the inmate into being a pilgrim, in his or her living cell space which then becomes a shrine and a place of spiritual power.

There are other indications of religiously linked graffiti illustrating various festivals, such as the lit brass lanterns associated with *Dewali*, which was called the 'festival of lights' by the Hindus (also known as '*Deepavali*' by the Malaysian locals, refer to Appendix o, PJG Volume 2, page 159, image ref: PJG\_392\_068b-DL3-18), and another type of lit brass lantern, which also represented another version of the 'festival of light', known as the '*Malam tujuh likur*' (Plate 14, page 135), which occurs on the 27th day of *Ramadhan*, the month of fasting for Muslims

when they would light up lanterns or oil lamps in front of their homes. A mandatory almsgiving must be performed before the end of Ramadan and the celebration of *Aidil Fitri*, though this is debatable as it relates more to a custom which happens uniquely in Malaysia, rather than to a mandatory practice in religions elsewhere.

These examples were noted as a part of the themes suggested within the religious affiliations of the inmates. Religious festivity and celebration suggests a different look at the function of religion, that has a loose attachment to what, later in this chapter, would be revealed as a by-product of the inmates' acts of adjustment (Clear and Sumter, Prisoners, Prison, and Religion 2002), or their dealing with guilt (Clear, Hardyman, et al. 2000), but what arises when referring to religious festivities in visual referencing is a complex mixture of homesickness (Ireland and Archer 2000), the exploration of family relationships (see La Vinge, et al. 2005), and ritual strategies in related issues of cultural value (Merriam and Muhamad 2000), which were strongly linked within the inmates' memories of family and ritual events such as the '*Malam Tujuh Likur*'.

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**Plate 14 "Malam 7 Lekor", image ref: PJG\_172\_047c-lvl1&2-06, Appendix o, Pudu Jail's Graffiti, Volume 1, page 174.**

In Plate 14, the graffiti showed an illustration of the lit brass lamps: four were depicted, one with its own stand. The empty spaces between the illustrations and the words were filled with small adornments of stars, crescent moons, and bursting stars (like fireworks). Text was written at the top: "MALAM 7 LEKOR", followed by "SELAMAT HARI RAYA AIDIL FITRI", underneath it, which refers to the Muslim's yearly religious festival.

Underneath the lanterns are the words; "MAAF ZAHIR BATIN", which is loosely translated as "I seek forgiveness (from you) physically and spiritually", which is normal method of reconciliation and renewal of ties and respect amongst those who seek forgiveness. The partially obscured text at the bottom right of the image shows the words; "TOLONGLAH HAMBAMU INI YA ALLAH YA TUHANKU", which translates as "Please help me, your humble servant, Allah, my Lord". The illustrations of figures are people acknowledging each other as a sign of respect and humility by clasping hands with one another, presumably relatives as there are women and men holding hands with each other. This would be showing an event during the *Aidil Fitri* celebration.

**Figure 9 : Description of Plate 14**

This demonstrates that isolating religious motifs as a direct part of memories of expectation and solidarity about the importance of cultural and religious events differs from changing the space into a sacred space as depicted in such an example.

Inmates within the Malaysian penal system are often visited, not only by their family members, but also by people from non-governmental and independent religious organisations throughout the country in an attempt to look after spiritual health and well-being. The Prison Fellowship Malaysia, Malaysian Care, Alpha for Prison and the Catholic Prison Ministry are some examples of organisations that carry out volunteer visits for practising Christians, while Muslims receive guidance through the efforts of the Religious Department of the Malaysian Prison, Malaysian Islamic Youth Movement (ABIM), and various private agencies and governmental bodies such as the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) which run workshops, forums, official events and give speeches. Though the religious and racially based demographic could be located in more quantifiable ways throughout Malaysian prisons (see Kassim 2006), this particular section of the PJG showed two prevailing appearances of the themes of religious gates or pillars: the Muslims and the Hindus, with very little sign of similar motifs relating to the Chinese faith.

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Though the Malaysian Chinese do have their own beliefs and faith, it was rare to find these and correctly categorise them as a particular type of graffiti indicating such practices. Perhaps, initially, this was thought to be because the Malaysian Chinese do not rely solely on a single system of belief. This was strongly argued by Chee-Beng Tan's (1983) paper where he explained that the Malaysian Chinese adopt multiple faiths;

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**Plate 15 : Collection of the religious gates graffiti found in the PJG portfolio**

The Malaysian Chinese refer to their religion in their own language...term 'bai shen'...means "worshipping deities" and is more general, referring to the worship of any kind of deity within the Chinese religious system, including those of Buddhist origin.

(Tan 1983, 219)

Though adopting various faiths and practices from Buddhism, Confusionism and Taoism, this would be debatable as the Taoism, as a faith, needs a stronger definition as it was regarding a mixture of various regional faiths. Daniel Goh (2009, 134) argued that the Malaysian Chinese would adopt most practices, changing with time and more modern ideas, known as *syncretic* practice, a product of loosely uniting and intermixing various religions throughout centuries of Chinese civilisation (Tan 1983, 218). Graffiti of symbolic religious places specifically for the Malaysian Chinese, perhaps became more elusive (and illusive to avoid detection) for those of this belief system, as seen in Plate 16. Hence, the lack of visual presence (of graffiti or drawing of Chinese deities, or any sign of altars) could be attributed to this *syncretic* practice on the part of the Malaysian Chinese, freeing them from being bound to the actual physical space of temples and allowing them to take part in more celebrated events and ritual festivities for different deities as it suited their prayer needs (Tan 1983, 223).

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Plate 16 : "Buddha" text in Chinese

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**Plate 17 : "Budai" / "Hotei" Figure**

Plate 16's "Buddha"<sup>49</sup> (Appendix o, PJG Volume 1, page 146), graffiti located in cell Block C, level 1; and "Budai / Hotei" (Appendix o, PJG Volume 1, page 50), located in cell Block B, level 1.

In Plate 16, the word "Buddha", written in Chinese characters, was located in the centre of the prison wall, noticeable, as it was half a meter in height, upon entering the cell space. It was noted that it was probably made by a highly literate inmate (correspondence with Yan Preston, March 2011), because of the highly stylised and well-written Chinese characters.

The Budai Monk is a popular legendary character in China. As the story goes, in the tenth century there was in Zhejiang Province an eccentric monk named *Qieci* (also known as Changtingzi), who traveled around carrying a cloth bag on his staff; hence his name, "The Budai Monk," meaning "The Cloth-Bag Monk." He was short, scantily clad, and corpulent, with his protruding belly exposed.

(Zheng 2004, 170)

The character "*Budai*", as seen in Plate 17, also known as "*Hotei*" in Japanese, is similar to the one described by Da Zheng (2004). The graffiti showed the deity as a man sitting down with his legs folded and his left knee pointing upwards. Wearing a simple robe covering his arms but leaving his chest and stomach bare. Appearing stout, with his large belly exposed, he leaned back, resting his baldhead on his right fist. His ears also had the archetypal look of appearing to be elongated (which supposedly symbolised the concept of being all-hearing, or it could be remnants of earrings which he had disposed of as he renounced material attachments). His



face appeared to be cheerful, with a large smile, looking just like the “laughing monk” as he is known.

Next to him, another figure was illustrated, which referred to the same character, standing and emptying what looked like his 'cloth sack', and spilling out what appeared to be sweets and *Jin Yuanbao* (ancient Chinese golden ingots which are boat-shaped, with a circular or oval little bump in the middle); these are a symbol of prosperity, income and wealth. Though the Chinese do have their affiliations and their different ceremonies worshipping their Gods, or demigods, the attraction for them would be to become more socially exclusive (Yang 1961, 80), and the accumulation of wealth and status would be the motivation for the devotee to recognise and be blessed by acknowledging the god and placing their trust in them (see Alexeieve 1928's lecture on the affiliation of the Chinese with Gods of wealth).

Although “Budai”, or “Hotei”, directly calls for a detachment from social hypocrisy and moral degeneration, it is a form of non-attachment in line with his aspiration for spiritual freedom (Zheng 2004, 179), which characterises the deed performed by the deities. Though about worshipping, it appears that in the case of the graphics found in the PJG, these were not religious in nature, but an extension of a codified ritual about what is representational, associated with worshipping symbols and recognising their primary role in shaping social and personal stability. While questions could be asked about the use of temples and shrines in the outside world apparently representing more ornamental and symbolic purposes (Mitchell 1974, 33) rather than being sacred ritual sites, it would be better left to a more elaborate research project than this particular chapter can cover on Chinese religious practice and beliefs.

This is not to say that the lack of drawings of Chinese Gods or temples in the prison graffiti reflected a lack of inmates of such faith; they may have existed in other drawings and texts, which were not part of the visual images of sacred places within the prison cells. Religious

censuses and registers have always been baffled as to how to position the Malaysian Chinese in terms of identity (Gungwu 2006), as to what they practice, or being misled by classifications of Buddhist, Taoist or Confusionists (Tan 1983, 217). It would be assumed that the Chinese inmates could choose to put their faith, place of worship and deities into proper sacred places, although it would be more likely to be just a reference to a deity, or mythical heroes and creatures, rather than the drawing being specifically a sign, or symbol of worship. Signs of ancestral heroes and mythical creatures, such as dragons and pheonixes (i.e.- refer to Plate 36, page 197, and image ref: PJG\_152\_045c-lvl1-11, Appendix o, PJG Volume 1, page 154), are present in the PJG. But to regard the prison cell as a specific place of worship would be a problem, as these visual representations were based on the inmate's ancestral belief and ideas that had developed down the generations, rather than following the standards of a monotheistic faith which draws out a different force or entity and prescribes a different devotional approach (see Sautman 1997, 15-16).

~

The Muslim inmates' religious gates found in the PJG were shown as structures with two pillars at the sides, joined with a top, usually in the form of an arc. The structures for Muslim practice were the typical mosque-shaped dome with a crescent moon at the end of it, reflecting the influence of the Mughal architectural style which was brought over during colonial times (Moser 2012, 2916-17). The pillars at the sides, represent the mosque's *minaret*, a design also applied in the interior of some mosques to the *mimbar*, the pulpit in the mosque where the *imam* (prayer leader) stands to deliver sermons and lead mass prayers. The lower parts of the drawings showed either the interior of the mosques, which usually had marbled floors, or the entrance gates. In both cases, it was either done with a detailed design reflecting an actual pictorial view of a mosque, or in a two-dimensional graphic representation.

In some cases, these drawings would indicate the position of west which is the direction of the Ka'aba (Mecca) itself. The designs were based on post-colonial mosques, which are typically found in most urban cities, as the older Malaysian mosques were of a more modest shape and simpler design with, characteristically, two or three-tiered pyramidal roofs (see Mohamad Rasdi and Utaberta 2010; A. S. Ismail 2008, 76; Moser 2012).

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Please refer to the author for more details.

**Plate 18: Qur'anic Verses which covered the upper parts of the entire cell room, Appendix o, PJG Volume 1, page 218, refer also to page 217 on the same Appendix and Volume.**

The upper part of the cell (Block C, Level 2), which was decorated with Arabic Quranic verses, the *syahadah*, "*Laa Ilaaha Illallah means, Muhammadan Rasulallah*" translated as "There is no God except Allah, Muhammad is His Messenger", on top of the prison cell's door, and the rest of the room cited *Bismillah ir-Rahman ir-Rahim*, commonly translated as "In the name of God, most Gracious, most Compassionate".

The shapes of the mosques in the PJG, are not the only indicators of Muslim inmates: the two words, "Allah" and "Mohammad" (Appendix o, PJG Volume 1, 58, image ref: PJG\_56\_033-04), in arabic lettering were also present, as a sign of the occupants declaring themselves to be of the Islamic faith. The words were written in similar sizes, on the same level with one another, and usually with borders of decorative arabesque elements around them. The importance of the two words is the key foundation as a belief only in Allah does not make one a Muslim; a Muslim must believe in and accept Muhammad as the last of the prophets as well. This is

mandatory and is the first rule in the five pillars of Islam. Some scholars might argue about the relevance of using both names, as only Allah should be praised in devotions<sup>50</sup>. It is interesting to note this as it is still a common practice in most local mosques to have both names ornamenting the interior walls. This perhaps indicates that a reminder of a place of worship has been brought into the prison cell, with the possibility that the inmates did not know that such practice was not encouraged, as noted in the Qur'an:

"And the Place of worship are for Allah (alone); So invoke not anyone beside Allah"  
(Qur'an, Sura Al-Jinn 78:12)

This is not a discussion of what would be allowed in the monotheistic practice of Muslims within the prison cells, as that particular point of view would more likely be part of a contemporary debate on the decoration allowed in places of worship. It was noted, however, by Kassim (2006, 197) that the inmates only had a superficial knowledge of (Islamic) religion prior to their imprisonment, hence the need to run rigorous religious programmes during the inmates' sentences to improve their rehabilitation. Superficial knowledge, as Kassim (2006) explained, indicated that most of the inmates began with a religious upbringing, knowing most of the rules, yet eventually stopped practising it fully and indulged in wrong-doing. Prisons and remand centres would be the places to re-enforce these religious teachings through persuasion and obligatory activities, as well as peer-pressure from other inmates who had already been indoctrinated. They would be expected to devote themselves to religion while isolated in their cells.

So any contemporary issues of design, whether it was right or wrong to have the name of the prophet alongside that of god would not be relevant. The drawing would have been based not only on the inmates' affiliation to their religion, but also through their experience of observing mosque interior designs prior to their imprisonment. It was in fact shown that such

decorations came not from the inmates' recently found religious knowledge while in prison, but was drawn from their memories of places where they had been.

Although a devout Muslim does not require a defined space for worship - he or she would be able to worship God wherever they set their feet, the Muslim community gravitates towards the mosque as a central feature of their way of life, an almost inseparable part of their culture (A. S. Ismail 2008, 46). Mosques outside prison cells served more than just as somewhere for mass prayers but were also places for events, congregations, marriage ceremonies, the collection of *zakat* (annual payment under Islamic laws for certain kind of properties to be used for charitable and religious purposes), religious classes, and various other activities. Thus, transforming part of the prison cell, even if the graffiti drawing had been done in only a small segment of the prison cell, would claim the space as a definite area for those who routinely used the time and the space to pray, in order to surrender the body and mind to God's will. In general, the acceptance of religious guidance seems to be the key for the inmates to find peace and confidence in themselves as they prepare to re-enter society upon release (Dakir, et al. 2012).

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Though I am aware that the study of Malaysian Hinduism and the study of the sacred space, especially when it takes place within the confines of a prison, would be a challenge to write about, I have read Shampa Mazumdar and Sanjoy Mazumdar's (2004) written account of religion (in a general overview of the dominant religions) which dealt not only with people's connection to their respected deities, but also with the desire to transform spaces and places through the depiction of symbols and sacred meanings. Although Mazumdar and Mazumdar's (2004) paper was directed at the reciprocal relationship of people between a place and the attachment of religion to it, it was an interesting example of how they saw people's need to have a spiritual as well as historical significance attached to places and artefacts:

"Religion endows these places with symbolic meaning which not only helps differentiate them from ordinary spaces, but through their geography, design or architectural aesthetics have the capacity to also foster attachment, devotion, spirituality..."

(Mazumdar and Mazumdar 2004, 387)

Transformation of spaces and places seems to be the key, as it relies on the devotees retaining their view of the 'sacredness' of a place, which depends on the visual recognition and memory they have of the place through being part of a congregation attending ceremonial events. If the visual representations of the sacred space or the place of worship were to be brought into the prison cell to 're-create' the space for worship, would these visual representations transform the space in which the inmates dwelt? It seems to be something that the devotees try to do to symbolise the religion they subscribe to, which goes beyond the ritual means and obligatory practices of the act of worship. The basic meaning of religion, as Bakar, Lee and Rungie (2013, 198) paraphrased Koenig et. al. (2001):

"...religion as an organised system of beliefs, practices, rituals and symbols that facilitates closeness to a sacred being and guides one's existence in society."

Visits to the temple for Hindus is not obligatory, as it is a personal and individual choice for each person's own spiritual quest (Mazumdar and Mazumdar 2004, 390). Visiting such spaces, however, one would be bombarded with symbols, statues, and various representations of deities, and through such elaboration of space, one would feel and believe as if they were entering another world.

Similar to the Muslim religious gates, the graffiti of the Hindu temple gates found in the PJG were drawings of structures which also had two pillars at the sides, joined with a dome-like top, in the form of an arc. The difference lay in how this was drawn as most of the drawings showed intricate details and symmetrical designs for both sides of the pillars. The top part was highly decorated and ornamented, usually with the design of a lotus flower or decorated with shapes of the stars.

Looking at one example, the image shown in Plate 19, from a cellroom in Block C, level 1, the intricate drawing of the Hindu temple was well ornamented with designs and floral motifs. However, the designs of the temple gates were much simpler compared to the original local temples in the area (for example the Sri Mahamariamman Temple in Kuala Lumpur) as these would be fully adorned with the figures of deities. In between the pillars, the temple drawings showed lit traditional brass lamps, with pairs of lamps drawn symmetrically to compliment and balance the design.

The centre of the design had a perfect large circle, decorated with a landscape design with a dome-shaped structure in the middle. Around it, were three Sanskrit letters, *Om*, which, the Hindus believe, was the sound that was made as creation began, when the divine, all-encompassing consciousness took the form of the first and original vibration manifesting as sound (Beck 1993, 42). On top of the circle was a flat design of the rising sun in the background with a lit brass lamp in the foreground. The roof of the temple carried repeated floral motifs including a row of the lotus flower design. The base of the temple showed its foundation although the central part of the temple was marred with torn plaster, indicating that there may have been actual images of deities (*e.g.*-Lord Krishna, Lord Ganesha, etc.), either using photographic prints or magazine cuttings fixed to the wall within the drawn temple. Either these images were taken away by the inmate as he left the cell, or the next inmates who occupied the space had taken these pictures down, leaving the remains of the drawings in place.

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**Plate 19 : "Temple". Appendix o, PJG Volume 1, page 178, image ref: PJG\_176\_047c-lvl1&2-18. Graffiti illustrates the Hindu temple, located in cell block C, level 1.**

Leaving behind the material, the believer enters another domain; as he/she approaches the inner sanctuary *garba-griha* ("womb chamber") the space gets narrower and darker. Enshrined in this sacred-sanctorum is the resident deity of the temple, dimly outlined by the flame from a brass lamp. Here at the end of the journey, the believer "sees" or has *darsan* of the Lord.

Mazumdar and Mazumdar (2004, 390) on Ramaswamy and Ramaswamy (1993)

It was interesting to note Mazumdar and Mazumdar (2004) on the concept of entering a sacred space, which they called the *garba-griha*, or the *garbhagriha*, a room or space which exists beyond the present physical space, that was symbolised through the drawings of religious motifs. What was depicted here was not only about the physical space but also about the emotional and subtle concepts of ephemeral spatial existence, by transcending or escaping into it (from the prison cells or even the current awareness of self) in a religious experience.



The source of significance of this spiritual compartment lies in practices included in the spiritually sought-after intimacy between worshipper and deity.

The presence of the temple within the prison space encourages the believer to be taken into a different space through these symbols, as a separation from the prison space, and to cultivate spirituality and the embodiment of a moral compass as part of the religious practice they took part in.

There was also the question of whether the process of religious transformation of the space applied to only part of, or to the whole, cellular space (see Plate 18). This part of the thematic compilation of graffiti had shown that a significant religious practice which was observed as a surviving part the Pudu prison culture, could play an important role in identity formation, teaching through prayers and rituals, stories and symbols, as well as through personal experience of the space.

Such extrinsic motivation to have these ornamental drawings of religious places covers a wide range of points, such as the concept that social and emotional benefits in this life will accrue to those who live good lives, or attempt to do so. Perhaps this resonates with the implication by Juliet Fleming (2001) on graffiti in the previous chapter, that to be surrounded by such graphics and texts of religious icons raises the notion of 'by reading them, we are indeed being good' (Fleming 2001, 140-41). Yet the belief in the Hereafter is also a key factor in providing morality with a strong basis and purpose for the inmates, not only for themselves (the authors of the graffiti), but also for the cellmates living together in the same space.



### **In the Presence of God(s)**

The examples above differ slightly from other religious spaces because of the presence of the deities, which reside within them. The religious gates were revealed as a transformation of space, a crossing over as a separate representation of another space within the prison cells, and moving beyond having just a visual illustrative purpose.

There are recognised religious associations in this theme, which suggests that there were dominant religions present within the Pudu jail: the Muslims, the Hindu, and the Christians. Although there are drawings with physical references as to what a god might look like, there is more of a spiritual perception of how an inmate would relate to their religious practice. The objective of this part of the paper does not deal with how the inmates would represent God in a graffiti drawing itself, but rather through a devotional act. Some of the graffiti images possess certain features that make them particularly suitable for private devotion; often appearing small and intimate in the scope of the drawing, they feel personal and close to their owners, by whom, in this case I mean the inmate who was responsible for drawing the images of the deities. A sense of proximity between the deities and the devout can be appreciated by observing them closer.

Plate 20 shows the Hindu God, "Lord Krishna". In Hindu belief, the deity "Lord Krishna" is an important element in the Hindu's neo-*Brahmanical* creed (Crooke B.A. 1900). Krishna was usually shown with blue skin, but in this case as there wasn't any indication of tone, the deity would have appeared as either black or light blue. The image of Krishna in the Sri Krishna Alayam Hindu temple, in Brickfields, Kuala Lumpur, seemed to be similar to the image in question. The traditional skin colour would be very difficult for any worldly artisan to depict, but they did their best, the closest they could achieve being that of a bluish cloud:

"The Supreme Personality of Godhead has a cheerful, lotus-like countenance with ruddy eyes like the interior of a lotus, and a swarthy body like the petals of a blue lotus."

Srimad-Bhagavatam 3.28.13

<http://vedabase.com/en/sb/3/28/13>, retrieved 20th Dec 2013

Lord Krishna was drawn wearing a *dhoti*, a traditional garment in India fastened to the waist, with a highly decorative belt and lining. A shawl, draped from his shoulders down to his knees, appeared to be of archetypal peacock feathers. His chest was adorned with what looked like a double string pearl necklace with a lotus-shaped ornament at the end of it. He wore a decorative garland round his neck reaching to the knee. His left arm appeared to carry a jewel-encrusted armband, and with both of his wrists adorned with ornamented bracelets.

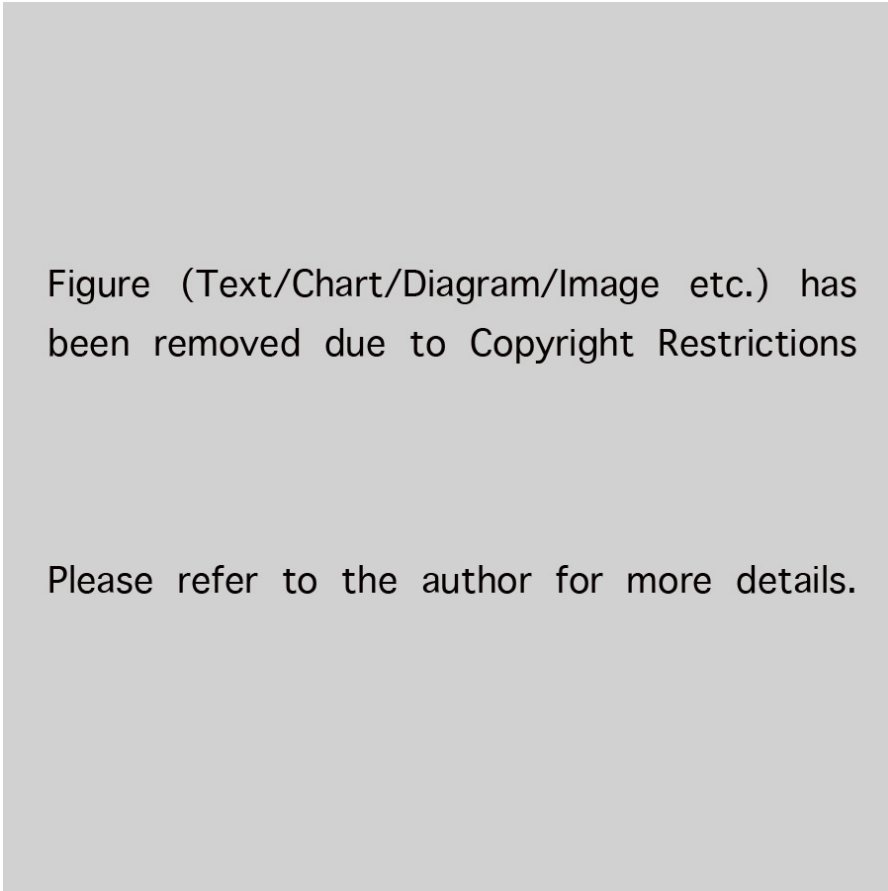
Lord Krishna here is depicted as a handsome young man, with light-coloured eyes and wavy long black hair. He is in a characteristically relaxed pose, playing the flute. In this form, he stands with one leg bent in front of the other with the flute raised to his lips, in the *Tribhanga* (tri-bent pose) posture, a dance pose while the flute is played. He wears a highly intricate crown decorated overall with pearls or beads, which most likely represents the idea of a peacock, though it was difficult to observe as that part of the wall was slightly damaged. A peacock feather floats beside his crown. Behind his head, a halo was drawn as a luminous presence representing his holiness.

Another Hindu deity, "Lord Ganesha" was also present in the same room (Plate 21). This graffiti dominated the room because of its size, being roughly a metre high. Lord Ganesha's characteristics, which are usually represented by *therianthromorphic* features (combination of human and animal attributes) as mentioned in Robert Brown's (1991) book, "Ganesh: Studies of an Indian God", contained all the usual archetypal appearance of the deity.

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Please refer to the author for more details.

Plate 20 : "Lord Krishna". Appendix o, PJG Volume 1, page 194, image ref: PJG\_192\_049c-lvl2-06.  
Graffiti located in cell block C, level 2



**Plate 21 : “Lord Ganesha”, which was also present in the same room as “Lord Krishna”, Appendix o, PJG Volume 1, page 226, image ref: PJG\_224\_052c-lvl2-07**

The figure of Ganesha shown in the drawing is a deity with an elephant’s head. On his head there appears to be a crown decorated with floral or lotus motifs. The deity seems to be wearing the dhoti, though in a much simpler form with fewer ornaments compared with the “Lord Krishna” (Plate 20). The deity appears to be in a seated posture, known as the 'ease posture' (*lalitasana*), his legs folded under him with his left foot turned outwards. The left tusk is broken; although a typical depiction of him would show the broken tusk to be one of his hands, this drawing does not give any indication of that.

The Lord Ganesha usually appears with four arms, holding an axe up high in one right hand (the axe represents a tool with which to cut away the material attachments of the devotee), and with the open palm of his other right hand facing out towards the viewer and marked with the Sanskrit symbol *svastika*, a symbol of a cross with the legs facing in an anti-clockwise

direction, which is a sign of blessing and luck. In his left hands, he holds the stalk of a lotus flower, and the *Ankusha*, the goad which Lord Ganesha's uses to remove obstacles from dharma's path. A garland, hung from his neck is seen to be of a much simpler design than that of Lord Krishna (Plate 20).

The throne, on which Lord Ganesha sits, appears to be lightly drawn, almost unfinished. Near his right knee, on the ground, are three sticks of burning incense, a bowl of fruit, a bowl of *laddu* (a local Indian sweet made from flour and sugar), and a rat, standing holding a piece of the *laddu*.

Heinrich Zimmer (1972, 70) noted that Lord Ganesha, as the elephant-headed god is known, is also called "The Lord and Leader of the Hosts of Shiva" or "The Lord and Master of Obstacles" (*vighnesvara*), who sits above a rat. As Lord Ganesha forges through obstacles in life, the rat represents his overcoming them. The bowl of *laddu* represents life's temptations, and the rat's action would be the representation of man's will succumbing to his own greed or lust. Though there would be various interpretations, based on the texts featuring Lord Ganesha's lore, the central symbolic appearance of this deity would begin to take shape to encourage the devout inmate to be patient, and would represent his motivation to overcome temptation through the blessing of the deity. The two (Lord Ganesha and the rat, which is also shown as his vehicle) appeared to be a symbolic relationship of a combined force to vanquish life's obstacles.

Whereas the graffiti drawings from the PJG showing Hindu subjects of worship were highly detailed, clearly designed in ambitious presentations of both temple gates and deities, the Muslim graffiti revealed a different quality: there were no figurative drawings of prophets, angels or deities. This is because the majority of practising Muslims in the region follow the teaching of the *Sunni*, one of the two branches of Islam, who have a strong antipathy to any form of pictorial representation, based on the interpretation of *Hadiths*, a compilation of the words and practices of the Prophet Muhammad, which stated:

"Ibn 'Umar reported Allah's Messenger having said: Those who paint pictures would be punished on the Day of Resurrection and it would be said to them: Breathe soul into what you have created."

(Sahih Muslim vol.3, no.5268)

Debates on this issue of what is permitted in the portrayal of the image itself and what are the image's functions in Islamic rules were simply based on the notion of avoiding turning an image into something to be idolised.

"Figurative art can be perfectly accommodated into the universe of Islam, provided it does not exceed its proper limits, or participate directly in the spiritual economy of the religion"

(Ali 2001, 9)

Throughout history, images of the Prophet Mohammad and the angels were depicted in various artworks but this has not happened recently. I will not pursue this issue in this paper as it could be much better dealt with in other research projects in theological study and debate. Although pictorial representations do exist, as artworks of the Prophet Mohammad have been found dating back to the Persian Empire period (refer to Ali 2001), I would like to demonstrate that the practising Muslims within the prison, as observed through the PJG, took note of Islam's religious narratives which prohibit any figurative representation. Instead the inmates turned to more abstract representations of physical sacred space, such as the Ka'aba, as seen in Plate 22. An alternative representation that was observed in the PJG took the form of religious structures/sacred space, calligraphy, and scriptures from the Qur'an, which Wijdan Ali (2001,9) explained as being a substitute for the Christian icons in decorative aspects of art and architecture<sup>51</sup>.

In plate 22, what was seen is the image of the Ka'aba (Ka'aba, Ka'bah)<sup>52</sup>, a holy sacred structure that is almost cubic in shape. The shaded parts of the structure represent the *Kiswah*, a black dyed and woven silk, which was wrapped round the cubic structure. It would also be

adorned with the Qu'ranic scriptures in gold and silver threads. But it would be difficult to transcribe the complex writings from the Qu'ranic scriptures in this drawing, which was done on a small scale, so the inmate just adorned it with the name of god 'Allah' and 'Mohammad' on each side of the structure. Behind it stood a minaret, taller than the Ka'aba itself, with the crescent moon and a star above it. In the background was a section of the mosque itself, the Al-Masjid Al-Haram. The sky above the mosque was adorned with stars, with a phrase of the *syahadah*, in Arabic scripture, written above that. A drawn figure of a praying man, which probably represents a faithful and pious man, was kneeling down with his legs folded under him and his knees facing forward. The hands were raised to shoulder level, with palms upward showing that the person was citing a *du'ā'*, an invocation, an act of supplication to God. The praying man was dressed in *thawb*, the Arab's robe or garment for men.

As a Muslim shrine, the Ka'aba was located in a square adjacent to the Grand Mosque in Mecca, Islam's holiest city. The same image would also appear on most praying mats/rugs (*sajjāda*) locally manufactured for Muslims (refer to Appendix k, Plate 45, page I), and contained a strong symbolic meaning which they would traditionally take note of as they pray five times every day. They do not just face Mecca city but specifically faced towards the Ka'aba in Mecca. Hence, the direction is an absolute reference point for the practising devout Muslim, so the inmates used the image, as a point and direction to face fulfilling the need for all Muslims to pray in a uniformed and single direction to God.



Figure (Text/Chart/Diagram/Image etc.) has been removed due to Copyright Restrictions

Please refer to the author for more details.

**Plate 22 : "Ka'aba", Appendix o, PJG Volume 2, page 68, image ref: PJG\_301-059c lv13-12, graffiti drawing located in Cell block C, level 3**

By being part of the ritual act, which would in this case be the act of daily prayers, the image, as shown in Plate 22, connects the devout inmate to the place itself and the religion it represents. Although the image exists in a single cellular space, which separates the inmate in one room from others, the connection of this particular action in the direction of praying, is part of a collective ritual, sociologically identified, which directs the Muslim in a single direction towards the sacred site (Mazumdar and Mazumdar 2004, 395).

These form useful subjects for future research, although it would be difficult to analyse each and every relevant prison cell as to the nature of the prayers said there by the inmates. The focus and function of this type of religion, as observed in this particular section, was not just about the features of God (for the Muslim), but was also about the inmate's preference for

having the image of a sacred site (though not actually essential to the practice), hence the relationship was about the alignment of the space, which is the Ka'aba, acting as the obligatory direction for prayers.

~

In another type of creation of the sacred space, the Christian symbol of the cross, as seen in Plate 23, had been drawn simply and sparingly as a religious icon, marking the symbolic relation with their prophet, Jesus Christ.

Figure (Text/Chart/Diagram/Image etc.) has been removed due to Copyright Restrictions

Please refer to the author for more details.

**Plate 23 : "Salvation". Appendix o, PJG Volume 2, page 221, image ref: PJG\_455\_100 D-lvl 1-Room 4-13. The graffiti was located in the Death Row Block D, cell room 4.**

In Plate 23, the cross-shaped drawing refers to the archetypal instrument of the crucifix, which has religious significance for Christians. The presence of this graffiti cross was memorable for

me, as it was drawn in a large scale at least a metre high. As I looked at it in the dark cell, which got very little light, the cross appeared to glow faintly in the darkness as its white paint contrasted with the dark space. As the eyes began to adjust to the darkness, the scriptures and passages surrounding the cross began to appear clearly in the dark, a humbling experience. What was even more overwhelming was that this graffiti was discovered in one of the cells in the Death Row block; it left me with a real sense of empathy and a strong memory of that particular space.

The word "SALVATION", left little doubt about the strength of atonement felt by that inmate in Death Row. The following plate refers to the translation of the passages contained in Plate 23;

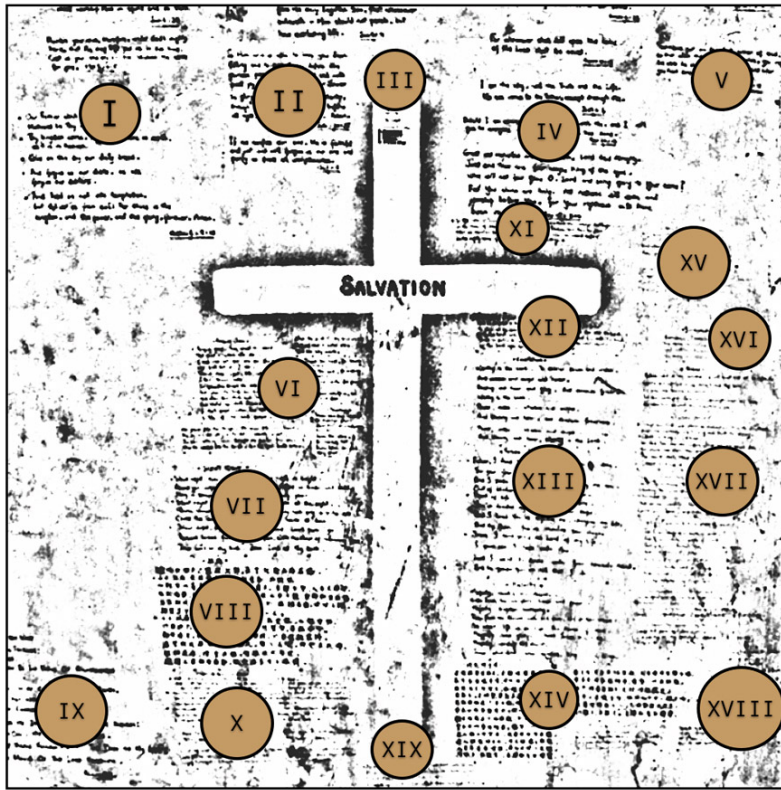


Figure 10 : Transcribed of the texts surrounding the cross, "Salvation", from Plate 23

I

(Partial transcribe - also refer to Appendix o, PJG Volume 2, page 222)

(God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him) must worship Him in spirit and in truth.

John 4:-24

Humble Yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time.

Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you. I Pet. 5:- 6-7

- Our Father which art in heaven Hallowed be Thy name.
- Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.
- Give us this day our daily bread.
- And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
- And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory. forever. Amen.

Matthew 6:- 9-13

II

(Partial transcribe - also refer to Appendix o, PJG Volume 2, page 222)

(For God so love the world, that He) gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever

believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

John 3:- 16

To Him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious presence without fault and with great joy - to the only God our Saviour

be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore. Amen. Jude:24-25

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

| Jn. 1 :- 9

III

26-6-1993

NEW LIFE.

IN CHRIST

PRAYERS + WORSHIP

[arrow pointing upwards] MORNING

[Deleted words]

8.30 p.m. NIGHT

IV

K. Ismail (2014)  
Chapter 3  
Images Within the Pudu Jail's Graffiti  
Pudu Jail's Graffiti: Beyond the Prison Cells

(Partially transcribed, refers to the New testament)  
(For the wages of sin is death,  
but the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus) Christ our  
Lord.

Roman 6:23

For whoever shall call upon the name  
of the Lord shall be saved.

Roman 10:13

I am the Way, and the Truth and the Life.  
No one comes to the Father, except through Me.

Jn 14:- 6

Behold, I am coming soon. My reward is with Me, and  
I will  
give to everyone according to what he has done.

Rev. 22:-12

Great and marvellous are Your deeds, Lord God  
Almighty.  
Just and true are Your ways, King of the ages.  
Who will not fear You, O, Lord and bring glory in Your  
name?  
For You alone are holy. All nations will come and  
worship before You, for Your righteous acts have  
been revealed. Rev 15:- 3-4

V

Therefore put on the full armour of God  
so that when the day of evil comes, you may  
be able to stand your ground, and after  
you have done everything, to stand.

John 6:- 13

VI

+Amazing Grace+

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound,  
That saved a wretch like me.  
I once was lost but now am found,  
Was blind, but now I see.  
Through many dangers, toils and snares  
I have already come.  
Tis grace that brought me safe thus far.  
and grace will lead me home.  
And when this flesh and heart shall fail.  
And mortal life shall cease.  
I shall possess within the veil.  
A life of joy and peace.

x x x x

His promise fills the temple. His peace fills my heart.  
His joy and His glory. He did wondrously impart.  
The blessed name of Jesus. Brought me freedom  
from sin.  
Now His praise fills the temple. And His spirit dwells  
within.

(Next column)

Bless the Lord, O, my soul. [...]  
And all that is within me.  
Bless His holy name.

x x x x x

Thank You Lord, for saving  
my soul.  
Thank You Lord, for making  
me whole.  
Thank You Lord, for giving  
to me.  
Thy grace salvation, so  
rich and free.

x x x x

+Doxology+

Praise God from whom  
All blessings flow.  
Praise Him all creatures  
here below.  
Praise Him above,  
Ye heavenly host.  
Praise Father, Son, and  
Holy Ghost.

x x x x

VII

Silent night, Holy night, All is calm, all is bright.  
Round yon virgin, mother and child, Holy infant so,  
tender and mild.  
Sleep in heavenly peace, Sleep in heavenly peace.  
Silent night, Holy night, Shepherds quake at the  
sight...  
Glories stream from Heaven a-far, Heavenly Hosts  
sing a-le-lu-ia.  
Christ the Saviour is born, Christ the Saviour is born.  
Silent night, Holy night, Son of God, love's pure light  
Radiant beams from Thy Holy face, With the dawn of  
redeeming Grace,  
Jesus, Lord at thy birth, Jesus, Lord at thy birth.

x x x x x x

(Based on John Freeman Young's Hymns, circa 1859)

VIII

Refer to Plate 41, page 216

IX

(Partial transcribe - also refers to Appendix o, PJG  
Volume 2, page 223)

- THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD; I SHALL NOT WANT.
- HE MAKETH ME TO LIE DOWN IN GREEN PASTURES:  
HE LEADTH ME BESIDE THE STILL WATERS.
- HE RESTORETH MY SOUL: HE LEADTH IN THE PATH OF THE RIGHTEOUSNESS FOR HIS NAME'S SAKE.
- YEA, ALTHOUGH I WALK THROUGH THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH. I WILL FEAR NO EVIL: FOR THOU ART WITH ME:  
THY ROD AND THY STAFF, THEY COMFORT ME.

- THOU PREPAREST A TABLE BEFORE ME IN THE PRESENCE OF MINE ENEMIES: THOU ANOINTEST MY HEAD WITH OIL: MY CUP RUNNETH OVER.
- SURELY GOODNESS AND MERCY SHALL FOLLOW ME ALL THE DAYS OF MY LIFE: AND I WILL DWELL IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD FOREVER.

PSALM 23.

X

+WHAT A FRIEND IN JESUS+

What a friend we have in Jesus, All our sins and grief to bear.  
What a privilege to carry, Everything to God in prayer. O, what peace we often forfeit,  
O, what needless pain we bear, All because we do not carry. Everything to God in prayer.  
Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere? We should never be discouraged.  
Take it to the Lord in prayer. Can we find a friend so faithful? Who will all our sorrows share?  
Jesus knows our every weakness. Take it to the Lord in prayer.  
Are we weak and heavy laden, Cumbered with a load of care? Precious Saviour, still our refuge.  
In His arms He'll take and shield thee. Thou wilt find a solace there.

*(Based on "What a Friend in Jesus", Joseph Medlicott Scriven's Hymn, 1855)*

XI

+In the name of Jesus In the name of Jesus+

In the name of Jesus, In the name of Jesus. We have the victory,  
In the name of Jesus, In the name of Jesus, Demons will have to flee,  
When we stand on the name of Jesus. Tell me who can stand before,  
In the mighty name of Jesus, We have the victory\*  
*(Based on "In the Name of Jesus", Hymn, source anonymous)*

XII

The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord,  
And he delights in his way. Though he fall, though he fall.  
He shall not be utterly cast down; For the Lord upholdeth him with His hand.  
Though he fall, though he fall. He shall not be cast down.  
For the Lord upholdeth him with His hand. \*  
x x x x x x x  
*(Based on Psalm 37)*

XIII

+EXALTATION+

Worthy is the Lamb, To receive power and riches.  
And wisdom and might and honour.

Blessing and honour and glory. And dominion forever.  
Worthy is the Lamb.  
Power, riches. Wisdom and might.  
And blessing and honour, and dominion forever more.  
Power, riches. Wisdom and might ---->  
And blessing and honour, **worthy** is the lamb.

x x x x x

\*FATHER, I THANK YOU\*

Father, I thank You, For all that you've done,  
You gave Your Son freely to me,  
And I praise You for calling me, drawing me near.  
Out of blindness, You caused me to see.  
Spirit of Life, You're God's holy fire.  
You've kindled my heart with Your blaze.  
And I know You're refining me, changing my Life.  
And by faith. You're revealing Your ways.  
Jesus, I need you, as Lord of my life.  
I gave all I have unto You.  
Lord, I want to come under Your heavenly hand,  
And to praise You in all that I do.  
x x x x x

*(Based on "Father I thank You", Steve Stewart's Hymn, c. 1980)*

+MAJESTY+

Majesty, Worship His Majesty,  
Unto Jesus, be all glory, honour and praise/  
Majesty, Kingdom authority,  
Flow from His throne, unto His own, His anthem raise.  
So exalt, lift up on high, the name of Jesus.  
Magnify, come glorify, Christ Jesus, the King.  
Majesty, worship His Majesty.  
Jesus who died, now glorified, King of all Kings.  
x x x x x

*(Based on "Majesty", Jack Hayford's Hymn, c. 1980)*

XIV

Refer to Plate 42, page 219.

x x x x

+HE IS LORD+

He is Lord. He is Lord  
He is risen from the dead and He is the Lord.  
Every knee shall bow. Every tongue .... (confess)  
That Jesus Christ is Lord.  
*(Based on "He is Lord", Hymn, source anonymous)*

XV

*[graffiti faded and illegible]*

XVI

*(Refer also to Appendix o, PJG Volume 2, page 22)*

+EMMANUEL+

Emmanuel, Emmanuel.  
His name is called, Emmanuel  
God with us, revealed in us  
His name is called Emmanuel

*(Based on "Emmanuel, Emmanuel" Hymn, Bob McGee, 1976)*

XVII

+BEHOLD+

Behold God is my salvation. I will trust and not be afraid.  
for the Lord is my strength and my song;  
He also has become my salvation.  
For the Lord our God is my strength and my song.  
He also has become my salvation.

*(Based on Isaiah 12:2)*

+VICTORY SONG+

Through our God we shall do valiantly. It is He who  
^will tread  
down our enemies. We'll sing and shout His victory.  
Christ is King. (3 times)  
For God has won the victory. And set His people free.  
His word has slain the enemy.  
The earth shall stand and see that...\*  
Christ is King \*

*(Based on "Victory Song", Dale Garratt's Hymn, c. 1979)*

x x x x x x

JESUS WE ENTHRONE YOU

Jesus, we enthrone You. We proclaim You are King.  
Standing Here, in the midst of us.  
We raised You up with our praise.  
And as we worship, built your throne... (3x)  
Come Lord Jesus, and take Your place.

*(Based on "Jesus We Enthroned You", Hymn, source unknown)*

x x x x x x x x

+For I am building a people of power+

For I'm building a people of power  
For I'm making a people of praise  
That will move through this land by My Spirit  
And will glorify My precious Name  
Build Your church Lord. Make us strong Lord  
Join our hearts Lord. Through Your Son  
Make us one Lord. In Your body  
In the kingdom of Your Son.

*(Based on "For I am building a people of power", Richard M S Irwin's Hymn, c. 1977)*

x x x x x x

+The Steadfast Love of Our Lord+

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases.  
Your mercies never come to an end.  
they are new every morning. New every morning:  
Great is your faithfulness, O Lord. Great is your  
faithfulness

*(Based on "The Steadfast Love of Our Lord", Hymn, source unknown)*

x x x x x x

+EXALT THE LORD OUR GOD+

Exalt the Lord, our God (2x)  
And worship at His footstool. Worship at His  
footstool.  
Holy is He. Holy is He.

*(Based on "Exalt the Lord, our God" Hymn, Isaac Watts, The Psalms of David, 1719)*

XVIII

x x x x

+PRAISE THE NAME OF JESUS+

Praise the name of Jesus (2x)  
He's my rock, He's my fortress  
He's my deliverer. In Him will I trust  
Praise the name of Jesus.

*(Based on "Praise the name of Jesus", Hymn, source unknown)*

x x x x

+HIS NAME IS JESUS+

His name is Jesus Jesus  
Sad hearts weep no more.  
He has healed the broken hearted,  
Opened wide the prison doors,  
He is able to deliver evermore.

*(Based on "His name is Jesus", Hymn, source unknown)*

x x x x x

+SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL+

Something beautiful, Something good;  
All my confusion He understood;  
All I had to offer Him was brokenness and strife,  
But He made something beautiful of my life.

*(Based on "Something beautiful", Hymn, William J. "Bill" Gaither. 1974)*

VIX

It's no longer I that liveth, But Christ that liveth in me.  
It's no longer I that liveth, But Christ that liveth in me.  
He lives, He lives, Jesus is alive in me.

*(Based on "It's no longer I that liveth", Hymn, source unknown)*

As with any research project involving prison graffiti, one has to be cautious before drawing any conclusions or assumptions about the Plate 23, "Salvation". First, it is not known to what extent the sample is representative of the literacy level of the condemned inmate in Room 4, Death Row, which may, or may not have contributed to the mass of religious texts seen on the walls of his cell (which were taken either from written material which may have been present in the cell room, or from his ability to actually memorise the passages and transfer them directly on to the wall).

At first observation, this religiously devout Christian inmate seeks to conform to his belief of Jesus, which he had shied away from, but now, because of the painful suffering brought on by prison isolation, and certainly because of his expectation of imminent death by hanging which awaited him on Death Row, he tries to connect through the symbol of the cross. With spiritual recognition he goes through passages and hymns which were familiar, bringing words of hope and joy. The selected passages from the Apostles, from the Gospels of John, Peter, the Holy Book of Psalms, the Book of Romans (Apostle Paul), and the inclusion of folk lyrics of evangelical hymns, in turn compliments and glorifies the cross, and reciting these must have helped the inmate as a way of relieving his guilt. This way of clearing guilt, '*exculpatory*' as described by Todd Clear and his colleagues (2000, 59), who saw it as a method of combating 'evil', or the 'devil', which existed within the inmates and had led to their weakness and could be blamed as the main cause of their criminality. The inmates hoped that the external power of religion would help to re-align themselves with their personal self-worth (Clear, Hardyman, et al. 2000, 60).

Observing the transcriptions in Figure 10 : Transcribed of the texts surrounding the cross, "Salvation", from Plate 23, it was noted that the written passages were carefully done as the initial letters of the words referring to God and Jesus were capitalised (i.e.- God, Jesus, Christ, Lord, You, Your, Him, He). While this paper may not be able to rationalise why the nouns were



capitalised in this case, the differentiation of the words in this way created an indication of external forces, allowing the inmate to find meaning in the passages and imbuing in him a sense of power to use the structured words and passages as a framework for the forgiveness that he seeks.



Religious presence and a religious theme is certainly one of the strongest aspects of the PJG. It exists as a group, conspicuous through its visual presence, even though it distinguishes itself in different forms and approaches according to the inmates' ways of affiliating themselves through ritual obligations and visual representations of the place illustrated and the deity represented.

The Muslims altered their space through drawings of geometric designs, calligraphic Arabic passages from the Qur'an, and visual representations of the only sacred site they would have recognised, the Ka'aba, thus forming a coveted space for themselves to enhance their religious rituals of prayers to God. The Hindus detailed their space with highly ornamented drawings of temples and their deities, creating a way to receive blessings from their deities. The Christians illustrated, with the words, hymns and passages in which they found comfort, their hope and trust in God as an act of atonement.

While the Chinese were subtle in their visual approach to their beliefs, yet different as they emphasised their self-affirmation to an external force in a different way that requires an alternative research lens into the process of their religious practice, which Daniel Goh's (2009) paper argued was simply recognised as almost non-representative, as the Chinese had re-enforced, changed and adapted to modernity, noticeably since the 1990s, of their multi-belief system. It was noted the Chinese inmates, instead of turning to religious icons and re-

appropriating the cell space towards their religious faiths, they had only illustrate and depicting their worshipped god(s) in more linear and narrative example as seen in the PJG.



### Places

The drawings of places within the prison space in some way indicates how one should define and measure people's bonds with places (see Goffman 1961), which somehow underlines the value of place attachment, place identity, sense of place, place dependence, etc., and may engender ambivalence toward the origin of one's identity.

The links between how these drawings were constructed determine to a large degree how one moves and relates to others in society (Martel 2006, 599). Joane Martel (2006, 600) felt that the spaces within the confines of the prison heightened the sensitivity of spatiality. Showing how the intertwining of the fabric of inmates' lives became much more visible, Martel (2006) discusses how the overview of the prison's compartmentalised and segregated nature would bring about the inmates' attempts to maintain and grasp the emotional bond with places, a prerequisite to provide the inmates with the sense of stability they needed in the prison environment.

Diana Medicott (2004, 106) had noted that, on entry into the prison space, the inmate would experience a range of reactions from shock to panic to outright claustrophobia, because of the confines of the small space, the overcrowding, the minimal facilities and the prison's administrative routine which breaks down their previous identities and memories. Medicott (2004, 106) also refers to Proshansky and his colleagues' (1983) paper, which pointed out that the remnants of the inmates' past would stick to them subconsciously, though scattered and without uniformity:

"...acquisition of a place identity is not a uniform process, more a "potpourri of memories, conceptions, interpretations, ideas and related feelings about specific physical settings as well as types of settings"

Proshansky et al., (1983) cited by Medlicott (2004, 106)

Place attachment refers to bonds that people develop with places (see Manzo 2005; Altman 1993; McCabe 1993). Places are not static containers; they are culturally relative, historically specific, local and made of multiple constructions (Rodman 2003, 205). While I was concentrating on this particular section of the PJG thematic arrangements, this concept came up in a series of visually drawn images of landscape and snippets of scenes. As those images found in the PJG were a series of "collages", a juxtaposition of experiences and languages, showing scenes of people, which are torn out of their native context and thrown onto the walls of the prison spaces, snippets yet perfect figures in the exile experience. The life of the exiled writer is an accumulation of cultural texts, which are patched together unevenly and barely contain a complete linear narrative.

Place attachment within a prison context, particularly in the PJG, took two forms: one illustrating a connection to the outside world, and the other depicting life inside the prison space. The latter was initially hard to recognise, as the usual expectation of the "place" was at first thought to be the depiction of a physical place, which in this example of drawings became a narrative scene using the prison walls to transmit an actual scene which may have happened within the prison cell; as can be seen in Plate 24, which shows a snippet of the cell life of several inmates:

Figure (Text/Chart/Diagram/Image etc.) has been removed due to Copyright Restrictions

Please refer to the author for more details.

Plate 24 : Refer to Appendix o, PJG Volume 1, page 24, image ref: PJG\_22\_025-11, graffiti from cell block A, level 1

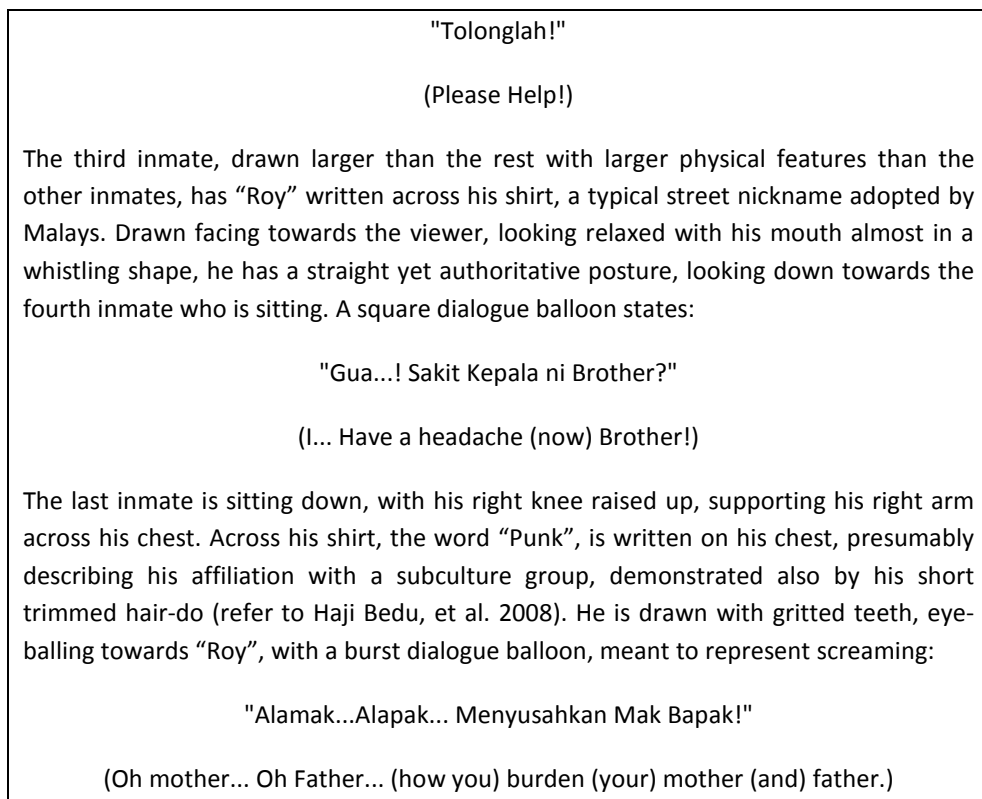
Image description: a scene of a prison cell with four male inmates, all dressed in, presumably, prison garb which is shorts and T-shirt. The scene is facing towards a closed wooden cell door with a barred window at the top, a peephole and a door lock.

From the left, the only inmate without a name, shortest in height compared with the rest, is holding a prison-issue plastic drinking cup in his left hand, a towel in his right, with a dialogue balloon above him stating:

"Mak!Kawe Nok Balikkk" (written in Malay, with northern Malaysian Kelantanese dialect)

(Mom! I want to go Home)

The inmate next to him, with his shirt marked with a Malay name, "Hasyim", with a flailing left hand and clasped right hand, standing attentively, close to the door, a waste pail beside him with two lumps beside it, presumably faeces. With a shouting dialogue balloon stating:



**Figure 11 : Description and translation of Plate 24**

This drawn graffiti scene shows the second two inmates as inmates who have been there longer than the first two inmates, who are mournful, whining and asking for help from their mothers or the wardens to ease their misery. There was very little of a story that could be extracted from this, yet it showed a glimpse of the prison scene that probably took place within the cell space. All who are gathered there, dressed in the same prison-issue garb, had to go through the same experience of harsh prison life. An interesting point is the waste pail (the Pudu jail did not have any sewerage system running through the prison cells), which is standing close to the grieving inmates, who most likely would have had to deal with cleaning out the waste pail every day and with disposing of its contents every morning.

It would be a simple assumption that new inmates would have to deal with these undesirable tasks, yet what is revealed here in the graffiti is an indirect, non-aggressive act of bullying, although it could be seen as more of a "rite of passage", an initiation ceremony to some extent for the affected inmates (J. L. Ireland 2000, 202). This form of task originated in colonial times.

Old workers (usually Chinese) had to carry out this task after midnight and finish before sunrise; they came to every outhouse to manually dispose of faeces and replace dirty pails with clean pails. They carried the two pails balanced on a wooden pole across their shoulders and were known as the “night-soil collectors”<sup>53</sup>, one of the Public Work Department’s tasks that was never elaborated in historical documentation. In the past, children would run away (and adults would distance themselves) and some would hurl verbal abuse if they ever crossed paths with one of them. It would be unheard of as a task after the 1980s, as Kuala Lumpur’s sanitation and sewerage system became a common development in the mid 20th Century<sup>54</sup> which would make such a task redundant (refer also to Manderson (2002), on the city’s plan for health and safety). This archaic practice of waste disposal would certainly upset the inmates who would each be unwilling to carry out such a demeaning task but would have to do so until they reached seniority or were replaced by newer inmates (notes from a conversation with a previous Pudu Jail warden, Tuan Yusoff Deraman, 2009).

Yearning for mother, or yelling for help, as shown in the drawing of “Hasyim” and the unnamed inmate, could possibly be seen as a demonstration of homesickness as well as the “pains of imprisonment” or the loss of the comforts of life, which was universally faced by inmates (Blevins, et al. 2010, 151). Homesickness is a reaction to separation, a common occurrence amongst inmates, revealed as a sense of loneliness, depression, emotional distress and a preoccupation with and longing for home (Archer, et al. 1998, 205). Carol Ireland and John Archer (2000, 98), noted that this was a physical stress symptom on the part of the affected inmates and would be more apparent in first-time offenders. Such stress would be looked on as a ‘weakness’ by the power hierarchy within the prison space (Liebling and Arnold 2012, 420), as the strong relationship ties to family in the outside world would be apparent to the other inmates, particularly in relation to the prison’s internal groups.

The far-reaching sociological networks forming complex outside allegiances (family or gang-related), along with conflicts and entanglements determining the inmates' associations within the prison's gang relationships (see Worrall and Morris 2012; Liebling and Arnold 2012) and the terms on which these relationships were based are far from this paper's objective. Such correlations could resolve the isolation predicaments of the affected inmates through family visits (Cochran and Mears 2013) and their dynamic relationship with the inmates to lower re-offending rates (see La Vinge, et al. 2005).

It is not known if such acts of bullying ever prompted any form of retaliation by the prisoners who had to carry out such an arduous and demeaning task, which could affect their wish to have a safe return home, or to say the least, could produce empathetic actions from the wardens to somehow ease their stay. Though there would not be any further story to be told in the inter-relationship between "Roy", "Punk", "Hasyim" and the unnamed inmate, as there was no other evidence except the drawing itself, future research could address in more detail other factors that might help to distinguish and thus identify this group of inmates.

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Please refer to the author for more details.

Plate 25 : "No Way Out", drawing of a prison window. Refer to Appendix o, PJG Volume 1, page 51, image ref: PJG\_49\_031b-lvl1-12, also refer to the same Appendix and Volume, page75. Cell room located in block B, level 1

In another section of PJG about places, the drawings that have lasted are not only of scenes of prison life but are a part of the space itself. Plate 25, a graffiti drawing of prison bars, fully rendered and dimensional, is an example.

The graffiti is a complete drawing presumably of a prison window with bars rendered in chiaroscuro. One supposes a marker or ink-based medium was used. The drawn iron bars, three vertical and cylindrical, are evenly spaced across the window, held in place with two horizontal flat iron bars. The drawing is done at an angle, which makes it three-dimensional, set into what looks like a chipped wall revealing a brick wall underneath its surface.

Writing at the top left shows a date, "96.21.9", presumably indicating when this was drawn. At the bottom left is the phrase "No Way Out", in a rectangular box. Underneath the writing is:

"Don't worry, be happy.



How far you go is up to you.”

At the bottom right-hand side of the drawing is a signed symbol, presumably the author/artist's signature, with a phrase underneath stating:

“Together. We can do anything”

More writing appears next to it, done at a different time from the drawing itself, showing another name: “Dort Van Duffy”, with a symbol above it.

The drawing was enclosed in a frame, rendered in a deeper tone than the actual physical wall, with a sharp border. What was interesting was the drawing of torn pieces of tape at each of the four corners so that the framed barred window looked like a poster stuck on the wall.

**Figure 12 : Description and translation of Plate 25**

What was interesting about this piece of graffiti was the way it featured as a drawing of multiple layers giving a feeling of reflectivity. It showed the prison bars although, of course, these prison bars didn't physically exist inside the prison space shown in the drawing. Also, there was no indication of any landscape beyond the graffiti's prison bars, confirming that it was not an actual or idealised view. The attempt to render it with the chiaroscuro effect perhaps made it look like the actual prison bars in a window set into walls that were chipped and revealing brick walls beneath. Another effect causing it to appear unreal and not actual prison bars was the way the drawing was done within the four borders, suggesting it was just an illusion of a poster.

This graffiti is perhaps suggesting a setting of a 'simulated prison space'. The inmate or artist had tried to simulate a view of the prison cell where the perception of the prison bars was just an illusion, which is an ironic suggestion since the inmates were contained in a prison cell. The term 'simulated prison space' used here could be more of a playful suggestion, compared to an actual experimental sociological prison setting counterpart<sup>55</sup>, and the strategy being played out by the inmates depicting the prison wall was to deny the existence of the actual prison space itself and see the illusional effect of the prison bars as having just an ephemeral effect.

The phrase “No way out”, shown as part of the ‘poster’ re-enforced the notion of the entrapment of the space as a figment as well.

The counter-phrase, underneath it, “Don't worry, be happy”, a lyrical popular song from the U.S.A. sung by Bobby McFerrin in 1988, is a classic representation of a phrase used in order to look at life as it is and accept fate with a positive attitude. It was followed by another, “How far you go is up to you”, a similar phrase to the former, as it advocates the salient positive behaviour, asking how far does one need to persevere, which was also motivational.

In another reference to landscape images, drawings of the outside world allowed inmates to temporarily transcend and escape their harsh surroundings, pulling them away from such austere conditions as the prison environment, which engulfed them. (Hanes 2005, 47).

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Please refer to the author for more details.

Plate 26 : “The river scene”, refer to Appendix o, PJG Volume 1, page 191, image ref: PJG\_189\_049c-lvl2-02, graffiti located in cell block C, level 2

Plate 26, as shown above, was a graffiti drawing of a picture of a landscape. It was a serene landscape, with a distant volcanic mountain in the background, puffs of smoke coming from the top, the whole slightly obscured behind a few coconut trees. The foreground depicted a river, with a suggestion of the water in which a single fish approached a lure, cast by a man fishing at the edge of the river bank. The man was sitting on a rock, under a half-dead tree with a few branches still carrying leaves at the top. A stork, standing on the top of the tree, overlooked the river.

A large snake was wrapped around one of the branches with its head and tail hanging down, preparing to drop on the creatures that were passing beneath it. There were smaller trees, receding into the background, with shrubs filling up the spaces between them, showing that it was a fertile forest. Four sheep were shown near the river bank on the lower right-hand side of the drawing. Two of them were grazing the grass, with another trying to mount one of them. A fourth sheep was sitting alongside with two lambs.

There were three cloud-shaped patterns, with hard lines and varying tones, drawn at the top left and right part of the drawing. It was unknown if this was intended to be part of the scenery, as the shape of each did not look like anything you would expect to see in a landscape drawing. The shapes appeared to be organic yet defined.

Two dates were noted: one, "18.11.91", written underneath a tree and the other, "21.6.94", written on the frame of the picture. Alongside the latter the inmate had written his name and his prison number "ATAP 2762-94". It can be assumed that the latter was the date when the graffiti drawing was done. The frame was complete with angled borders and drawn with edge motifs, just as anyone would expect of a picture, painted and framed on a wall.

**Figure 13 : Description of the "River Scene", Plate 26**

Such a depiction of place reveals itself as escapism, and was how the inmates tried to associate themselves with it, as in this case, where they would portray themselves as the character within the scene, a practice that applies as well to the graffiti theme of portraiture in this chapter. *Place attachment*, a term, which refers to M. Carmen Hidalgo, and Bernardo Hernandez's (2001, 274) paper, which defined it as an emotional attachment to physical properties, which plays the role of an identifier and a way of developing an identity.

In a graffiti such as is seen here, there would be no indication of any specific reference to an actual physical space; it would be restricted to more of a rural scene, adorned with nature's

wealth and fertile ground which would be far away from the cityscape scene the Pudu prison and its vicinity would be able to provide. The background shows a volcanic mountain, which could indicate the neighbouring countryside in areas of Sumatra, which suggests that the inmate originated from such an area. The name "Atap"<sup>56</sup>, another example of a Malay onomastic name (which also means 'roof' in Malay), may give further clues to the image's locality. The general view of the image may be that it seems to be an idealistic place to be, a refuge away from the prison space, which may influence other inmates in the same prison cell who view it as well.



I have presented here three examples of the theme of "Places" as seen in the PJG portfolio, one showing life within the prison, the other more of a reflection on the space, and the final one depicting the outside world. Each one had its own snippets of information and a story to tell, a concept and a memory, each with its own direction.

With regard to the way inmates carry out their narrations, Diana Medlicott (2004, 107) noted during her research interviews in prisons across the United Kingdom that the prisoners she interviewed were more 'tellers' rather than 'interviewees'. The inmates play their own part, as a narrator, a storyteller, and they tend to be more interested in telling their story in their own way, rather than answering more formal routine questions. In one of her interviews an inmate, Hal, recalls home in a fragmented story of events, places and routines. The narrative materials that she noted had significance for the inmates themselves, and contained conflicting emotions as to what was lost and left behind in the past, yet remained in short bursts as fragments of descriptions of whatever the inmates managed to recall (Medlicott, *Narratives of Memory, Identity and Place in Male Prisoners* 2004, 108). Perhaps the graffiti seen in the PJG is also an act of 'telling', though in a very different form from the verbal conversations, which Medlicott (2004) discussed, though the common ground would be the similar notion that the

narratives in the PJG appeared to be fragments as well. As the actual recipient of the narratives (through the graffiti), the readers, who were anonymous to the author just as the author was anonymous to the readers, would receive visual narratives as fragments, leaving the readers to guess and create their own speculations as to how the story would take shape.

The term 'place' shows itself as physical features and symbolic meanings (Lewicka 2008, 211). As a kind of diversion, an ornamental piece in the prison cell may or may not reveal how the inmate was coping with the incarceration process. The inmate, who had drawn the graffiti, would struggle to hang on to what were presumably the memories stored in his mind by projecting them into the prison space through means of the sketch. The struggle to keep their personal identity and 'place attachment', through narrating their memories, either verbally or visually, is certainly seen as an attempt on the behalf of the inmates to recall the space (Medlicott, *Narratives of Memory, Identity and Place in Male Prisoners* 2004, 115).

Prison involves a sudden removal of an individual and a complete separation from home, family and his/her social life into a restricted, constrained environment (Ireland and Archer 2000, 98). The prison space becomes part of the mechanism of change, just as prison itself does, a place of persuasion, which also has a role as a place of rehabilitation.

As Medlicott (2004, 116) noted, the importance for the inmates of their memories of the past seems to recede, as they begin to develop changed priorities. The time spent in prison affected their sense of identity and they began to re-prioritise what they needed to do while in prison in order to survive the outside world upon their release. The drawings of places, in a sense, seem to become relics, a past which the inmates would not be able to return to.



**Plate 27 : Another example of place attachment. Illustration retrieved from the lower section of the image, refer to Appendix 0, PJG Volume 1, page 203, image ref: PJG\_201\_050c-lvl2-04. Illustrated is a paddy field, on a fertile land, with mountains in the background, coconut trees in the foreground and birds flying in the spaces between them.**

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### Portraits

The next section to be considered were portraits, the second largest group in relation to the texts within the PJG. There was much to appreciate in the appearance of various faces and figures within each and every cell although these were just as anonymous as the other types of graffiti writings in the PJG.

Portraiture in the PJG in general were those taken from the inmates' memories, imitating the photographic portraits that would usually be found as framed images in local homes.

Ideologically, these images tend to carry their own structured notion of an institutionalised family, which in most cases, would focus on the presence of elder members, usually in the centre of the image. Though these take on a different kind of function with regard to the actual images to which these graffiti refer, they have their own sense of embodiment, in relation to the complex and ambiguous terrain of domesticity that these images might represent (refer to the photographic essay works of Simryn Gill and Tino Džumini, in *Picturing Relations*, 2007).

This type of graffiti, portraiture, was briefly discussed in Adrian Koopman's (1997, 83; 87) paper which referred to them as 'identity comments'. Koopman's (1997) view of 'identity comments' may be seen as an exploration of experience, and a construction of self-narrative by the inmates from the Pietermaritzburg prison in South Africa, where what is actually happening is the depiction of self. Though this may be partially true with reference to some of the portraiture graffiti found in the PJG, these seemed to be more than just self-referential, as they appeared to be referring to people other than the artists/authors themselves. I would like to explore this further as I could see that there must be more to this portraiture section of the prison's graffiti than it just being self-referential, and it is just as significant as the various narrative texts which are described in this chapter.

Actual glass mirrors in prison, particularly in the Pudu Jail, would most likely be prohibited in the prison cells, as they could possibly be used as a harmful tool by the inmates. Consequently, the inmates had to resort to the walls as their medium as a metaphysical, reflective surface, on which they imposed, as a drawing, faces, or portraits, usually shown from the top of the head down to the chest, though some showed full figures, some of which referred to either their direct physical or metaphorical selves.

One example, Plate 28, showed portraits not only of the artist himself, but also of other inmates who were in the same prison cell. Portraits of five individuals, each one looking different from the other, were clustered within a square frame, all looking directly at the viewer with attentive eyes. It was noted as well that in the four corners of the frame could be seen drawings of tack-like marks. It would, of course, be impossible to tell if these portraits referred to the inmates in the cells, or to different individuals related to the inmate, such as his family or friends. There was a strong indication that these were portraits of the inmates in the cells as there were marks showing inmate numbers at one side: "5833-95 11/11/95; 5790-95", and with another at the top of the image; "Sesi 95-96", which means "Session 95-96", which

may a humorous school-like reference to a session-batch group. There was also a date underneath the drawing, "26.8.1996", which may suggest when the drawings were done.

The portraits were drawn with similar smiling facial gestures, just like those of people expecting a photograph to be taken, along with a slightly larger portrait outside the frame, which may refer to the inmate who was responsible for drawing the portraits.

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**Plate 28 : "Faces of inmates", refer to Appendix o, PJG Volume 1, page 142, image ref: PJG\_140\_044 c lv11-04, top portion from the composed image of the graffiti, found in Block C, level 1.**

Though little could be told about the story behind this work in Plate 28, it is interesting to look at it as material which recalls the faces of the inmates as a small slice of autobiography. It may also show the relationship of the inmates within the cells to have been a harmonious association with an almost family-like closeness. The loss of physical ties with people and family does put a strain on inmates (Blevins, et al. 2010; Rivera, Cowles and Dorman 2003; Worrall and Morris 2012), and to cope with this meant that the inmates were forced to rely on each other for personal support as a way of adapting (Blevins, et al. 2010, 155). Kimberly Greer



(2000, 445) noted that the reliance and support in women's prisons changed to allow them to cope and became a form of recreation featuring a '*pseudofamily*', where the female inmates started to form relationships with other inmates to compensate for their loss and fulfil a familial role or 'make-believe family' (refer also to Hensley and Tewksbury 2002). Although the circumstances of bringing about such relationships seemed to be frequently considered by the female inmates, it is still an uncharted area of research that would look at such intimacy or close-knit relationships between male inmates (Wulf-Ludden 2013, 117).

Though it would never be known if such hypothetical relationships existed among the Pudu Jail's male inmates in the cells observed in the PJG, it was enticing to question whether such relationships (either platonic or sexual) did exist among them in Pudu Jail, whether they cultivated social adjustments in this way. One has to be wary of such conclusions as the graffiti may not represent an actual reconstruction of the inmates' real-life relationships with one another within the cell, and may just be part of cell humour.

Though the relationship between the inmates seemingly took the form of readjustments to accommodate each other's presence, the cell space is another compartmentalised space that exists within the prison institution, which has a different sense of containment, excluded from the "total" institutional process effect (Berg and DeLisi 2006, 633), where the inmates, in turn, reorganise their own conduct within the cell space. This may reveal a very different inter-relational expectation from that of the regulatory prison administration control; I would lightly term this occurrence: "what happens in the cell remains in the cell".

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Not all portrait graffiti referred just to the inmates themselves or their surroundings; other portraiture graffiti also suggested the relationship of the inmates to the outside world. Some referred to family attachments, a subject which played a strong role and provided motivation

for the inmates' re-entry process into society, which affects the rate of recidivism (see La Vinge, et al. 2005). It would be difficult to assess, either qualitatively or quantitatively, what part family ties played within the Pudu Jail, although it has been briefly mentioned as one of the key ingredients in terms of motivation and moral support for the inmates' rehabilitation process (see Adam, Wan Ahmad and Abdul Fatah 2011; Omar 2001). Some studies indicated, however, that the inmates blamed family issues for making them dysfunctional and as being a factor in their misbehaviour (see Dakir, et al. 2012; Sidhu 2005, 21).

With so many variants of portraiture found in the PJG, it was significant to note the different styles between the drawings made by female or male inmates. While, overall, the graffiti of figures and faces done by the male inmates tended to be much more simplistic with almost child-like qualities using the simplest means to represent a figure, the female inmates, who were located in Block G, had taken their own graffiti in a more detailed and organised direction.

There were very few graffiti found in Block G, either texts or drawings. However, the drawings were more composed and detailed in form and the use of tonal shading and *chiruschuros* helped to emphasise the size and shape of the images drawn.

As shown in Plate 29, a graffiti showing five faces was observed. Faces of four women and a man were clearly drawn except for one which was incomplete. Starting at the right, the face of a woman was drawn with dark heavy lipstick, dark hair in a short bobbed hairstyle, from the top of her head to her bust, with marks indicating her cleavage. Underneath it was written an onomastic name: "Intan Ketat", which may loosely refer to a Malay woman by the name of 'Intan', who presumably possessed provocative body features. Next, to the left, a woman with a similar hairstyle, with her head tilted to the left, was shown with a lighter shade of lipstick. Underneath her head the name "Noran" was written along with a date, "22.7.96" and a statement "SEE YOU KAJANG", which refers with anticipation to a city in the outskirts of Kuala

Lumpur. Next was a male's face, rendered darker with the contours of the face fully portrayed. His neck was unusually long and he was shown wearing a shirt with a tie. No name was present that could refer to this individual, though a signature on his right, "Sandra '96" was noted, presumably the signature of the inmate who drew these illustrations, and the same signature appears across the top of the image in Plate 29.

Next, the face of a woman was featured, adorned with ten hair ornaments, known as the '*cucuk sanggul*', which in the past Malay women who possessed long, luxurious hair would use to hold up their hair in a bun at the back of their heads. These ornaments, typically made of gold or silver, were used as hairpins, normally worn, in different lengths in sets of three, five or seven by brides, or in even numbers, which this figure has, which were worn by traditional Malay dancers. Though serving a practical purpose, these would usually be worn on special occasions such as weddings; a more elaborate version of *cucuk sanggul* would typically adorn the bride.

This lady's hair was tied in a bun shape at the back, with straggly bits of hair across her forehead and at the sides, a stylistic elegance that would strongly suggest the style that a bride would have. Shown in full make-up, with dark lipstick and eye-lashes, her earrings further ornamented her features. Her long neck was adorned with what seemed to be an intricate necklace. Her broad shoulders showed the patterns one would find on a traditional dress, the '*kebaya*'. It was noted at the side that she was referred to as "Yan Seremban", a Malay girl's name, which most likely originated from the afore-mentioned State of Seremban; she would be called by the name of 'Yan', usually a shortened name for Malay women called Marian, Afian, Mariam or similar.

The last of the illustrated faces was observed to be incomplete; the face was lightly outlined with what could be short hair, and showed her neck, a necklace and part of the top of her dress. The eyes and the lips looked as if they had been rubbed out, preventing them from

showing the individual's features. The name 'Seha Sarawak' was inscribed at the side, along with two dates, '28.5.96', and '27.6.96', which may indicate that her stay in the cell, or the prison, had only lasted a month.

It was impossible to know what would have been the relationship between 'Intan Ketat', 'Noran', 'Yan Seremban', 'Seha Sarawak' and the unnamed man. They seemed to differ in their geographic origins, which suggests that the group of individuals did not represent any family relationship but might just be friends, which makes sense as nicknames were used rather than formal names, and the image could have been illustrating a wedding attended by these individuals.

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This may support the suggestion from Greer's (2000) findings about the platonic relationship between the female inmates which was like a kinship between them. Perhaps there are some hints of the platonic relationships which may have occurred in these prison cells, which would be interesting as most of the females' graffiti in the PJG showed more decorative elements; they were adorned with patterns, floral motifs and drawings of intimately decorated figures. This shows that the female inmates' graffiti in Pudu Jail had a different perspective in its approach compared to the male inmates' graffiti. While the male inmates' graffiti appeared more diversified, which could be seen as a major contribution to the variety of graffiti in this study, I believe the greater frequency was because the ratio of male inmates was greater compared with female inmates, and the facilities at the Pudu Jail for male inmates were substantially larger than for female inmates. Perhaps it would be a good idea to look at the female inmates' prison in Kajang which might have its own share of graffiti that could demonstrate different variants from what is exposed here.

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**Plate 30 : "Indian Woman", refer to Appendix o, PJG Volume 1, page 224, image ref: PJG\_222\_052c-lv12-04, graffiti observed in a cell room in Block C, level 2.**

Plate 30 - Depicting an Indian woman lying on her stomach, shown resting on the ground with her head tilted up, facing towards the viewer and with a panther guarding her at the back. This could be a drawing that suggests a similarity to local Hindustan theatricality in movies or TV drama.

This is not to say that every graffiti drawn by male inmates was childish or lacking in detail, as the ones showing the images of Hindu gods were illustrated meticulously (see Plate 20 and Plate 21, page 151 and 152). The same occupant or inmate also applied his skill to other drawing in the same cell depicting a scene which was most likely an idealised image from a local tv drama or movie scene (see Plate 30, "Indian Woman"), and to a further graffiti which showed Malaysian comic magazine characters (Chapter 4, Plate 43, page 278), which were all portrayed with similar rendered features to the original cartoonist publications, with the exception of the dialogues, which the inmates had inserted their own narratives (refer to email correspondence with Prof Dr. Mulyadi Mahmood, 19th January 2014, Appendix p, pp liv-lv). Drawing skills would vary from one person to the next but the illustrations certainly show the

effort and the amount of time spent to finish the graffiti so that it gave the right visual appeal that the inmate wanted.

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In Plate 31, the graffiti depicted a drawing of a girl and a boy. They seemed to be portrayed in school uniform, dressed as those in high school usually were. One could assume that these were made by a juvenile inmate, as the graffiti was found in Block D, which housed the juvenile inmates, and although in the same block as those on Death Row, they would never have mixed as they were held separately. Though there were other scribbles and older graffiti alongside and across this one, a statement at the right-hand side, may indicate a reference to the illustration in the drawing:

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"Sampainya masa Berpacararan  
Terputus di tengah jalanan  
Buat mereka yang Kesepian  
mohon maaf [...]"

The poem was loosely translated as:

"It is time for the date (which refers to the arranged meeting of a couple, a date)  
To be fall apart mid way  
For those lonely souls  
I ask for forgiveness [...illegible...]"

Figure 14 : Translation of small writings observed on the right portion of the image on Plate 31

This drawing referred to a particular scene, or snapshot, showing the inmate and presumably his girlfriend. The regretful poetry at the side appeared to be an uncontrollable element for the inmate who was predicting the end of the relationship, overwhelmed by his incarcerated circumstances leading to him offering a general atonement in words. The couple were shown in their tidy, tucked-in uniforms, standing still with both hands in their pockets, staring at the viewer with blank facial features, which suggested a disconnection between the inmates and the couple in the image.

Disconnection with the outside world was quite a common trait among juvenile inmates/offenders (Lyon, Dennison and Wilson 2000, 42). To investigate further into the PJG's examples of juvenile behavioural traits, taking into account their "unpredictability" and their acts of bullying within the prison, which, in some people's opinion put the adult inmates to shame (conversation with the ex-warden, Tuan Yusoff Deraman, who also had experience during his years of service of supervising the Henry Gurney School for Juvenile Correction) would add a different perspective to this research, but it would be beneficial to look into this phenomenon of problems with Malaysian juvenile-related issues which fuelled their aggression (Fauziah, et al. 2012) that could have been caused by their state of depression (see Nasir, et al. 2010; Raja Mohan and Sorooshian 2013; Lim, et al. 2013). Looking further into this particular area it might be possible to find a link to behaviour that could effect their state of depression in adulthood.



Pudu Jail had its share of juvenile detainees and ran its own courses on rehabilitation and counselling, however, this will have to remain separate from this research process, as the drawings of graffiti from the juvenile wing (Block D, level 1 and 2), were mainly done in a less insecure way, showing less about how they dealt with their grief and underwent the rehabilitation process in a different way, as these offenders would be in their cells for no longer than three months (Scorzelli 1988, 257), compared with the adult inmates who had to go through different prison routines and would most likely have longer prison sentences.

There would be further examples in other types of portraiture, such as magazine cuttings pasted onto the walls, usually showing images of popular local stars (female music artists) taken from local magazines and newspapers (refer to Appendix o, PJG Volume 1, page 212). These images of women would make up their own mixture of information which would yield a different impression of the inmates' sense of yearning. Using part of a collection of popular images, in this case images of female artists, would give a different perspective than those portraits of women that were drawn (in this case the graffiti). While this may demonstrate more of a masculine inclination, with a hint of the locker-room mentality about displaying the inmates' most favourite and desirable idols, this is an interesting aspect on how this representation of Malay women (as noted, in the PJG images of 'Pop Idols' pasted onto the walls of the prison cells were predominantly images of Malay women, in "perky", or "cute" poses, in Malay the adjective to describe it would be "*gedik*") is different from the expected view of them in more modest garments, as would be envisaged for Muslim women in Malaysia. Although it would be more geared towards a discussion of Malaysian women's declarations about liberation of the female body, which is re-building their Malay-Muslim identity, often called '*subversive bricolages*' (Comaroff 1985, cited by Ong 1995, 179), which refers to re-applying the norms of cultural tradition, a subtle protest through wearing different intimidating garments, which teeters on the edge of Muslim religious tolerance.

Going back to the inmates' practice of having these images on the wall returns us to the question about the part played by idolatory, a term that I apply rather loosely, to describe the adoration of celebrities as was seen in the PJG (see also Chia and Yip's (2009) paper on adolescent media consumption of celebrity adulation).

The idea of masculinity as well, gives us a different perspective on these particular images as part of a mechanism to create identity, and in some cases, preserve it, rejecting the anonymity of their being just another inmate in the block by reflecting their favourite popular cultural reference, which in this case is music idols. In part, an assortment of various popular idols, presumably with similar nuances attached to the songs they would be associated with, creates meaning and identity for the inmate who put it up on the walls of the prison cell. (Refer also to Kenneth Pimple's (1986) paper on student dormitory door decoration displaying various visual connections to their own preferred popular culture).



It would be difficult to tell whether these remnants of family-based portraiture came out of the emotions raised by the lack of meaningful relationships and personal attachments, or through angst as a way of portraying external blame for their imprisonment. While the existence of self-portrayal was apparent on the walls of Pudu Jail, as these graffiti acted as a way of mirroring the self, it certainly had its own method of what appeared to be self-reflection, which varied from a depiction of themselves with others (family or lovers), or of other inmates sharing the prison cells.

Some of the graffiti portraits referred to popular cultural references such as musicians (i.e.- "Bob Marley", "Guns and Roses", etc.), and various cartoon strips and magazines in fashion in Malaysia in the early to mid 1990s. Anti-authoritarianism also has its place within the PJG portraiture, as the wardens themselves were often illustrated or mentioned in written texts

(refer to Appendix o, PJG Volume 2, page 188); in this case, such graffiti were found in various cells within the juvenile cell blocks. Though few were observed in the rest of the cell blocks (which were those of adult male inmates and female inmates), the variance from the juvenile depictions of anti-authority was present because of the short-stay within the prison cells and their transgressive behaviour still not being subdued. Although there would be a debate as to whether these were drawn or written in the early stage of their detention or throughout the duration of their stay, this would remain unknown as the process of rehabilitation may or may not affect their judgement because of intervention treatment.

Medlicott (2012, 15) suggested that the nature of the inmates' identity and even their past memories were destined to be either weakened or dispersed altogether because of the strain of what Goffman (1961) called 'total Institution'. Consequently, the inmates would begin to start to take on a new prison "*identity kit*", a term which Wilson (2004, 75) cited from Gee's (1990) paper on the inmates' reaction to coping with and adjusting to the incarceration process. What was seen here, in visual form, were the images of faces from the Pudu Jail, which I refer to particularly as its own snapshots of identities, revealing memories in the form of drawings, a picturesque illustration of the inmates themselves, showing their images of themselves prior to their imprisonment. It acted in a sense, as a way to resist the conditioning of the imprisonment. I believe the nature of these portraits in the prison graffiti within the Pudu Jail served as a simulated experience and the remnants of a state of weakened identity as well as the inmates' memories and complete renewal of themselves. Though it would be arguably difficult to trace this within a drawing as it is, as the images on the walls were just a sliver of all that remained from the prison cells.



## Animal Instincts

In this part of the chapter, I would like to introduce the relationship between the inmate and creatures observed on the walls of Pudu Jail. The attraction to the natural world, particularly the animal kingdom, has its own appeal as a narrative in the form of graffiti which was found on the walls of Pudu Jail. What I observed in the adulation of animals in the PJG, was several categories as follows:

1. Illustrations and drawings of animals which were often connected with a nostalgic way of life and in rural settings.
2. Symbolic animals: two different categories of animals or creatures, one religious in nature, the other representing mythical beliefs.
3. Anthropomorphic creatures; creatures showing animal characteristics with human traits.

These three categories of animals and creatures were illustrated in the PJG, leading to discussion on the inmates' relationship with animals through animal-facilitated prison-based interventions, where inmates carried out social interaction through animal training or their companionship with animals was a part of their correctional education (Deaton 2005).

Colin Jerolmack (2007, 75-6) noted that the relationship between humans and their conduct with animals had led to various methodologies being used to assess behavioural and emotional variables and functions, though Gennifer Furst (2007) reported that the notion of inmates with animals had created a very different perspective and a symbolic relationship with the language of interaction which indirectly affected recidivism and the psychosocial state of participants. However, the Pudu Jail does not appear to have had any programmes in which the inmates had to carry out any form of animal care or feel a sense of companionship to help with

recidivism or their rehabilitation process. Thus we are left with only the inmates' natural memories and what was left of their relationships to animals in various categorical bonds as illustrated on the walls of the prison.

While Jerolmack's (2007) introduction gave a retrospective view of the overall interaction of human-animal bonds, Furst's (2007) paper revealed the necessity of bonding between human (as guardian), or in this case the inmates, and the particular physical animal in his/her care, which contributed to their sense of self-identity in a beneficial way, and identified a symbolic interaction which may suggest that paternal instincts evolved depending on the frequency of their interactions (Furst 2007, 107). Furst (2007, 100) argued that Sanders (1993) described how the interactions between inmates and animals was more of a "primitive" nature, as the inmates were treated in more of a dehumanised manner which on an extreme level denied their status of being human.

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**Plate 32 : "Elephant". Appendix o, PJG Volume 2, page 150, image ref: PJG\_383\_068-D-L2-18. Graffiti retrieved from Block D, level 2**

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**Plate 33 : "Africa". Appendix o, PJG Volume 2, page 92, image ref: PJG\_324\_061-CL3-DL2-15. Graffiti retrieved from Block D level 2.**

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**Plate 34 : "Love birds". Appendix o, PJG Volume 2, page 151, image ref: PJG\_384\_068D-L3-09. Graffiti observed in Block D, level 3**

Domesticated animals, such as dogs or cats, were never found in the PJG. Only images of fishes and birds, as commonly expected domestic creatures, were observed in the PJG. More exotic animals such as elephants, horses, tigers, snakes, and panthers, which were noted in the graffiti collection, would represent something that would be beyond the normal expectation of the domestication of local pets.

In Plate 32:, what was illustrated by means of scratched indentations in the wall was the image of an elephant, which looked similar to illustrations of the Indian elephant. In another graffiti, Plate 33, a map of the continent of Africa was illustrated in which there was a small portion of landscape with a tree and an elephant. A large image of a striped tiger was partially drawn at one side of the map. In another graffiti, Plate 34, was shown a scene illustrating two birds, perching on a branch of a tree, illuminated by the light of the moon.

While the animals drawn were those that would be geographically far away from the local landscape, and were illustrated in exotic scenes with the birds and animals peering out over the landscape, what was noted was the absence of common local pets, such as cats and dogs on the walls of the prison cells. In the case of the graffiti illustrating the birds perched on the tree branch under a bright full moon this might suggest more of an emotional attachment, a symbolic representation of a relationship.

It would be difficult to judge whether this was attachment to animals on a personal relationship basis, as the drawings were too different and abstract to suggest their own narratives. As the inmates' expression of self-identification could be recognised in other variants of the suggested themes in this chapter such as how the inmates coped with the process of 'total institution', as Goffman (1961) put it, the inter-personal relationships with other humans (those on the outside of the prison walls and those within), places, time, and sacred places, were compartmentalised within the 'third space' (A. Wilson 1999; 2004).

However, the lack of graffiti of personal domesticated pets may not prove a lack of personal

attachment to such creatures, but it may suggest that interactions with animals may have produced a different bond and self-identification.

Such stimulation and affection between the inmates and animals may have a different paradigm as the absence of any interaction with actual animals was not part of any rehabilitation programme within the prison system of Pudu Jail. However, the drawings of animals and creatures noted in the PJG were taken as having more of a symbolic presence and meaning which will be observed in the later part of this section of the graffiti, the symbolic creatures.



The depictions of symbolic animals and creatures took two forms, as observed in the PJG. One type related to religious affiliation and the other surfaced from the inmates' beliefs.

The former designs are quite common in the world of craft making in Malaysia. Abdul Halim Nasir (1987), illustrated various examples of Malay carvings as being quintessential to early Islamic teachings, which disguise any elements of flowers, animals or creatures in abstract, geometric, and incomplete designs to avoid showing any forms that could directly illustrate the creation of God in perfect form, which was contradictory to Islamic teaching (A. H. Nasir 1987, 34).

In Plate 35, the graffiti illustrated the shape of a bird, which was stylised with graphical elements from the Qur'anic text "Bismillahirrahman Nirrahim". The scriptural words were highly stylised as lettering and showed ornamented elements as parts of the bird. Next to it the word, "Allahuakhbar", a *Takbīr* or expressive phrase in Arabic, which literally means "God is great", was shown with a similar graphic approach, geometrical and symmetrical in design like the previous text, balancing in the shape of a flask. The lower part of the image showed



floral motifs, similar to those in Malay woodcarvings, which carry the '*awan boyan*' motifs (see illustrated examples in Nasir 1987, 74).

The text at the top of the graffiti, which was done in stencil-like writing, was "ARUDAM FAMILY", and it was unknown as to whom it referred and what its relationship was to the drawings of the animals in the graffiti. Underneath the text were numbers "8814" and "13.11.91", which represented the inmate's number and a date, repeated in the centre of the drawing, which may indicate when the drawing was made. At the top right-hand side of the graffiti was a drawing of a quarter of the sun, which forms a corner of the image's frame. Lines drawn as rays, with web-like lines in between the rays, filled the space.

The inmates had the chance to work and learn from vocational instructors while in prison, and they would regularly employ their acquired techniques to build items on commission<sup>57</sup>. Nasir (1987) described carvings of floral elements in Malay woodcarvings:

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Plate 35 : "ZRUDAM FAMILY". Appendix o, PJG Volume 1, page 192, image ref: PJG\_190\_049c-lvl2-03, graffiti retrieved from cell room in Block C, level 2. Image illustrated the usage of Qur'anic texts which were stylised in the shape of animals.

“The floral elements are suitable for carving as they are easily formed and styled according to the discretion of the carvers”

(A. H. Nasir 1987, 108)

The transfer of Malay carvings onto the walls of the prison cells would be an interesting sight, using as it did, the decorative elements for traditional Malay homes. The entire series of drawings would be too incomplete to even consider it as a fully decorated space as it was based on just a few elements taken from Malay woodcarving, so it was much like any other text or drawing on the walls, existing only partially and incomplete. In this way it would represent a sliver of the self-identity of the inmate who had drawn such graffiti.

How do such relationships shape the flowers and animals and indicate levels of shared tradition and spirituality? Perhaps the best way to understand is to look at the issue of how the abstraction and geometrical application of creatures and the creation of God is prescribed in the Islamic approach to illustrations as Ali (2001) argued:

Islam is centered on Unity, and despite having a concrete meaning, remains an absolute idea that cannot be interpreted, represented or expressed with an image.

(Ali 2001, 10)

Ali (2001) commented further on 'Unity' as a key to understand the elements of pictorial art in order to follow historical and literary works. However, the work seen here is partially influenced towards the concept of identity, which would contribute to the self-identification of the inmate as a Muslim-Malay, a person who had developed not only through the scriptures from the Qur'anic verses being written onto the walls, but also via the geometric structures and the choice of design which inherently belong to traditional Malay carvings.

Whether or not the claim about the two merged elements may have its own discourse on the issue of *aniconism*, the practice of or belief in the avoiding or shunning of images of any human beings or living creatures (refer to Ali's (2001) proceedings and Yilmaz's (2001) dissertation), these notions of the use of Arabic calligraphy are seen as a compensation for the suppression of and prohibition on illustrating any living forms (Yilmaz 2001, 30). Documentation of such

relationships challenges any interaction on the part of those who had failed to see human-animal interaction as anything other than just a mimetic representation, thus in this way leaving any real-life experience of actual reference to any living being (which in this case were the animals and creatures) as no more than just because of aesthetic values and their state of mind.

I am not discounting the value of these decorative elements to the Muslim-Malays or suggesting they lacked any worldly experience in the arts, or in this case, in the prison graffiti of animals and floral graphical designs, as these have their own relevance to more spiritual representations and demonstrate the connection with the inmates' state of mind and their consciences. Other variances had revealed their own characteristics in various other forms, which could be seen in the sections "At the Religious Gates" and "In the Presence of Gods", which demonstrated that the inmates saw their stay within the cells as a transformative experience.

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The symbols of animals and mythical creatures, particularly when they trigger and acquire an effective meaning for their association, would be perceived as a powerful acceptance of the drawn subject (Sleeboom 2002, 299). Margaret Sleeboom's (2002) paper presented the case of using a mythical creature within the context of nation building and her point of view on this matter helps with the interpretation of the symbolism attached to the effectiveness of a powerful creature, which in this case might be a dragon.

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**Plate 36 : "Dragon". Image ref: PJG\_86\_036 b lvl3-16, Appendix o, PJG Volume 1, page 88. Graffiti observed in cell Block B, level 2**

As observed in Plate 36, the dragon may be one of the mythical creatures relevant to Chinese geomancy, a powerful creature which corresponded with the four seasons depicted in the ancient times of Chinese civilisation (Yetts 1912, 14). The single inscription of the Chinese character means "Good Fortune", which is a common greeting for the Chinese even today, and forms an expected goal in any person's life. It may have the meaning of "good money", or luxury or wealth but it may also imply "good family and children" as well (Correspondence with the translator, Yan Preston, 22nd March 2011).

In the texts on the right-hand side of the wall, the first column on the left directly translates as "Hong Shun Tang"; the second line means "Five Lakes and Four Seas", or "Four Corners of the World", and the final line shows the name, "Gao Lao Liang" meaning from the mountain and the sea. The "Hong Shun Tang" is a historically known Chinese Malaysian secret society which

established its presence in Malaysia, as well as in mining towns in San Francisco and Bakerville in Canada (McKeown 2011). More can be read about its origins, with related articles giving a detailed picture of the existence of the Chinese triads and secret societies, in Leon Comber's (2009) publication, "The Triads: Chinese Secret Societies in 1950s Malaya and Singapore" and in the updates from Wee Hing Thong's website<sup>58</sup> on Malaysian gangs. This Chinese Malaysian Triad is considered to be one of the largest secret society groups since the 1950s, and has received its own media attention suggesting that it has had powerful political ties in the country in recent years (Singh and Ng 2013).

Though the influence of this kind of drawing had its own associations with the secret society, the mythical creature, the dragon, had a different meaning than that assumed from a Western dragon design. Sleeboom (2002, 302) noted the specific association of the dragon, which I would agree with in this case of the graffiti shown in Plate 36, that it has its own strong and specific associations of fraternity and loyalty with an emphasis on the hierarchy of power, acting as a proclamation on behalf of the group. The declaration of "Five Lakes and Four Seas", or "Four Corners of the World" was seen as a claim to power, or more likely propaganda which had its own effect of mobilising the ability of the group to maintain or even contain the extent of their power over all, which arguably was an irresistible power of the Hong Shun Tang's group giving it its own reach through this symbol and association with this mythical beast. Though it would be seen as an ideology, this "Unifying" symbol, as Sleeboom (2002) argues, would almost be seen as an attractive and persuasive use of the figure and the associated sentiments for the members of the secret society. Although evidence of the group's authoritative presence may remain challenged for the sake of academic argument, perhaps historical narratives and political studies may further enlighten us about the rationale of the group's existence.

Showing another example of a creature's presence in the PJG, mythical Greek creatures such as Pegasus, Plate 37, had made their way onto the walls of the prison cell. Western views on the iconography of such creatures may be subject to literature adapted for Southeast Asia, in which contemporary viewers of such classical creatures may come to know them through interacting with media such as literature or movies and television shows (Sardar 2000). Ziauddin Sardar (2000) reflected on the traces of Kuala Lumpur's origins and charts the changes experienced by the city and its people, showing a diverse and affluent cultural life. These investigations also make an attempt to understand how creatures were perceived by the inmates' drawings on the walls of Pudu Jail. A common initial judgement would be to emphasise the way that animals or creatures were imagined in prison or became symbols reflecting the cultural context from which they emanated.

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Plate 37 : "I Want to be Free Out of Here". Appendix o, PJG Volume 2, page 95, image ref: PJG\_328\_062-DL2-07, graffiti which illustrated a mythical creature, "Pegasus", observed in Block D level 2

In Plate 37, is the drawing of a Greek mythological creature, Pegasus, which is a horse with the wings of a bird. The horse shown here had a proportionately small head, which was most likely an error in judging the size in proportion to the creature's body. The wings were fully expanded upwards, completely decorated with detailed individual feathers. The landscape below the horse was illustrated in a smaller scale compared with the creature. The scenery of hills and mountain, trees and an elephant was smaller in size as if to show that Pegasus was being seen in flight. The horse was missing a hoof at the end of its left front leg which hadn't been completed by the artist, and a phrase was written across its body stating, "I WANT TO BE FREE, OUT OF HERE".

The story of Pegasus is common within Sinclair Ross's (1938) literature, "A Day with Pegasus", which Karen Bishop noted (1985) with reference to the symbolised meaning this mythical equestrian elegance had through a spirit of imagination.

Each horse becomes a Pegasus, soaring above everyday reality to a light-filled dimension of perfection and beauty. In Greek mythology, Pegasus, the white, winged horse born from the blood of the beheaded Medusa, created the fountain of Hippocrene, which was sacred to the Muses as the source of poetic inspiration.

(Bishop 1985, 69)

The archetypal creature, which Pegasus represents, feeds the imagination, even for a child as Bishop (1985) had noted of Ross's literature. In flights of the imagination Pegasus soars above earthly reality. Taking the dimension of the imagination in combination with everyday reality could channel them into, specifically, a personalised creation and a new awareness or perception of the world. If Pegasus represented the divine and pure for the wondering child, as Bishop (1985) had depicted, what could it do to the inmate sealed in his cocoon of a prison cell?

Wilson (2004, 68) suggested that inmates have the ability to retain a form of personal influence, which in part she explained as prisoners being able to sustain a complex and

temporal illusion in order to bypass the “dead time” (A. Wilson 2004, 85), which was how she described the duration of the inmates’ long-stay within the prison cell that could see them locked up for more than 12 hours at a time. Prisoners immersed themselves in various erratic patterns of their own making, their personal literacy. Perhaps like many other variants of graffiti examined in this chapter, there was an appeal to popular literature, regardless of the origin or whether the source was a foreign influence, which it was in this case of Pegasus. Its purpose seemed to be to elaborate the appeal of escapism, which although childish was an innocent appeal and an honest request to be given freedom from the sufferings of incarceration.

It was interesting to note about the image of a horse in the Malay language, particularly in local proverbs and metaphors related to equine creatures, that, conservatively speaking, they tended to have more negative meanings and associations (Md Rashid, Hajimaming and Muhammad 2012, 35-6). Although the example given here points in a different direction from being the metaphorical expression of Malay traditions, the archetypal association involving this creature has its own virtue and appeal<sup>59</sup>.



The term anthropomorphism originally comes from two Greek words: *anthropos* meaning human and *morphe*, meaning shape or form. This involves projecting characteristics onto non-human forms, particularly assigning the features of humans onto other beings, other living forms, or even non-living forms (Horowitz and Bekoff 2007). This idea is also familiar in a theological context, in which God is conceived as having the features of man, whether these are physical attributes or using transitive verbs such as ““love””, “judge”, “promise”, and “forgive” (Cherbonnier 1962, 187; see also Barrett and Keil 1996). Anthropomorphism is also found in cultural literature that emulates or depicts human behaviour as reminiscent of animal behaviour (Beer 2005; Wang and Dowker 2007).



Gillian Beer (2005) noted the human desire to adopt animal characteristics; usually only in part, not fully, in order to compensate for the dullness of their senses in comparison. Beer (2005) gave examples of dogs, bats, avian creatures and such as a way of empathising with the human inability to cope with their current state, thus having the desire to adapt to or emulate the creatures' abilities. Though this was an interesting comment on this particular matter, the graffiti found in the PJG with regard to this does raise a few questions about how much value was put on the human self, physically, for the inmates to dwell on?

In a spiritual sense, Braginsky (1993) noted that there were religious references to the spirit of man being seen as an abstraction and a metaphorical analogy. Although it was difficult to find meaning in the anthropomorphic representation and deduction in his writing, it contributed to this particular idea as being part of a coordination of humans' own carnal desire, which corresponded with the experience and desires expressed in the literature that the reader (or in this case, the inmate) subscribed to. Though I do not agree with many of the pseudo-analogies in this particular article, I cannot deny the expectation that other spiritual elements might have had a hand in forming the thoughts which the inmates of Pudu Jail might bring into the cells.

In the conversation I had with a previous warden of Pudu Jail, Tuan Yusoff Deraman, he mentioned that during the 'wash-up', the inmates would be stripped naked and hosed down prior to entering the prison complex. He said that the water used to wash the inmates had earlier been 'blessed' with Qur'anic incantations, something which was usually done by the prison's *imam*. I cannot fully verify this information, as I am quite sceptical about such practice. However, the warden had mentioned that they had to be sure to do this as some of the inmates might have been "*berisi di dada*", by which he meant that the inmates may have had evil and familiar spirits attached to them, or have some form of shamanic practices which they carried inside them, which could bring harm to others or inflict misfortune on them while imprisoned.

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Plate 38 : "Snake Man". Appendix o, PJG Volume 2, page 85, image ref: PJG\_318\_061\_CL3-DL2-02. Graffiti retrieved from Block D, level 2

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Plate 39 : "*Langsuir* and Man riding a tiger". Appendix o, PJG Volume 1, page 196, image ref: PJG\_194\_049c-lvl2-11. Graffiti retrieved from Block C, level 2

In Plate 38, the graffiti showed a man's head, with shoulder length hair and the body of a snake. Alongside another drawing of a man, they both had a similar blank gaze directed towards the viewer. On the lower part of the graffiti was a drawing of a coconut tree, with a naked woman in a risqué pose standing with her right leg bent up onto the seat of a chair. Notes were scrawled which pointed to her private parts and stated “Kangkang Kayai”. The word “kangkang” is a Malay word describing the action of spreading the legs, usually done by squatting - although it may also refer to the colourful Filipino verb for the act of fornication. The second word, “Kayai” is unknown at this point, suggesting it may be a name or a reference to a person, or a street phrase.

In Plate 39, the graffiti at the top right-hand side depicted a man, wearing a t-shirt and striped shorts, riding what seemed to be a panther or an unfinished drawing of a tiger which had the rider's leash around its neck. The drawing at the bottom on the left showed a bird perching on a tree. The drawings next to it illustrated what may have been a temple for worshipping or a Buddhist grave marker, which are usually found in the northern part of the Malaysian peninsula or the southern parts of Thailand. A path had been drawn to another scene, which showed a mask, similar to the *Thai Khon Mask*, or 'demon mask' which originated in Thailand. The drawing next to it depicted the profile of a woman's head without a body. The trail led to her head, having started from the landscape scene behind, then led to the a graveyard in full moonlight from a dark sky. The bodiless woman may refer to *Langsuir*, a local vampire-like ghost which arrived as a result of death in childbirth or through the shock of bearing a stillborn baby (Nicholas 2004, 227).

Richard Winsteadt (1951), published significant studies on the evolution of Malay magic in *Shaman Saiva and Sufi: A Study of the Evolution of Malay Magic* based on his earlier publication in 1925, which sought to unravel this highly complex system based on historical and comparative data (Bastin 2001, 254). Winsteadt had written that the local Malays in the

past – and even in the present – do deal with such practices by choice, based on centuries of improvisation of Hinduism, Muslim beliefs and reconstructed prehistoric paganism (Winsteadt 1951, 4). Winsteadt's (1951, 19) notes on the Malay's attachment to such practices usually referred to two important elements of the practice, which are "*semangat*" (vitality), and "*keramat*" (natural objects, people, places and creatures referred to as 'sacred'). The practice of Malay magic was also reported in an earlier publication by Sir Frank Athelstane Swettenham, the first Resident General of the Federated Malay States from 1 July 1896 to 1901, which was entitled "Malay Sketches" (1900, pp.192-210).

Both accounts of the origin of Malay magic claimed it to be a syncretic practice combining Hinduism, Malay Animistic and Islamic practices (Winsteadt 1951) sometime in the past, long forgotten in history, its origin impossible to trace. Winsteadt (1951) had claimed that such practices could still be found, though in a diminished state as Islamic laws had prohibited its practice so that followers had become recluses, hidden in the rural shadows. Ariel Glucklich (1997, 17), argued that, since the last century, magic and its theatricality had been exposed, using mundane science and scepticism, observing it all with objectivity, leaving only a few sympathisers and the placebo effect of a natural common expectation that the magic would work for those who decided to believe in it.

The stories and their mystical effects do come to light whenever there is a case of metamorphosis, of a man turning into a beast, which was common in the region. Some told of a man turning, through shamanism, into a tiger, known as the *were-tiger* (see Boomgard 2001, pp.186-206; Swettenham 1895, 200; Winsteadt 1951, 57-8; Skeat 1900). Such belief and a lack of visual evidence of such an occurrence could only remain as a fable, which could not be proved other than through appreciation of folklore. Swettenham (1900) corresponded with a Malay Sultanate's adviser about this matter, among other things, and was told that the dealing

and practising of *sihir* or shamanic practices was contradictory to devout Muslim beliefs and would be considered as a grievous sin (Swettenham 1895, 209-210).

This particular part of this thesis will not delve into the deep association of magic and mysteries in the shamanic practices of the Malay, which may, or may not, have existed behind the cell doors. Literature about dark spiritual practices always intrigues people, providing incriminating evidence that was difficult to prove, especially if some form of criminality was involved in some way (influenced by black magic, "*sihir*", or otherwise), which was also difficult to prove and there was no specific provision for accepting this kind of thing as evidence (Ahmad, Abdul Aziz and Jasni n.d.). Since the late 1980s as well, Islamic leaders had begun to raise objections and declare these pagan-animistic practices to be detrimental to Malaysian Islamic teaching and values (paraphrasing Nicholas 2009, 47 on Kasimin 1997).

I wanted to elaborate a little at this point as an observer of the animal-associated graffiti, particularly concerning the matter of anthropomorphism and its link to the world of the unknown, particularly those who may subscribe to spiritual mediums and the portrayal of shamanistic practices. These contrived to make statements about their religious values, even though their religious values themselves were in conflict with the syncretic beliefs of the Malays. There is a paradoxical and constant negotiation to provide objectivity, a practice to which Nicholas's (2004; 2009) work provided a competent approach to this form of folk analysis.

Finally, there is the question of belief as an incentive for completing this part of the thesis. Putting aside the basic objective of observing any possible relevance to culture, particularly that of the Malays, this form of graffiti is surrounded by the culture from which it is derived. The drawings on the walls are seen as a way of relieving the affliction and suffering of isolation which prison imposes on a person, but the basis of credence about them is likely to alter in the event of unnatural circumstances, which, in this case, would be their ability to reflect Malay

magic. The inmates might have believed in spirits but this could not be proved without their presence, in this instance, to verify this claim. If you take away the inmates' belief in an extra-human dimension, however, this may rob the graffiti in the PJG of much of its vivid quality.

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### **Suffering is the word**

Graffiti in the form of text is the second largest section next to portraiture. The coverage may be wide and shared at various points with religious texts, calendars, dates, names, and places; it contained a mosaic of beliefs, hopes, fears, confessions and insights gleaned from what could perhaps be called slices of conversation from within the cells of Pudu Jail itself. As these were written narratives, where the subject matter is usually much easier to deduce, the nuances and the dialogues within the PJG were seen to be a more penitent and consistent form of relaying information.

For example, it was noted earlier in this chapter on Figure 4: "Ilmu Kesabaran" (The Knowledge of Patience), page 110, which could also be translated as 'the Virtues of Patience', formed an expression of thoughts and advice given to another inmate as a written 'scripture' on the walls of the prison cells. In this context, ironically, it hinted at unspoken rules about inmates' conduct, which the newer inmates were 'advised' to adhere to; a way of reminding another to think about their fate and the daily routines, they would need to follow. This form of 'elder' advice would enable reflection, which needs no further explanation if the advice were not heeded, as it would suggest the consequences of not adhering to this advice would be that the inmates would face a hard time from the wardens' treatment or even from other inmates as well.

Not all writings in the PJG pointed out how the inmates should conduct themselves, as Figure 15 shows; some were different and purposely written more as a reflection, which suggested

that the answers to his enquiries would be revealed to the inmate pondering them, should he choose to answer these questions.

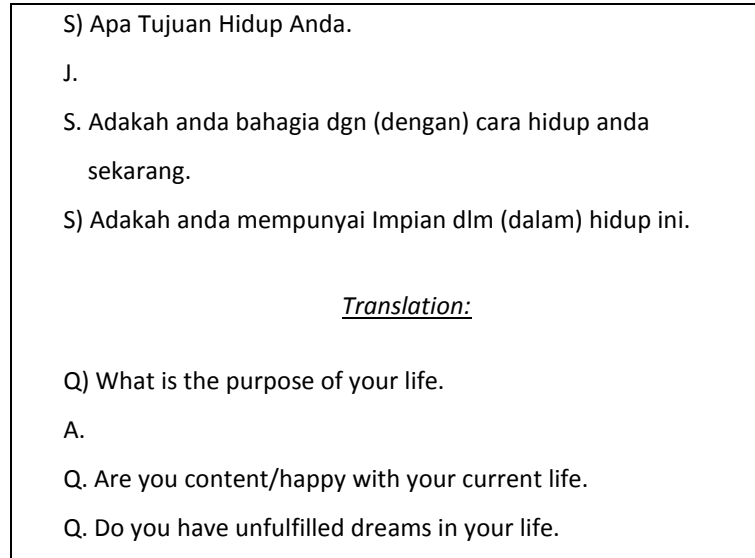


Figure 15 : "What is the purpose of your life", transcribed and translated from cell room in Block B, level 3, refer to Appendix o, PJG Volume 1, page 87, image ref: PJG\_85\_036 b lvl3-15.

This variety of wall-writing that was expressed here might signify nothing more than inmates attempting to tell other inmates what they thought they should hear. The concerns of other inmates, from one to the next, cannot be fully comprehended from a few sentences on the walls of the cells, however, this form of writing showed a much clearer intention on the part of these writers to initiate and advise other inmates to think of their stay in prison as a time of redemption. It would not be known if these kind of questions were asked verbally during their (the inmates) time together; I would doubt it, though it's not improbable, as these questions were very direct and almost antagonistic.

Malay culture is richly verbal, with a large stock of sayings (*peribahasa*), short evocative verses (*pantun*), and narrative poems (*syair*). The importance of speech (*bahasa*) to proper conduct is attested by the fact that *bahasa* has a secondary meaning of 'courtesy, manners'. For instance, the collocation *tahu bahasa* (lit. 'know speech') is explained by Hussain (1990: 26f.) as *sopan santun* 'well mannered'. Other similar expressions are *melanggar bahasa* (lit. 'attack speech') 'breach etiquette' and *kurang bahasa* (lit. 'less/under-speech') 'ill-mannered'.

(Goddard, Cultural values and 'cultural scripts' of Malay (Bahasa Melayu) 1997, 186)

The Malays are known to be polite, which came about through the introduction of courtesy, 'adab' (Halstead 2007, 285; refer also to Goddard 1996), where they would avoid any sort of confrontation if possible. This also had an effect on their way of talking, mannerisms and language, which showed the same kind of approach (Goddard 1997, 184). Politeness, in this sense, is something that the Malays will maintain consistently through their sense of pride and self-esteem even by consensus in an entire community (Goddard 1996, 432). This indicated that other inmates would try, as could be seen indirectly in the PJG, to instil 'adab' into other inmates as well, to emphasise that the predicament of direct confrontation, face-to-face, would be considered as 'humiliating' or 'deriding' others. Thus, it could be said that the walls became the medium for relaying advice, or for carrying on indirect dialogues between the inmates.

Some of the written graffiti was not just one-sided or aimed specifically at another; these kinds of text spoke more of a shared grief and an attempt at consoling one another, as seen in Figure 16:

Untuk Temanku....  
Kita Dilahirkan oleh Takdir  
Sesama Yang Terjadi... Nasib kita Ini... Kita Serupa...  
Oleh Demikian Terpaksalah Bersabar Wahai Temanku...  
Kelak!! Pastinya Kita Dibabaskan (sic) jua..  
Menemui Apa Yang Terpendam Dijiwa Kita...  
Tapi.. Teman Fikirlah Apa Yang Dilakukan?!!  
[image of hangman's noose] Ia Menunggu Anda?!.. Atau Hindari Dari Itu Okey....

Puisi Kepada Mu...  
Wahai Burung Didalam Sangkar.  
Janganlah Bersedih Atau Beduka (sic)  
Apakah Daya Ini Sudah Nasib Bala Mu...  
Pintu Sangkar Belum Dibuka.  
Lebih Baik Dirimu Bertaubat.  
Sembahyanglah Kamu Sebelum Disuruh...

Nukilan  
Dari Yang Berjiwa Suci  
Mie 95  
Nenas Boy Phg D. Makmur.



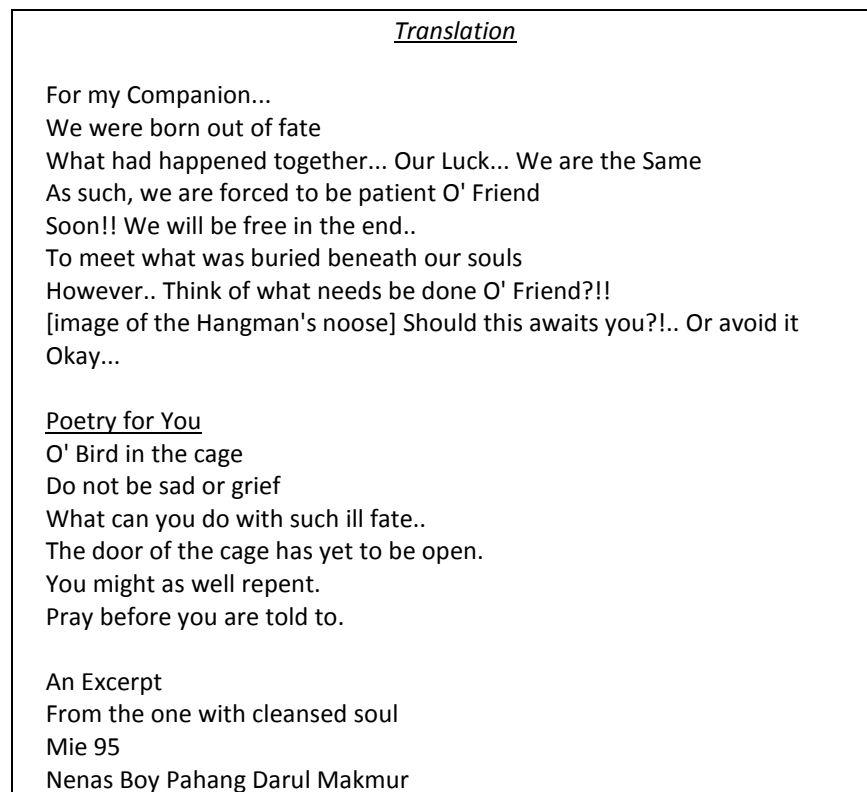


Figure 16 : "Untuk Temanku", Poetry. Graffiti observed from cell room from Block C, level 1, refer to Appendix o, PJG Volume 1, page 124, image ref: PJG\_122\_042c-01

What emerged between the walls of the prison cell was not only a form of indirect counselling, but was also a series of humorous accounts which were used in a way to defy authority, which can be seen in Figure 17:

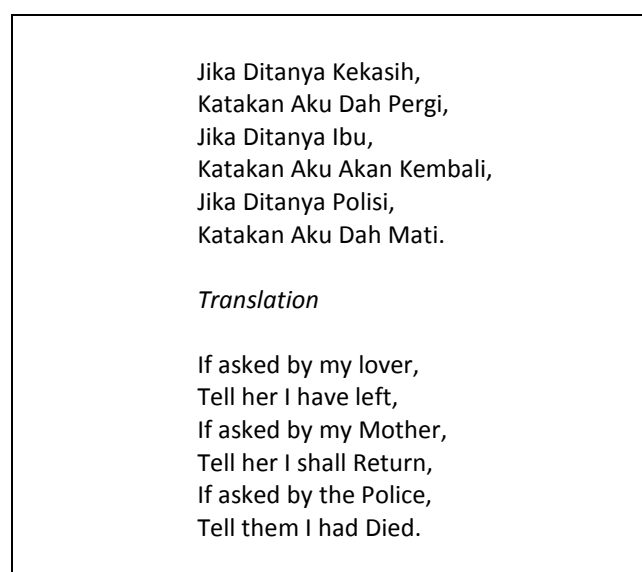


Figure 17 : "If Asked", Poetry, transcribed and translated from image ref: 200504-036 B lvi3-01-268. Graffiti observed from cell room in Block B, level 3.

The use of *Pantun*, a form of traditional Malay poetry, are commonly made up of four-line stanzas or quatrains, was common in most Malay texts in the PJG. Figure 17, showed a description of self-pity and how imprisonment had shut the writer away physically from his loved ones, yet he remained selective about to whom he would return.

It was noted in relation to the family, that often the words referred to the inmates' sense of how they had failed their parents' expectations; they had written of their shame and illustrated their failure and acknowledged that being in prison must be a continuing disappointment which they could perceive was what their parents must have felt. Thus the withdrawal of the inmate's physical presence had affected their self-esteem as they began to narrate their plight, which suggested that they had responsibilities in their role as a son caring for his parents, which had now ceased due to his imprisonment:

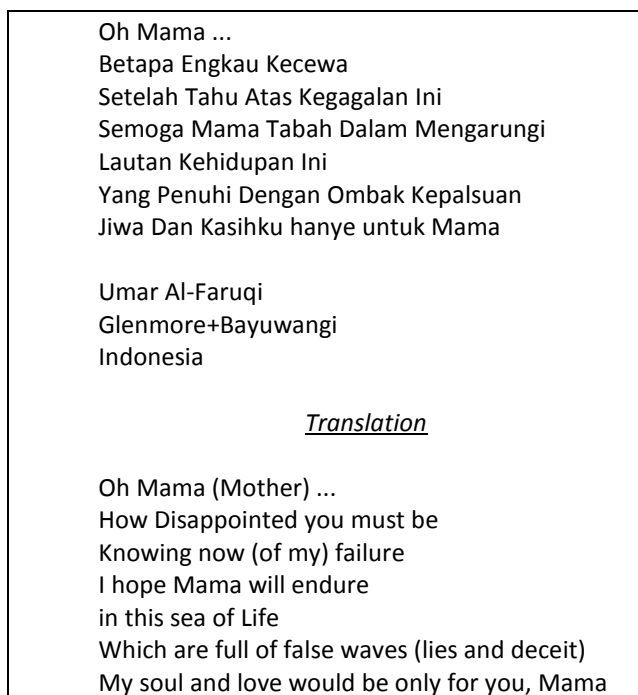


Figure 18 : "Oh Mama", Poem transcribed and translated from Appendix o, PJG Volume 1, page 121, image ref: PJG\_119\_041 c lvl1-11.

Shame, pride and self-esteem seemed to be a major influence on the inmates' personal conduct, and their accumulated hypersensitivity to their sense of '*malu*', shame, would combine with another feeling, which would be '*marah*', a response of hostility and feeling resentful (Goddard 1996, 437). Goddard (1996) noted the Malays reserve and their reluctance to reveal their frustrations openly:

"...a link between the normal Malay reluctance to openly express resentment or hostility and its pathological release in amuk. In any case, it is uncontested that ideally the feeling of marah should be highly controlled in expression."

(Goddard, The "Social Emotions" of Malays (Bahasa Melayu) 1996, 437)

*Amuk*, or amok is a description of an extreme kind of killing frenzy (Goddard 1996, 437; Swettenham 1895, 38), prompted by a different stimulus which could not be conveyed in writing, but would be expressed through the action of rampage and merciless killings. The Malays had their reserve and made it rather personal, more akin to being 'offended', rather than being 'angry' (Goddard 1996, 438). Thus, in the PJG, some of the inmates resorted to using taboo words, though these would be more likely to be spoken between the inmates rather than written on the walls where they could be seen by the wardens, or some other inmates could take offence at the sight of them. As can be seen in Plate 40, there were explicit, gender-oriented obscenities, which were written as the inmates attempted to vent out their frustrations by means of derogatory language about the person they were referring to, which, in the PJG, was usually the prison administration or the wardens themselves.

Figure (Text/Chart/Diagram/Image etc.) has been removed due to Copyright Restrictions

Please refer to the author for more details.

Plate 40 : "Penjara Puki", graffiti noted from cell room in Block C, level 3, image ref: 058c-lvl3-18

The word '*puki*' has the same meaning of a women's front private parts in the Malay, Indonesian and Austronesian languages and also in Tagalog. To refer to the Prison (in this case, the Pudu Jail) as a cunt, would be misleading. It would be semantically closer to the phrase 'Fuck this Prison' rather than a direct translation of 'This is a cunt prison', as the latter phrase might have a different meaning than the one intended by the inmate.

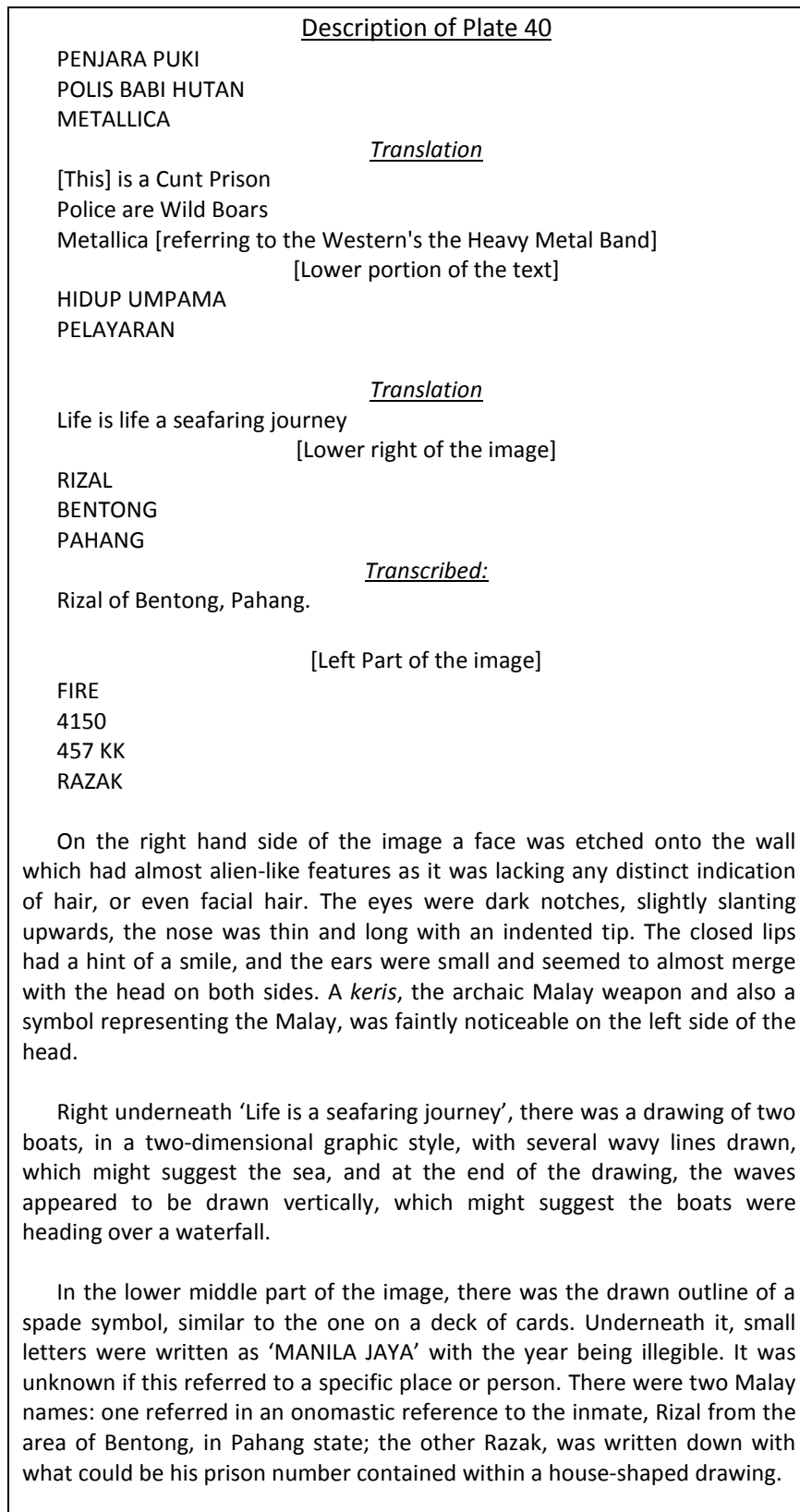


Figure 19 : Description of Plate 40

The two short phrases, one of which referred to the prison and the other to the Police force, in the same derogatory tones as if referring to a wild boar, represented an outburst of hostile words, with the characteristics of resentment. There is a lingering feeling of brooding about these phrases. Such writing and the use of taboo words suggested a demonstration of masculinity, without any intention of sexual aggression, but rather just a generally rebellious tone.

The *keris*<sup>60</sup> was usually used as a symbolic representation for the Malays at their formal functions such as wedding ceremonies, Malay royal events and also in shamanistic rituals. The faded drawing showed an unsheathed *keris*, pointing upwards, which might have suggested ill will and a thirst for blood (Frey 2010, 11). The physical representation of the *keris* differs from one type to the next, and the use of it at certain events or social gatherings would also reflect the context of the user's intention as well (Ahmad and Hasan 2011, 36). Even the drawing of the unsheathed *keris*, or the *kris*, had its place as a symbol of the Malays' sovereignty in local flags and logos, and did not represent any suggestion of violence.

There was no link and it was impossible to associate any hypothetical consideration as to whether the drawings of the *keris* had anything to do with the obscene writing placed directly next to it, as this would have suggested some kind of provocation by the inmates towards the authorities who might have been looking for ways to make enemies of the specifically Malay-centric inmates.



Not all words were unpleasant, cynical criticism of others, chauvinistic or anti-authority. Some inmates had also written metaphorical poetry onto the walls in which they were shown to be a protagonist in an inescapable situation. In general the text-based graffiti in the Malay language used songs, lyrics from popular songs, and personal poetry; there was one of the graffiti in

Chinese, which was found in the condemned cells, as seen in Plate 41 and Plate 42, and translated in Figure 20 and Figure 21, in which this particular inmate had used symbolic representations of animals, scenery, journeys and subtle nuances with similar semantics such as dangerous situations and difficult elements in his environment, which attempted to reflect an empathetic journey which he had faced, and felt, within the prison cell.

Figure (Text/Chart/Diagram/Image etc.) has been removed due to Copyright Restrictions

Please refer to the author for more details.

Plate 41 : "A Lonely Swan Goose", refer to Figure 10, part VIII

**Chinese Transcribed:**

**孤雁**

骤响的枪声已惊破沉静，长空里几声雁哀鸣。  
小小孤雁，流浪与哀鸣。只剩孤影，路难认。  
心里害怕芦苇的深处，再起杀禽声。不想多望，人面太狰狞。  
收拾痛楚，路重认。凡里唤叫，彼此不可听，当初那些共鸣。  
瑟瑟秋风，吹得更想，寒风冷而劲。震翅再飞，快快上路。  
离开这里的苦境，河边遍地有伏兵。  
小小孤雁，流浪飘零。忍着痛苦，路重拾，心里害怕。  
仍要挣扎求存，做千里长征。不想旧望，前路安宁。  
饱受痛苦，胆战心惊。虽已疲倦，仍要飞越重洋。  
尽管秋风再劲，恳请西风，帮它去冲，陪它去逃命。  
振翅远飞，探索前程，行踪纵然不定。  
愿赶上当初那雁影，让它再享昔日温情。

Transcribed by Preston (2014)

**Translation:**

A Lonely Swan Goose

A sudden gunshot breaks the silence; a swan goose's cries come from the vast sky.

A lonely, little swan goose, homeless and crying. With itself, it is difficult to find a direction.

Worried about the sound of killing, again from the dense reeds. Unable to bear the thought of how ferocious humans can be.

Hiding the pain, looking for the path again. No friend can hear its calling, despite their singing together long time ago.

The cold autumn wind, loud and noisy. Clapping its wings, the little swan goose hurries to fly again.

It wants to leave the suffering here. There are ambushes everywhere on the river bank.

The lonely, little swan goose, homeless and crying. Bearing the pain, it takes off again, scared and worried.

Terrified and exhausted, it is still determined to fly over the ocean.

The fierce autumn wind, please, please accompany the little swan goose, help it to fly to safety.

Clapping its wings and flying far, far away. Searching for the path forward, despite the huge uncertainty.

Hoping to catch up with the shadow of the swan goose from the old times, and to enjoy the tender love from the old times.

(Preston 2014)

**Figure 20 : Translation of "A Lonely Swan Goose" by Yan Preston (2014), refer to Plate 41**

The swan goose, which features strongly in China's art and also in its poetry, represented male energy, or *Yang*<sup>61</sup> (Armstrong 1944, 58). It was known that the swan goose regularly migrated from China in the autumn when the country sinks towards the cold winter. The swan goose is often associated with departures, homesickness, loneliness and journeys within Chinese culture (Preston 2014). Numerous Chinese poems have featured the swan goose<sup>62</sup>, often with a melancholy tone.

It is not surprising that the poet, who is also a condemned inmate, as this poem was observed in the death row cell block (cell room 4, Block D), had chosen to use the swan goose as a metaphorical character, in this sad, yet hopeful poem. The poem told of the hardship, of having to face challenging elements and the risk of being hunted down as well. The use of such metaphors of a delicate creature being vulnerable, in a risky place, suggested that the poet



had his share of the unknown fear of death that was inevitable. At the end of the lines, he wrote of his determination to stay positive despite the circumstances, to somehow face death. The ocean and path in the poem can mean the other world after death.

The indication is that the person (the little swan goose) had been hunted down, and there were perhaps many more of them who suffered from the same fate. For example, he wrote about the 'killing in the reeds', and the 'ambush along the river'. Also, he mentioned that they used to 'sing together', which indicated that more had faced a similar fate, which had ended in an earlier death witnessed by him.

The 'shadow of the swan goose' could point in two directions: it could either be described as a former lover, or it could simply be the poet himself. Either way, it indicates that he had a better life before (prior to his imprisonment and death sentence), and he was hoping to reunite with that experience through his death.



In Plate 42, the same poet/condemned inmate had written a different narrative in between Christian hymns, which was a more direct and personal reflection:

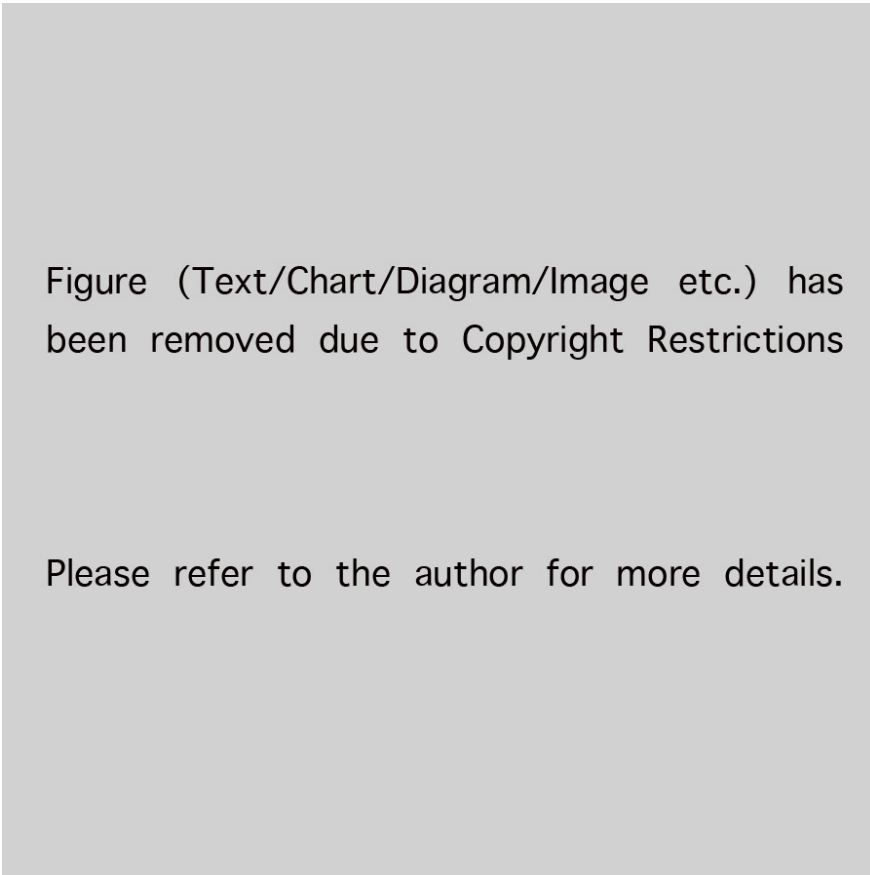


Plate 42 : "Who Understands Me", refer to Figure 10, part XIV

**Chinese Transcribed:**

誰能明白我  
昂然踩着前路去，追趕理想應途上。  
前途步步懷自信，風吹雨打不退讓。  
無論我去到那方，心裡夢想不變樣。  
是新生，是醒覺，夢想永遠在世上。  
前途哪怕遠只要自強，我計劃獨自尋路向。  
常為以往夢想發狂，耐心摸索路途上。  
懷自信我永不怕夜航，到困倦我自彈自唱。  
掌聲我想夢裡聽聲，儘管一切是狂想。  
途人路上回望我，只因我的怪模樣。  
途人誰能明白我，今天眼睛多雪亮。  
人是各有各理想，奔向目標不退讓。  
用歌聲，用微笑，求得知音的欣賞。

怀自信，我永不怕夜航，到困倦我自弹自唱。  
掌声我想梦里听寻，尽管一切是狂想。  
昂然踏着前途去，追赶理想旅途上。  
前途步步怀自信，依然心中那正确方向。  
怀着爱与恕的心，充满梦想的笑匠。  
用歌声，用微笑，来寻知音的欣赏。

Transcribed by Preston (2014)

**Translation:**

Who understands me

Proudly I follow the path forward, on the journey to chase my dream.  
With every step I have confidence, I shall not shy away from the wind or the rain.  
It doesn't matter where I go, the dream in my heart will never change.  
Is it a new life, or did I just wake up? I dream about living in the world forever.  
The path forward is long, but I will stay strong. I plan to find the direction on my own.  
Often, my old dreams drive me crazy. Now I am patiently searching for them.  
With confidence, I am not scared by sailing at night. When tired, I play music and sing a song.  
In dreams I hear the applause, although it is only my mad imagination.  
The passerbys look back at me, for my weird appearance.  
Which passerby can understand me, for my eyes are as bright as the snow today.  
Everybody has his own dreams, we run to it without hesitation.  
With my song, with my smile, I look for empathy from a real friend.

With confidence, I am not scared by sailing at night. When tired, I play music and sing a song.  
In dreams I hear the applause, although it is only my mad imagination.  
Proudly I follow the path forward, on the journey to chase my dream.  
With every step I have confidence, I still follow the right direction in my heart.  
With love and forgiveness, laughter fills my dreams.  
With my song, with my smile, I look for empathy from a real friend.

Translated by Preston (2014)

**Figure 21 : "Who understands me", transcribed and translated on Plate 42**

Most of this poem is fairly straightforward; there isn't a metaphor such as 'the lonely swan goose' as in the previous example. The writer/inmate seems to be full of positive spirit on his search for his dreams, which he had previously dismissed and disregarded. He seeks the old dreams as they had given him strength, despite the fact that he was often misunderstood as being a misfit. Chasing dreams, perhaps dreaming of an old dream, seemed to be the narrative of this poem.

The general content of this text was void of any specific reference to place, time, or objects, which prevented any indication of the inmate's background or his origin. What was evident was the language used, which was Chinese, and how it was written.

Several of the lines within this poem were repeated, followed by stanzas, which re-enforced the importance of the inmate's epitome of self-acceptance and reminiscence of his past. In each line he expresses the flaws, which he may have, and the imperfections that are deemed abnormal by others, yet he perceived himself identifying the painful search for the 'dream' as being a move to empower his self-identification. At the end of both stanzas, the theme of 'seeking empathy' in a real friend was the underlined objective; the poet had disguised his fears by acting the muse through songs and smiles in order to find out who would have felt for his plight, for seeking attention and a sense of place.

Similar to the previous poem, the accurate meaning and intention of the writer could not be ascertained any further than what was written. What could be suggested at this point would be to look for other indications in the text surrounding this graffiti, which contained elements of religious text, and these types of narratives might be able to provide visual clues. Though at this particular point, the ideal way to understand these narratives would be to gain access to the inmate himself, which would be difficult as he was unknown to me at this point and because of his circumstances he would already have gone, due to the nature of the cell space being occupied only by those who were to be executed by the noose.



Both of these plates were written in traditional Chinese characters, *Fan Ti Zi* (繁体字), a traditional structure of some Chinese characters that typically have more strokes than the simplified versions (Preston 2014). Yan Preston (2014), through email correspondence, had indicated that this poet was either ethnically Chinese but not born in China, or it indicates that

the poet was educated before the Chinese liberation in 1949, as simplicity in Chinese writing was introduced after this date. This would be an important fact, as the rest of the graffiti text around this Chinese text not only suggested the level of education the inmate might have, but also the origin of the inmate as well, which was in this case China.

Though, what might have made it complicated would be the rest of the texts surrounding the Chinese poem and narratives. The Christian hymns observed in Plate 23, page 156, suggested that they came from an American folkloric source. And the written text from various Christian books had raised questions as to whether the condemned inmate had personal experience abroad in terms of religious studies or whether it had been taught to him, or he taught himself while being in prison as religious materials were allowed. It would be possible as well that religious texts were being taught by means of consultations with religious volunteers, as their visits were common in most Malaysian prisons.

The choruses and lyrics of the Christian hymns had lines missing and some were incomplete (refer to Figure 10 : Transcribed of the texts surrounding the cross, "Salvation", from Plate 23), which would suggest that these graffiti were written based on personal memories, which would have their share of flaws or mistakes if compared to the original sources.

This would become an interesting part of the observation in the PJG, as overall the graffiti in the PJG seemed to be dominated by various drawings and texts which referred to sources from the surrounding region. This particular graffiti, however, suggested that the inmate was Chinese-educated from Mainland China, who had also had experience of Christian culture which was Americanised. This is not to say this particular graffiti was an anomaly and did not fit into the PJG report, as it would be naive to exclude the probability of other cultures which would include variations other than what would be expected locally, as other graffiti in the PJG had shown texts done by inmates who were literate in Iranian, Spanish, Bengali and other languages.

What it is important to note here would be the type of narrative which could be observed on the walls, as these examples had shown different but legitimate narratives which takes us beyond the discussion about which race does what kind of graffiti.



In summarising the text-based graffiti, this particular section of the chapter has observed the types of narrative formats in the PJG, which showed similar characteristics in their construction of words and their intentions.

As the text and narratives of the PJG were done in languages, which could be understood by other readers (i.e. other cell mates) of a similar literary background, it would suggest that these were done with the intention that these writings would remain in full view of others and be read by them as well. This would suggest that the writings were done with forethought and had engaged with readers (other inmates). Thus they directly, or indirectly engaged others in visual dialogue. These could be in the form of advice, consoling words, or even consultation on various ways of conducting themselves within the prison. Consequently, the particular topics of these narratives were usually shared popular cultural references to music and songs, and open letters of longing to loved ones and regret expressed to their families for their wrongdoings.

As the writing predominantly received no response in the form of a continuing dialogue, they were left as one-sided queries. As to instigate or to pass judgement on other inmates, verbally, would seem to be confrontational behaviour, the use of writing would suggest this was a sensible medium for relaying such messages without the need to actually verbalise the words. This was understood as one of the norms of cultural restraint and the inclinations of the locals as they preferred to be subtle and would rather avoid face-to-face confrontation. Though it could not be known what were the exact forms of conversation between the inmates of Pudu

Jail, the words on the walls seemed to play their part in relaying thoughts, not only for themselves but also those of others as well. Indirectly, these could be seen as a mesh of the dialogues, which may have happened within the prison cells, though it would require further evidence and exact details on the types of inmates needed to choose such topics.

Avoiding confrontation may have been the motivation in order to survive prison life, though it would not have spared the inmates from their resentment of the prison authorities. The actions and speech of a resentful attitude on the part of the inmates would surely be noted by the wardens or other better-adjusted inmates, which might put a strain on the experience of the inmate responsible. Thus, obscene words, profanities, and euphemisms had their share of space on the walls of Pudu Jail. The walls would have then become the means of relaying messages, which would grant a certain degree of anonymity to the writer, though it might not be necessary to look too far because of the small number of inmates living within the shared cell space, making the quantity of such writings few and far apart.

Not all writings would reflect entirely the background of the inmates. It would be expected that the Malay inmates would be able to write in the Malay language and its dialects, English, and Arabic (of those literate in Islamic religious studies); the Chinese inmates would be able to write in English, Chinese and Malay; the Indian inmates as well could write in Malay, English and Hindi; and inmates of other nationalities and races would write in their own languages as well. This demonstrates that the graffiti which was observed in the PJG carried its own expectations of the languages used by inmates who had a particular literacy with which they would feel comfortable engaging in their act of writing on the walls.

So it could be suggested at this particular point that the inmates of Pudu Jail would consider writing in their familiar native language as a means to engage with other inmates, as these texts possessed qualities which might have demonstrated a subconscious decision that the messages written would be appreciated by other inmates of a similar background. For

example, the most common locals, the Malays, are usually able to write in two or three languages (Malay, English, and Arabic) depending on the level of their education. As observed in the PJG, the examples suggested that the Malay inmates engaged in personal dialogues, poetry, local songs, letters and reflections in their native language; their use of English would be much more limited, used to illustrate their familiarity with popular Western songs and short statements. The use of Arabic texts by them was usually exclusively taken from the religious texts of the Qur'an.

At this particular point, this observation would not exclude the probability that inmates of other nationalities were writing texts which were foreign to them, though what would be suggested here is that the inmates probably used their native language so as to communicate indirectly with other inmates and this could be considered as a tool to provide a stimulus to engender a sense of kinship among themselves.



### **Luxuries in the mind**

There are other types of images in the graffiti existing in other illustrated forms, represented in the shape of symbols, local manufacturers' brands, vehicles, tableware, cigarettes, and other daily items. I mentioned in my previous review of literature in Chapter 2 that the prison inmates of Pudu Jail had depicted objects that were familiar and had considerable value to them.

The values represented in icons and visual depictions of objects would represent a much less significant means of temporal regression for the inmates to retreat into a world of fantasies. This would seem to be the case if these were compared to the rest of the other types of graffiti which largely represented significant points in their lives, from relationships with their families and lovers, to places of longing and worship, dialogues with other inmates in an attempt to



adopt a sense of kinship, the temporal transformation of the cell space into a religious vacuum, and self-affirmation.

This is not to discount that the images such as cigarettes, cars, teapots and the like had any less value for the inmates as something to relieve the stifling life within the prison cell.

However, my point here is that this particular collection of such images showed them as merely decorative and lacking any cohesive point to define the purpose of these illustrations other than what was drawn.

While in some cases images of boats and rafts might have represented their previous entry into the country by illegal means, this could be seen as being similar to the graffiti of places or a recollection of a previous experience of the space they had lived in, even temporarily. The desire for items of luxury, usually cigarettes, was part of the prison's economic exchanges between the inmates, and these illustrations would have no further part to contribute to this particular segment in observing the PJG.



## Chapter 3 Conclusion

Further discussion on the various sections of the Pudu Jail's Graffiti will be revealed later in Chapter 4, but the state of the inmate's mind could be seen as a shared social concept, be it individually or in terms of popular cultural references. Again, I would like to declare the assumptions about the thematic considerations of the PJG to be entirely speculation on my part, however, it would be based on an existing thematic, compartmentalised, qualitative review that has been shared among other research studies on prison graffiti (refer to Hanes 2005; Yogan and Johnson 2006; Johnson 2009; Koopman 1997; J. Z. Wilson 2008; Costanzo, Bull and Smith 2013).

Another study shows that prison does impact on the inmates, representing a sudden and involuntary separation between them and the outside world (Ireland and Archer 2000, 98), which would make them significantly likely to encounter grief and depression within the prison cells.

As Medlicott (2012, 15) suggests, the nature of the inmates' identity and even past memories were destined to become either weakened or dispersed due to the strain of what Goffman (1961) calls 'total institution'. The inmates would begin to form a new prison "*identity kit*", which is a term used by Wilson (2004, 75) citing Gee's (1990) paper on the inmates' reactions, ways of coping, and adjustments to the incarceration process. I refer to this particularly as it has its own revealing memories in the form of drawings, illustrated pictures of the inmates themselves, some of which may have depicted how they appeared prior to their imprisonment. It was in a sense, a way to resist the conditioning of the imprisonment. Though

it would, arguably, be difficult to trace it all within a drawing, as the images on the walls were just a glimpse of all that remained from the prison cells.

Within the PJG, it was noted that, overall, the graffiti seemed to refer to the outside world, whether songs, poetry, music lyrics, buildings or places. There were very few examples which showed any narrative about the prison or events within it. The preference, within the PJG, seemed to be that the drawings of the inmates' memories on the walls should be about their past lives and subjects with which they were familiar. This in turn revealed that the inmates' individual values, beliefs, and external behaviour prior to their institutional lives remained as a strong factor, which had to be adapted or assimilated into the prison environment (see also '*Prisonization*' by Clemmer (1958), as argued by Clear and Sumter 2002, 130).

Such basic categories are those which carry the most information, possess the validity and could be looked on as having a quantitative value, and yet represent the themes most differentiated from one another within the PJG which still require qualitative appreciation. Although one could go deeper in exploration of the meaning of the images and texts in the PJG, it is important to consider the negotiation and production of social relationships, material culture, inmates' networks and the relationship of power and material culture associated with prison which pertains not only to the inmates and their memories, but also to their relationship with the space, other inmates (individuals and groups), the wardens, and the various factors of religion, race, gender, and the length of their imprisonment.

A group of images of sacred places appeared like a phantasmal embodiment on the walls, and acted as an idiom for developing remembrance and weaving it into the present time in the inmates' space. These images were not drawn in a haphazard way, but in a semi-lucid way that might exemplify a rational assessment of evidence and the inmate's attempt to reproduce religious textual material. This had its own links to the mystical ritualism that characterises the memorialisation of places of worship. This way of depicting a memorial (mosque, temple or

church) became a form of device taken from sites, iconic texts and rituals, which provided both a sense of history and an example of a personal ritual system that would be evident among the Pudu Jail prison inmates and constituted one of the important features of the PJG's own thematic components, identifying its historical associations.

In other words, these sets of images investigate how discursive and ritual acts of identification and naming, particularly those carried out as servants of a shrine, temple or place of worship by the inmates, are connected to the wider rhetorical strategies that seek to build relationships in a sacred exchange. The ritual practices enacted at the shrine ultimately serve as a means of constructing new internal configurations that enable the inmate to believe in self-identify on a number of different levels. On the whole, they have acted as cultural integrators, drawing the inmate into being a pilgrim, changing his or her living cell space which then becomes a shrine and a place of spiritual power.

Nevertheless, the PJG theme of religion is strongly based on the conceptualisation of religious and sacred place attachment, which provides various senses of place attachment than are available in literature on the subject of prison graffiti, and which I hope, could begin to aid future research on the complex issues of the inmates' relationship to religion and sacred places' attachment. Place attachment within a prison context, particularly in the PJG, was of two types: one was shown as a connection to the outside world, and the other, showed the alteration of space inside the prison cell.

Such extrinsic motivation to have these ornamental drawings of religious places cover a wide range of ideas, such as the reward of having social and emotional benefits in this life will come to those who live good lives, or attempt to do so. Perhaps this does echo the implication by Juliet Fleming (2001) on graffiti in the previous chapter, that being surrounded by such texts and graphics of religious icons represents the notion that 'by reading them, we are indeed being good' (Fleming 2001, 140-41). Yet the belief in the hereafter is also a key factor in

providing morality with a strong basis and purpose for the inmates, not only for themselves (the authors of the graffiti), but also for the cellmates living together in the same space.

The term 'place' represents physical features and symbolic meanings (Lewicka 2008, 211). As a type of diversion, an ornamental piece in the prison cell may or may not convey a sense of coping with the incarceration process. The inmate who had drawn this graffiti struggled to hang on to what was presumably a memory stored in his mind by manifesting it into the prison space through the intended sketch. The struggle to keep their personal identity and 'place attachment', through narrating memories, either verbally or visually, is certainly seen as an attempt by inmates to rename the space (Medlicott 2004, 115).

Some of the graffiti had been drawn as a 'simulated prison space', which the inmates tried to develop as their perception of the prison bars or even to make the space itself be seen just as an illusion, an ironic suggestion since the inmates themselves were contained in such a space. The term 'simulated prison space' used here would be more of a playful suggestion, a strategic pretence by the inmates, using the prison wall, to deny the actual prison space itself, to make an illusionary effect out of the prison bars as being just something ephemeral. Such a depiction of place can be seen as escapism, which in effect is how inmates tried to avoid having to deal with the reality of prison life.

Personal loss of family and physical ties does put a strain on the inmates (Blevins, et al. 2010; Rivera, Cowles and Dorman 2003; Worrall and Morris 2012), so having to deal with it forced the inmates to rely on each other as an adaptation of personal support (Blevins, et al. 2010, 155). The creation of a '*pseudofamily*', or 'make-believe family' was a common occurrence in the female inmate population as literature has suggested, however, this does not appear to exist for the male inmates, or at least is not openly admitted in the case of prison in Malaysia. Whether this had any effect on the stylistic drawings, or the decorative elements and texts on the walls may leave some clues about this particular hypothetical guess.

The female inmates' graffiti in the Pudu Jail showed a different dimension in their approach compared to the male inmates' graffiti. While the male inmates' graffiti was more diversified, which could be seen as a major contribution to the graffiti's variants in this study, I believe the differences could be attributed to the fact that the ratio of male inmates was higher than that of the female inmates, and the facilities in the Pudu Jail for male inmates were substantially more extensive and designed predominantly to hold a male inmate population, rather than female inmates.

The inmates of Pudu Jail may not have had the opportunity to care for creatures other than themselves, thus opening the way for narratives in which drawings of creatures within the cells reached outside the walls of the prison. From the appearance of symbolic representations of secret societies, illustrations of creatures one might find in children's literature, Islamic calligraphic motifs, to the bizarre suggestions of shamanic anthropomorphic beings, the relationship with animals created a very different reflection and symbolic relationship through the language of interaction which indirectly suggests that the animals that had been drawn represented something different, going beyond what was actually depicted.

I want to elaborate a little at this point in the role of an observer of the animal-associated graffiti, particularly in the matter of anthropomorphism and its links with the world of the unknown. Those who subscribe to spiritual mediums and the portrayal of shamanistic practices contrive to make statements alongside their religious values, even though those religious values themselves are in conflict with the syncretic beliefs of the Malays, about which there is paradoxical and constant negotiation to achieve objectivity, something Nicholas (2004; 2009) provided through her work as a competent way to view this kind of folk analysis.

The question of belief was an incentive to complete this part of the paper as one had to have a sense of detachment by observing objectively in order to consider various relevant topics which could produce their own deliberations. The drawings on the walls can be seen as an

escape from affliction and isolation which the prison would produce as the inmates might have believed in a power that they could only get through an anthropomorphic association, yet they would only succumb to what they knew in words and how they might have looked visually.

Certainly, there would be different and more diverse types of graffiti groupings that could have arisen with other images, which weren't presented here. Or they could have corresponded with various other papers, which are relevant to the culture, economics, history and politics in order to furnish images and texts from the PJG. The key idea here is to recognise as easily as possible the partial existence of their memories, which were typical in the construction of the prison graffiti itself. The narratives and the graffiti used as data would lead to the unearthing of ways in which individuals develop their sense of self – whether it was about the inmates, or even the researchers themselves. This may lead to a possible conclusion as to how the inmates arrived at discovering themselves as much as how the researchers reached their own self-affirmation.

## Chapter 3 Notes

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<sup>26</sup> The size of the names in most of the graffiti was considered small compared to the rest of their graphic content, yet this seems to be the case on almost all of the walls in any given perusal of the portfolio.

<sup>27</sup> However, that did not stop the questions about religion and citizenship. After more than four decades of independence, the question of whether Muslims and non-Muslims should enjoy equal rights as citizens in an Islamic state still remains a primary source of political division. In 2001, in a soon-retracted pamphlet, "Malaysia Adalah Sebuah Negara Islam" (Malaysia is an Islamic state), the government used Al-Mawardi's eleventh-century text, *Al-ahkam as-sultaniyya*, to argue that non-Muslims could be appointed as government ministers. The same text, however, warned that Muslims must closely monitor non-Muslims, as well as specifying special taxes to be levied on non-Muslims living in an Islamic state and providing safeguards for the privileged status of Islam and Muslims.

Weiss, 2010

<sup>28</sup> Acronym for Pertubuhan Kebajikan dan Dakwah Islamiah Malaysia (the Welfare Organisation and the Malaysian Islamic Da'wah)

<sup>29</sup> Acronym for Pertubuhan Pembela Islam Malaysia (Malaysian Islamic Defenders Organisation)

<sup>30</sup> See their current blog space: <http://pekidakualarompin.blogspot.co.uk/2009/01/perlembagaan-pekida-malaysia.html> (accessed: June 21 2013)

<sup>31</sup> Further reading is suggested of Dr Leon Comber's (2009) "The Triad: Chinese Secret Societies in 1950s Malaya & Singapore" which revealed extensive cultural research and social norms in respect of the secrets and the fraternities of the Malayan and Singaporean Chinese secret societies.

<sup>32</sup> See the interview with the former warden of the Pudu prison, Abd Manap Bin Arshad, 0:08:45 min, from "Beyond Bars: Pudu Jail" (2010).

<sup>33</sup> Further information about Onomastics (study of the history and origin of proper names) in Malay-speaking areas can be found in William Roff's (2007) paper.

<sup>34</sup> Further reading of James Chopyak's (1987) paper on the influence of music in the Malaysian culture may give some light on this subject.

<sup>35</sup> William Roff (2007, p.397) refers to the South East Asian Malays who had adopted Arabic Islamic onomastic terms, evident from the old text of the *Sejarah Melayu* (the Malay Annals, circa 1612) which referred to personal given names as - *isms*, which directly linked to their father's name - *nasab*. (italicised in original).

<sup>36</sup> The British Civil Service refers to tally marks as the five-bar gate system, though it was noted that the usual way of displaying it is in sets of five marks (five counts), and gates usually have five vertical bars with the sixth running across.

<sup>37</sup> Personal observations noted during my visits of primary and high schools, public lavatories, orphanages, old folks homes, mental institutions, soldiers barracks, and other prisons in Malaysia.

<sup>38</sup> a space which supports its own culturally-specific discourse, generated, influenced, and sustained by the inter-relation in the notion of prison and its literacy.

(A. Wilson, *There is no Escape from Third-Space Theory* 1999, 54)



<sup>39</sup> Meals and diet were important expectations. Those being confined, who were only served bread and water, were very unhappy without their usual diet of rice, as they were used to the amount of carbohydrate found in rice.

<sup>40</sup> The inmates had to be creative about their "cell cuisine", like baking a cake using ground-up dried breadcrumbs to make flour, with salt, sugar, cocoa and water, banana or pineapple, all smuggled into the cells to make a flavoured fruit cake, as some of them would do when they felt the need for a celebration.

Abol, former Pudu Prison inmate, (Beyond Bars: KL's Pudu Prison 2010, 0:15:30 min)

<sup>41</sup> The average cost of food per Malaysian prisoner, per day, in 2011, based on Hakimah Yaacob's (2012, 1495) report, was estimated at Ringgit Malaysia (RM) 7.98 (roughly GBP 1.57), calculated from the inflated price of RM5.01 (GBP 0.99) in 1996 for each inmate. Taken with the average number of 1,578 Pudu prison inmates in 1996 (see Historical Chapter), it would work out at the staggering amount of only RM 7,921.56 (GBP 1,564.04) per day at the Pudu prison for food. This would make the food budget for the Pudu prison an average of RM 2.8 million (GBP 0.57 million) per year, which would certainly have put a severe strain on the quality and distribution of food for both the prison authorities and the inmates.

<sup>42</sup> Prisoners' wage rates increased by 100% to RM 1.00 per day (GBP 0.20) in July 2001. (Announced by the Malaysian Director of Prisons, Datuk Omar Mohamed Dan.)

(Ref: <http://www.utusan.com.my>, archive date 07/06/2001, accessed Sept 20, 2013).

<sup>43</sup> Refer to the Proceedings of the Legislative Council of the Federation of Malaya (fifth Session), March 1952 to February 1953:

Clause 57 (b) : Substitute the words "the prescribed punishment diet" for the words "a diet of bread and water or rice and water"

Proceeding between M. Humphrey and Dato' Onn with the Committee on Prison Bill, 1952 (second Reading)

(Legislative Council of the Federation of Malaya 1953, 774)

<sup>44</sup> John Bohannon (2009, 1615) noted that a nutritional diet played a significant part in its effect on prison inmates, an idea studied by Bernard Gesh, a nutritional and psychological researcher at the University of Oxford and later published in *The British Journal of Psychiatry* (2002), that a balanced diet suppresses and even causes fewer violent incidents among inmates.

<sup>45</sup> The average daily pay for the inmates is at RM0.80 to RM1.00 per day from 2001, prior to the increase, it was at RM0.50 per day.

Refer to article by Angelina Sinyang, Utusan Online (07 June 2001), [http://www.utusan.com.my/utusan/info.asp?y=2001&dt=0607&pub=Utusan\\_Malaysia&sec=Dalam\\_Negeri&pg=dn\\_05.htm#ixzz2fZewpQ5v](http://www.utusan.com.my/utusan/info.asp?y=2001&dt=0607&pub=Utusan_Malaysia&sec=Dalam_Negeri&pg=dn_05.htm#ixzz2fZewpQ5v)

(Retrieved 01 June 2010)

<sup>46</sup> See to the 'Visits Guide for Inmate Family', Official Portal, Prison Department of Malaysia.  
[http://www.prison.gov.my/portal/page/portal/english/lkeluarga\\_en](http://www.prison.gov.my/portal/page/portal/english/lkeluarga_en)  
Accessed Sept 20 2013

<sup>47</sup> Malaysian Prison Act 1995 (Act 537) and Regulations  
Part 14: Religious Instruction and Education (p. 141)  
Article 145. Prisoner to State Religious Denomination

Every prisoner shall be required on reception to state his religious denomination, and shall continue to be treated as a member of that denomination.

<sup>48</sup> Malaysian Prison Act 1995 (Act 537) and Regulations  
Part 14: Religious Instruction and Education (p. 141)  
Article 146. Change of Religion

A prisoner shall not be allowed to change his religion, except in any special case in which the Officer-in-Charge is satisfied, after due enquiry, that the change is proposed from conscientious motives and is not sought from any idle whim or caprice, or from a desire to escape from prison discipline.

<sup>49</sup> Plate 16 : "Buddha" text in Chinese:

Literacy Level of the writer (inmate):	high
Direct Translation of text (Chinese):	Buddha, typically found archetype of the deity in common Chinese

Translated by Yan Preston, Date: March 22, 2011, 7:33 am CDT

<sup>50</sup> Refer to [http://www.quranicpath.com/misconceptions/mosques\\_masjids.html](http://www.quranicpath.com/misconceptions/mosques_masjids.html), accessed 20th December 2013.

<sup>51</sup> Though controversies still exist among influential Muslim Sunnis about figurative representation, especially after the controversy of the Danish cartoon which criticised the Prophet (see Klausen 2009; Müller and Özcan 2007), the basic principle for Muslims in the region does not subscribe to drawings and instead follows the practice of using abstract geometrical drawings based on the Qur'anic scriptures with their illustrative designs for depicting religious narratives.

<sup>52</sup> At least once in their lives, every Muslim is supposed to make a pilgrimage (hajj) to Mecca. The central event of the hajj is a visit to the Kaaba; Muslims walk en masse, anti-clockwise around the Kaaba seven times (*tawaf*). This ritual is supposed to represent the angels walking around the throne of God and allows Muslims to symbolically enter the presence of God.

<sup>53</sup> An odd-job profession that is long forgotten. I recall having conversations with my parents and relatives, about how these "night-soil collectors" would come around the village, carrying two pails on a wooden pole, balancing the contents while navigating the village roads.

Refer also to Chun See Lam's blog article :

<http://goodmorningyesterday.blogspot.co.uk/2006/09/tribute-to-humble-profession.html>

Retrieved 23rd December 2013

<sup>54</sup> Refer to The Straits Times article, 11 July 1950, page 10, "K.L. to start on \$16,000,000 Sewage System Next Year". (Retrieved from <http://newspapers.nl.sg/Digitised/Article/straitstimes19500711-1.2.129.aspx>, 20th December 2013)

<sup>55</sup> The actual sociological experimental of 'simulated prison setting' refers to the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) prison study, an overview by Stephen Reicher and S. Alexander Haslam (2006) paper.

<sup>56</sup> The Malaysian Registrar Department has restrictions on names, which have 'culturally negative' references. Though this phenomenon has yet to produce any recent studies on onomastic trends, over recent years the listing has grown which is an interesting pointer suggesting future research, which would extend further the groundwork of Roff's (2007) paper.

<sup>57</sup> Refer to the Malaysian Prison Department's website on the industrial commissioned works, examples of the inmates' woodworking skills could be seen here:

<http://jpmportal.prison.gov.my/tempahan/index.php?type=kategori&kategori=KY>

Retrieved 02 Jan 2014

<sup>58</sup> Refer to <http://weehingthong.wordpress.com/2013/08/28/malaysian-gangs/>

Accessed 11 January 2014

<sup>59</sup> Though in different circumstances about humans in relation to animals, or in this case mythical creatures in a conceptual way, Wang and Dawker (2007) noted Kovecses' (1997) metaphorical suggestion:

"HUMANS ARE ANIMALS, and OBJECTIONAL HUMAN BEHAVIOUR IS ANIMAL  
BEHAVIOUR" (Capitalised in original)

(Kovecses (1997) as cited by Wang and Dowker 2007, 226)

Wang and Dowker's (2007) paper discussed a rather philosophical idea about Kovecses' (1997) implications that there is no difference between animals and the human counterpart. They discussed this further in cross-linguistic studies about the commonality of creatures' features, and their expected characteristics, and adults, which they had examined as being more relevant to understanding the double meaning in the suggested metaphor.

<sup>60</sup> The keris is a dagger, which was widely used as a weapon by the Malays between the 9th and 14th centuries AD.

(Ahmad and Hasan 2011, 36)

Refer also to other research and publication of the mystical representation of *keris*, or *kris* in 'The Kris: Mystic Weapon of the Malay World', 3rd edition by Edward Frey (2010); and Farish Noor's (2000) paper, 'From Majapahit to Putrajaya: the kris as a symptom of civilizational development and decline'.

<sup>61</sup> The Yin and Yang is a description of constant primal bipolar forces, in which these two balances and counter act with each other; in which this was based on ancient Chinese metaphysic literatures, the book of *I ching*, or the *Book of Changes*.

(Osgood and Richards 1973, 380)

<sup>62</sup> Referred to "100 Poems from the Chinese", New Directions Publishing Corporation, Translated by Kenneth Rexroth, 1971.

# Chapter 4

Discussion of the Pudu Jail's Graffiti

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## Discussion on Pudu Jail's Graffiti

### Introduction

This chapter summarised all of the illustrated ten themes as described in Chapter 3. Referring to the themes of Names, Time, Food, Religion (a combination of the themes "Religious Gates" and "In the Presence of God(s)"), Places, Animals, Notations, and briefly on Symbols and Icons, I arrived at the end of this research process, which had revealed that there were various factors points which I would highlight on the nuances between agreements and differences between this thesis and other prison graffiti research.

This chapter review this thesis as to why it is a form of new knowledge compared to other similar research, which would be a welcoming additional context into the world of prison graffiti in retrospect of the Malaysian prison life from the Kuala Lumpur's defunct prison in the 1990s.

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It would be possible to count the characters, words, or sentences in the texts that exist in the PJG portfolio. One could categorize their phrases, analyze their metaphors, describe the logical structure of their constituent expressions and ascertain their associations, connotations, symbolism and instructions.

The prison graffiti do not have a single meaning that can be "found," or even "identified" wholly to describe just exactly what they are. Just as texts can be read from numerous perspectives, so graffiti as well can have several meanings and data can be subjected to various kinds of analysis.

There would be plenty of room for investigation, which could offer psychiatric, sociological, political, or poetic interpretations of the texts and images. As Hans Schouwenburg (2012, 36) paraphrased Frank D'Angelo's (1974, 173) note on graffiti; *'To the linguist, they throw light on grammatical structure; to the archaeologist, they help to date buildings and events; to the sociologist, they reflect customs and institutions; and to the psychologist, they are manifestations of pent up hostilities and sexual frustrations'*. All of these accounts may be valid but each requires a different initial analysis, which would present an overwhelming amount of choice to contain all within this paper.

In line with various examples of research on graffiti, as stated in the previous chapters, I have decided to look at content analysis and accordingly have chosen, when looking at the graffiti images, to extract only one content at a time for each, for this particular paper; any other meanings are, for the moment, being excluded, though not dismissed. I struggle constantly with this, in the case of the PJG, as interpreting the graffiti relies on a multitude of different factors in order to understand its effect and the influence of external cultures associated with it – whether these stem from its authors or are applied to it by its readers. Even external cultural practices need to be considered as influencing factors. The anonymity inbuilt on both sides, from the authors and even from the eventual readers, has a part to play and openly invites assumptions about how these images are read depending on the circumstances of the readers themselves. One cannot identify an exclusive meaning for each of these graffiti, as the readers themselves have their own set of assumptions based on their personal, academic and visual experiences.

As a researcher myself, I do speculate about whether these messages were meant exclusively for these inmates, but also about how they would affect those who later came to read these graffiti? How will that influence my own ways of reading them and explaining them to others in this thesis? Perhaps D'Angelo's (1974) notion came across as an interesting point, that one

## Chapter 4

should also consider the readers' disciplinary background which could have a bearing on their association with the words and images of the PJG's graffiti, and a sensible way to look at it would be to leave it open to other interpretations as best as one could. Paraphrasing Jacqueline Wilson (2008, 70) as mentioned in Chapter 2, it was agreed phenomenon of prison graffiti as being a minimal form of conversation where the texts were rarely found to be complete; in most cases there is no elegant, concise or universal conclusion to most of the narratives because the graffiti was drawn with no discernible audience in mind, which would always leave ample room for interpreting these narratives based on how they were read.

In relation to this research, I considered the elements of D'Angelo's (1974) position as to what kind of a reader I will be in approaching the PJG, and to acknowledge as well the limitation of prison graffiti being an incomplete narrative as noted by Wilson (2008). These two elements would influence my approach with my methods of transcribing and noting the possible source as suggested by Collier and Collier's (1986) early approach in the photo-elicitation process. I would also combine this with my personal experience of exploring the space prior to becoming a researcher; I would design a method of approaching these words and images in the prison graffiti through a particular reasoning, suggesting an approach that would take account of various ideas from other research studies which might throw light on these drawings by the inmates.

To read the PJG, or to have a reasonable discussion about it, would involve some ideal basic requirements and would usually necessitate a tremendous amount of insight not only into the background of the inmates, but also into the urban setting within which the PJG lies. It would be wise as well to consider the demographics of the inmates, their population, race, religious affiliations, age groups and gender, the prison's administrative process, and the social dynamics of the prison inmates themselves.



But what if these factors and suitable evidence about the prison graffiti were not immediately available or were partially incomplete? Or, in fact, were not available at all? All I had left was my own experience of exploring the space over a decade ago (in 2002-03) and the remnants of the images of the PJG. I had also explored various second-hand resources ranging from historical reviews and printed evidence to personal interviews with ex-wardens and officers involved with the inmates, but these were not sufficient enough to explain how the graffiti came to exist and were far from helpful in illuminating what the graffiti might mean or portray.

What was left were the images of the graffiti, which I had gathered and I had started to look at them again as a series of groups with a thematic association, which arose from the review of the prison graffiti-related papers in Chapter 2, some of which had already suggested segregation of the graffiti according to its contents<sup>63</sup> and context<sup>64</sup>. The discussion of the images illustrated in Chapter 3 was of only a few selections made from the whole lot, as my interest had been raised not only about what the images might represent, but also how strongly they corresponded to the overall review of the theme they might embody.

Further arguments from Anita Wilson's (2004) study of the importance of the inmates' perspective must be included in any relevant research that has to do with prison ethnographic studies, as it refers to their natures being embodied in the space. It was noted that she remarked it would be 'obscene' to exclude their perspective (A. Wilson 2004, 69), with which I agree at various points in her research. The nearest idea of what she meant by 'obscene' is perhaps that judgements about the lives of the prisoners should not be made without taking into account how important it is that they themselves are part of the research (through interviews and indirect observations), in order to understand the space they had filled and connect them with using that space.

The PJG were divided into groups, each with its own theme. Not all images remained in their original group during the assessment as some of them contained more than one type of graffiti, which meant that I had, at times, to move these images to a different category depending on how I assessed them. This did not detract anything from the quantitative value of the PJG, nor from its content or even context, nor did it affect the group a particular example was removed from. Doing this was interesting as I began to see that segregation into themes did not work in every case. My own preliminary assessment of the majority of the PJG meant that I sifted and separated most of the images into their respective themes based either on those images with a more obvious leaning towards the semantic meaning of the words, as well as the graphic images themselves, which influenced which group each might belong to. However, closer inspection of various parts of the PJG, using transcribing and translations, showed that other interpretations of the graffiti could be made from some of their additional smaller texts as well, writing which contained important values that, not surprisingly, also needed to be considered, and might necessitate them being reallocated to another group in the PJG's themes.

In considering a single image of the PJG, it would be difficult to justify saying categorically that it belonged only to one group, as it could just as well be shifted from one group to another based on what the text and images represented; it would be a subjective decision based on the best interpretation by the researcher. It is necessary to remember this about the texts and images of the PJG, that sometimes they may contain more than one particular narrative, or need to be considered in different ways depending on what the transcribing and translating of these images revealed.

Consequently, how I arrived at the different themes described in Chapter 3 was dependent on various factors, such as how the texts were written and also how they would sound if read out loud. This was particularly interesting as, reading in Malay, some of the verbs and nouns have

different meanings depending on how they are pronounced, whether they are said sarcastically or what kind of intonation comes out of the narrative, which would help towards understanding what the sentence might mean and where it should be placed in the themes described in Chapter 3.

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## Names

The first theme is names. These were taken to be personal identifiers in the form of the inmate's own personal name or that attributed to and recognised by him or her. The length of the name was also considered as this had a bearing on where it would fit in, not just as an individual unit (or single name of an inmate) but also whether it represented a group. The names of the inmates (I have given examples of the Malay nicknames in this case) revealed that a sense of 'berpuak' (tribal behaviour) was apparent in the Pudu Prison inmates' graffiti. What this means, was that the association among the inmates depended on their place of origin and their affiliation to where they grew up, based on their written names and associations to their own place of origin, which in turn became a form of protection, or a kind of secret network with other inmates, forming a definite group.

This cannot really be seen as confirming the existence of a secret society although evidence of the Malays' involvement with secret societies was much more apparent in the neighbouring country of Singapore, as reported by Nafis Hanif (2008). Although her research and involvement, through her fieldwork, with inmates, which showed evidence of encoded and decoded messages (see Hanif 2008, 32 & xii), has been quite useful, I could not find much evidence to suggest that any of the PJG images had their own encryption key, or whether any disguised messages might suggest that the inmates of various races within the Pudu Jail had any affiliation or ties with secret societies.

## Chapter 4

### Discussion of the Pudu Jail's Graffiti Pudu Jail's Graffiti: Beyond the Prison Cells

As an example of racial segregation, the names of the inmates tended to be clustered only with inmates of a similar race; as already noted the Malay names were written close to other Malay names, which also happened with Chinese names and Indian names which were similarly grouped. This tied in with the fact that the inmates' graffiti was observed as being written in their own native languages. In the same way, the animated strips of illustrations of prison life being narrated on the walls showed that the Malay inmates were interacting with each other about their grief and misery at doing time (refer to Plate 24, Chapter 3, page 165).

However, this does not mean that the inmates were actually separated depending on their nationality, race, or religious differences, as this wouldn't be practical because the prison itself was too small to allow this kind of separation, and it has already been noted that there was an overcrowding issue at Pudu Jail since the mid 1980s<sup>65</sup>. However, it was probable that the cells would have their own sets of dominant nationalities, racially or religiously affiliated inmates, which would explain why each individual cell space tended to have its graffiti dominated by a single language, whether it was Malay, Indonesian-Malay, Chinese, Iranian, English or Tamil languages used in the texts selected in the PJG. However, it must also be remembered that there would be constant movement and shifting of inmates between the prison cells as the prison administration would have to deal with the influx of inmates, and this would affect the composition of inmates within the prison cells and would also explain the possibility of other languages being present in the prison cells. My point here is not to claim that the inmates of Pudu Jail were truly segregated in ways stated above, but that mixtures of inmates would have had to be tolerated not only among the inmates themselves, but also because of adjustments by the prison administration, which would have affected the way graffiti was formed, covering the walls in segments depicting names predominantly grouped according to the inmates' similar racial backgrounds.

As has been noted previously, (refer to Appendix b, page xxxvi, Figure 24), race and nationalities in Pudu Jail were often segregated by the prison administration not only to restrict any form of internal conflict due to racial or even gang-related problems, but also because this means of segregation also improved the chances of inmates being influenced by dominant religious groups, which would be more likely to prompt recently joined inmates to become affiliated with them and their practices as well.



The inmates' names were usually seen in various combinations of nicknames and their place of origin (refer to Chapter 3, Figure 3, page 106; and Figure 5, page 110). The reason for choosing to write in such a way is unknown as it would need to be seen from the inmate's perspective, although there would be some graffiti which had the inmates' names written in full. The graffiti containing the names of Malay inmates were commonly seen written with Malay characteristics, which was not so apparent with other races. The frequent practice of combining nicknames with place of origin seemed to be more relevant to the Malay inmates, which confirms the proposition suggested in Mintz's (1987) observation, that the Malay have strong connections not only with their peers but also represent a means of identifying themselves through their characteristics and even, in a way, demonstrate a form of subtle code which they might have to apply in order to associate with one another. Although it might have similar applications as regards kinship, that could be observed as well in the organisation of gang-related initiations by the inmates within the prison cells. Not everything would suggest that the names definitely pointed towards inmate gang memberships, although there is a high probability suggested by the practice noted of creating a form of 'inner circle' which was recognised, or acknowledged, in the writings on the walls of the prison cells.

This would, however, be rather different from the gang relationship, as inter-personal relationships between inmates being a form of friendship that served as a protection against violence (refer to Wulf-Ludden (2013)), or in some extreme cases led to fighting or an attempt to maintain power by emasculating others. However, the grouping of names within the PJG introduces the notion of inter-relationship between the inmates and suggests a form of friendship which demonstrated personal ties through identification of themselves, as they acknowledged one another through their 'identity'. They were all unique but at the same time shared a 'sameness' in terms of their relationship, their status and the place each one had among them all.

As I have already discussed in Chapter 3, using Eric Thompson's (2004) ideas about '*kampung*' (Chapter 3, p. 111), the concept of 'village boy' is used here not in a derogatory fashion relating to status or economic circumstances but rather as a subtle way of declaring kinship or the presence of a clique amongst the inmates. I pointed out the consensus among the inmates for using both their own unique personal identifier in the form of their own accepted or peer-given onomastic name, short name or nickname coupled with a geographic or place identifier. These names were written alongside those of other inmates not just because they wanted to be identified with those other inmates but also in recognition of a regional connection as well, if possible. This partly explains the '*identity kit*', which Gee (1990) identified, as noted by Anita Wilson (2004, 75), and remarked on the inmates' knowledge and persona (see also Phillips (2007, 76) on '*prisoner identity*'), and which I would like to echo in the case of the inmates who begin to take on a particular role, a role that could either have been brought into the prison with them, or developed during their incarceration, or possibly both.

In terms of self-recognition and the identity of the inmates, even though, overall, the inmates would be treated with the same disciplinary routine by the prison authorities, this would not be the same among the inmates themselves. They would scrutinise and mistrust any other

inmates who were outside their 'inner circle'. What would also be relevant would be the status of seniority, where inmates would have proved their ability to adapt to the cohesion of the prison's community. Coretta Phillips (2007, 76) pointed out that the inmates would have had to adapt to the *inmate code*<sup>66</sup>, a term which Phillips (2007) coined from ideas raised by Sykes and Messinger (1960) (see also Wulf-Ludden 2013), whereby the inmates themselves would have to adhere to the prisoners' own systems and codes of conduct which linked together modes of behaviour between the different racial, religious and social hierarchies. The prison authorities may have imposed segregation as well, in order to reduce any kind of internal conflict and reduce any display of masculinity to the confines of the inmates' internal groupings. This may explain some of the details about the inmates' names and their place of origin, which were clustered in groups throughout the PJG.

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## Time

In relation to the PJG's theme of time, I refer to the writing of Michael Hardt, an American literary theorist and political philosopher, who wrote an essay, "Prison Time" in 1997. He dealt with the disintegration of time within prison and referring to his concept on the delivery of the prison experience and its effect on time, he stated;

Inmates commonly refer to the time they spend in prison as qualitatively different from time outside. Prison wastes time, destroys time, empties time. Prisoners get time for their crimes and do time to pay their dues.

(Hardt 1997, 65)

Hardt (1997) describes time as an instrument of punitive torture, a mechanism that is purposely used by the prison authorities and which the inmates regard with different quantitative, and certainly qualitative, values. His argument was interesting as he pointed out that time is used as a scale of measurement and an assertiveness of 'power' over the inmates;

he refers to it being another mechanism of discipline and a tool of punishment based on Foucault's (1977) "Discipline and Punish: Birth of the Prison". By controlling the aspect of time, through autonomous constant routine activities and the rigour of disciplinary activities which change an inmate's perception of time, they see it as having great value and almost imagine it as a luxury they sorely miss and yearn for.

Hardt (1997) discussed how time has a different quality for those who live in the outside world, making us wonder if the quality of time spent by citizens outside the reach of the prison space is imbued with a greatly desired value for inmates. Constant routines and boredom would certainly cause one to disengage from the present.

Inmates try in vain to hold on to this ephemeral, fleeting time, giving it some concrete, if only symbolic, substance, crossing out days on a calendar, scratching notches in the wall – they mark time.

(Hardt 1997, 65)

In Hardt's (1997) paper, he proposed the notion that prison time could be seen as an act of demoralisation, as the subjectivity of inmates being incorporated into the prison space where time, being used as the instrument of punishment, also has a pervasive control and lays the groundwork for servility on behalf of the inmates in relation to authority and the processes of punishment and surveillance.

The excess of time within the prison space is the dominant value which makes the space in which the inmates dwell, into a prison space. Regardless of the activities and regime of disciplinary routines introduced by the prison administration and authority, the inmates will instantly encounter idleness between the repetitive routines and this is the moment that the prison punishment begins to take place. This on its own, brings about the punishment and the demoralising factors for the inmates, which in turn influence their need to create their own prison-cell graffiti.



The PJG illustrates two particular ways in which the inmates noted time on the walls of the prison cells: the Gregorian calendar and the use of tally-marks, both of which seemed closely similar in the way they function but have different connotations as to what they represent.

The tally-mark system is a method of mark making by which the inmates signify their achievements of coping with the institutional expectations and routines of prison, day in and day out. As these marks were made to note each day passing while they occupied the same cell space, there is no notion of when the count would end, although the inmates' prison sentence and the expected duration of their stay could be calculated based on the crime they had committed. Although time spent by the inmates could be ascertained in that manner, it was interesting to see the effect the duration had on the inmates. How they recorded the time through tally-marking somehow more easily reflects the inmates declaring that they had survived a prison day and its routine, thus keeping a score of how many days they had spent rather than how it was spent.

On the other hand, the Gregorian calendars in the PJG functioned more as a tool of premonition, devised in a way, which allowed the inmates to chart out the days they needed to spend within the prison and intentionally note the precise (or estimated) calculation of time they would spend within the prison space. It seemed to be a familiar format similar to the paper calendars that hang in most homes; the overall appearance of the calendar on the wall of the prison space emulated that. The Skeuomorphic effects of the calendar may be explained by the inmates being familiar with the function of a drawn calendar.

The Gregorian calendars in the PJG usually contained the dates of the inmates' arrest, imprisonment, court appearance, release date, and any religious occasions or other meaningful special days noted by the inmates. Thus, it served in a different way from the tally-marks as this particular format fixed the trajectory of the stay in prison and the expectations to

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be encountered by the inmates, regardless of the various disciplinary routines. Although in a way this may not be a rule written in stone (pun intended), as how it was written was how it would happen, the inmates were aware of their ability to re-capture the time they were detained through the space they dwelt in dictating their days and opportunities.

These two modes of keeping track of time, tally-marks and the Gregorian calendars, contained very different temporal attributes. While the former was seemingly chaotic, and almost indefinite in terms of quantity for marking the days that the inmates dwelt within the prison space, it reflected Hardt's (1997, 71) notion that this kind of prison time was seen as a loss, or in this case, as something that destroyed and damaged their destiny or their hopes. Though this may suggest a purely virtual view of the prison graffiti, the marks that were etched defined what was real to the inmates, namely days indistinguishable one from the next.

The latter is a construction, abject in its openness yet it gave the inmates the possibility of organising the arrival of whatever event they had inscribed. The Gregorian calendars in the PJG were seen as companions, in which precisely specified events and appointments, which the inmates would attend, were noted. It certainly would be considered with anticipation if a noted date of release were drawing near. However, this may not be a substitute for how time was spent as well and certainly would not be able to conjure up a proper explanation of the meaning of time for the inmates. What was considered here was a structured form, the organisation of time, which was planned in advance, and which also relied on the manner of the inmates' attitude towards it.

The first of these, efficacy, concerns the ability to make things happen or to have control over outcomes. The second concept, choice, centers on the notion of opportunity to make choices—in essence, that the individual has options from which to select. The third conceptual component, predictability, is anchored in the idea that personal control is greater when future events are predictable.

(Rivera, Cowles and Dorman 2003, 150)

Beverly Rivera, Ernest Cowles and Laura Dorman (2003) acknowledged the inmates' ability to control their space and certainly the portion of their time spent in a personally controlled environment would be the key to developing their ability to find their sense of self. How Rivera, Cowles and Dorman (2003) summed up the factors of control, opportunity of choice and predictability about the outcome would be the key to explaining the differences in the calendars found within the PJG. Both types of calendar gave some insight into the narrative of control: the Gregorian calendars related to the expectations of the inmates who regarded their stay within the prison walls as a form of temporality, while the other style of calendar was unstructured and revealed indefinite control. This style also revealed that the tally-marks started to become skewed as the inmates began to lose sight of any organisation or balance, which would have helped to preserve the marks as straight and in proper rows.

Anita Wilson (2004) preferred to regard the question of time on more of a case-by-case basis, seeing it as a way of understanding the meaning of time rather than how it affected and regulated as Hardt (1997) did. This has universal truth, as the meaning of time differs from one individual to the next, even though the prison space is a controlled space, leaving either very little room or a large amount of room, in terms of idleness and the appreciation of the value of time, depending on how the prison was run. While Hardt (1997) refers to prison time as a mechanism which disturbs and demoralises the inmates, Wilson (2004) refers to the inmates' ability to adapt and re-adjust themselves so as to use their time according to their instincts and by employing their own learned processes to change the nature of the space, which in turn would affect their use of time as well. Each method of formatting time in the PJG embraced both of these ideas, as time conceived within the prison could lower the inmates' morale as well as helping them to reconstruct or improvise the way they dealt with the space and the time they spent within it.



## Food

The theme of food within the PJG was a limited review, as there was only a single image in the graffiti showing the Pudu prison diet (refer to Chapter 3, Plate 13, page 124; and Figure 7, page 125), which brought a decisive discussion to the table on the important consideration of the inmates' dietary intake. It raised several questions about the complex effect of food on the social structure, the inmates' sense of value, and how it affected the delinquent habits of the inmates.

...prison food assumes enormous importance, symbolically representing, in many respects, *the* prison experience. In outside society dietary habits serve to establish and symbolise control over one's body. In prison, that control is taken away as the prisoner and their body become the objects of external forces.

(Smith 2002, 202)

Catrin Smith's (2002) arguments on the food and dietary choices among women inmates within the British health-care system revealed challenges about dealing with the distribution of food and its effect on the inmates. This gave a brief idea of the effect not only of the nutritional benefits, but also dealt with the cultural differences that food brought into the prison can represent. Pudu Jail played its part in rationing meal portions when it came to its inmates, although, as Smith (2002) mentioned, food has an impact on rehabilitation as well as the social dynamics between the inmates and the wardens. So the key point here is not about criticising the food served to the inmates of the Pudu prison, it is more about how the effect food has on the constant routine and diet experienced by the inmates has also to be considered in the overall processes of imprisonment and views on rehabilitation.

John Bohannon's (2009) article included arguments from Gesch's (2002) study, which claimed that dietary improvements could alleviate violence to a significant amount, could improve

social relationships between inmates and certainly lessen the strain on the prison staff.

However, he had concluded that the results would not be a complete solution to the problem, as there would be many other variants to consider and the complexity of biochemical elements would be challenging to prove (Bohannon 2009, 1616). Although it might not be possible to measure the effects of diet on a micro-level, it does have an effect on the different social exchanges between the inmates. Prison food played its own part in the network of power and the inmates used it as a part of the prison currency which affects the dynamics of the prison (see Valentine and Longstaff 1998) and has its own moral dimension within penal practices (see Godderis 2006).

What does come into question is the relationship with food, which still remains unclear as it presumes the food which was prepared by the Malaysian prisons would be of *halal* certified meat, and most likely would be handled with strict control. The effect of food may have played a significant part in Pudu Jail as it would remind the inmates of where they came from and bring a sense of belonging as well. However, the process of rehabilitation within the confines of the prison might not have been able to accommodate most of the culturally specific cuisines required, as the luxury of providing the diversity of South East Asian food would be a step too far for any prison.

Smith's (2002) and Bohannon's (2009) papers play a part in this particular section, as the rest of the PJG's themes dealt directly and indirectly with the inmates' memories. Their texts and illustrations were attempts to assert themselves as to where they came from in the form of names, places and spaces, and through various other accounts of their relationships with others and the outside world. The food and diet of the inmates of Pudu Jail also need to be highlighted as they may have some influence on the inmates' own reflections about their stay within the prison. It was noted while reviewing one of the graffiti, that, alongside the angst

and suffering of the prison routine, the daily rations and monotonous nature of the food was one of the factors that made the inmate wish he was back home where he belonged<sup>67</sup>.

Thus the description of food does have a value as well. It is probable that the food served in prison would, of course, be appalling and the consistently boring diet would render the inmates more determined to leave the prison. Valentine and Longstaff (1998) stated that food and the inmates' diet could have strongly influenced the rest of the inmates' thought processes during their incarceration. It would be interesting to consider the dietary practices within the prison environment and how they would affect the initiative and the creativity shown by the inmates to use any form of improvisation they could within the prison cells to break the monotonous routines of their prison diet<sup>68</sup>.

Though it cannot yet be determined what the effect of the dietary consumption among the inmates of the Pudu Jail had on them, it can be suggested that it would have a causal effect on the inmates' thought processes and also influence their relationships with other inmates. It would be important as well to consider how the variety and quantity of food may or may not contribute to the inmates' behaviour (see Rauch 1986). It is important to consider the negotiation and production of social relationships, material culture, inmates' networks and the relationship of power (see Valentine and Longstaff 1998) on the role of food in the material culture of the Pudu prison by focusing on the inmates' own narratives about food. This would throw light on the complexity of the relationship of power between inmates and staff, and between individuals and groups of inmates, as it would provide a different take on their creativity and inherently, their aspiration to be rehabilitated.

How would food affect non-Muslim inmates? And how would it affect those inmates who came from a different dietary practice? These questions initiated a different narrative and values, considering the consumption of food as a cyclical process and how it affects the

inmates directly and indirectly through the prison authorities' expectations that the inmates would be rehabilitated. I would not criticise the notion that food was served as an "everyone got to eat" paradigm, although the policy-makers and administrators vacillated about the function, budget and objectives of the Malaysian prison being based on a punitive process while running the prison as a rehabilitation and treatment centre. Although this depended on which prison was being referred to, for instance it would not be a priority measurement for inmates in a maximum security prison (Omar 2001, 334). Nutritional support through dietary concern for inmates, particularly when it is possible to influence the inmates' behaviour, should not be underestimated.

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## Religion

It was noted in Hardt's (1997) paper that inmates often resolve to take part in religious conversions, or to return to their religious practices with a deeper commitment as they have suffered intense metaphysical problems and experienced an ontological 'malady' (Hardt 1997, 66) as they try to cope with their time in prison (refer to the section "Time", in this chapter, page 248). Hardt's (1997) review may deal with this as an existential matter, questioning how inmates value time, or rather waste it, when they are 'assaulted' with a regime of pre-constructed schedules and routines, which they have to follow. By disengaging with their previous lifestyles, and accepting their forced barter with 'prison time', the inmate would then have to struggle to hold onto various conscious forms of fulfilment rather than remaining empty, or in state of idleness, and it would be then that religious devotion would help to 'ground' them.

Discussing the theme of Religion, I had examined both of the categories, "Religious Gates" and "In the Presence of God(s)", as both complement each other in relation to this subject. The

inmates of Pudu Jail demonstrated their conformity to their chosen religion through the transformation of their cell space – and their dwelling – in which their drawings illustrated the physical sacred spaces, which they may have experienced prior to their imprisonment. This would act as a medium and a platform prior to their presenting themselves (the devout) to their affiliated god(s). Although both themes objectively served as an attempt by the inmates to rectify their dwelling space using decorative motifs from their religious affiliations, the “Religious Gates” here represent an important step in adapting the space to allow them to prepare before meeting their God(s).

Before discussing the forms and shapes of these drawings of religious gates, an overview of the inmates themselves should first be introduced as this determines the type and style of the drawings of religious gates. Inmates were usually segregated by race and nationality by the prison authorities (refer to Appendix b, page xxxvi, Figure 24), not only in order to reduce the risk of internal conflict due to racial or even gang-related problems, but also to improve the chances of inmates being influenced by dominant religious groups who would usually prompt recently-joined inmates to become affiliated with them and their practices.

It was noted that the races in Malaysia were predominantly Malay-Muslims, Chinese-Syncretic Buddhists, Taoists or Confucianists, (refer to Tan 1983, 218; also Chapter 3, page 136) or Christians, as well as Indian-Hindus, and other nationalities from both within and outside the region with their own respective religious affiliations. These differences would be apparent as well in relation to the Pudu Jail's segregation practices as the inmates would come together in a similar crowd because of the familiarity of their cultural practices and the conformity of their religious practices as well. As segregation pushed the inmates into groups, it was observed how separate blocks were dominated by different ethnic groups based on the inmates' own nationality and racial profile. Thus it would be perfectly possible that religious practice would



play a large part in influencing how the inmates behaved among themselves in order to ease the process of rehabilitation, and to be compliant in the face of the authorities.

In the PJG, it was noted that the dominant graphic representations of religious presence in graffiti showing religious or sacred spaces seemed to stem mostly from Muslims, Hindus and Christians. The presence of the Chinese-Syncretic graffiti was very subtle, and worked in a different manner to the rest in terms of illustrations of religious places and sacred spaces; they did not have quite the same function but served as symbolic configurations that emulated sacred spaces from the outside world.



The Chinese-Syncretic graffiti showed more in the way of a story or fable about the ancestral past or the portrayal of figures of deities, showing that its function was to visually tell a narrative rather than to represent a space within which to worship the respective deities. One would expect to see figures such as Goddess Kwan Yin or the God of Kwan Ti (refer to Haji Ishak 2009, 7), as figures of these deities would be commonly found in their respective altars, and would be the subject of common ancestral worship found in most of the Chinese homes in Malaysia. None of these figures, representing the presence of a deity, were found within the PJG to suggest that such a racial profile was present in Pudu Jail, but it would not be conclusive to suggest that there were no devotees present within the prison cells. Perhaps it should rather be considered that altars for the Chinese-Syncretics practices were placed in specific chosen places and the inmates would not have considered placing them within their prison cells.

Chee-Beng Tan (1983) referred to the confusion regarding the identification of Malaysian Chinese religious practices, which would have similar implications for Chinese inmates within the Pudu Jail. The adaptation of various faiths seemed to suggest an illusive nature even in the

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graffiti works in the PJG. As previously noted, the appearance of the gods or demigods, such as the 'Budai' or 'Hotei' (refer to Plate 17, page 137), as mentioned and illustrated in Chapter 3, characterised partially a reference to their beliefs. However, it was watered down as these drawings were not in any way illustrating a transformation of the cell space into a sacred area, it was more of an informative illustration of narratives based on such characters. The idea of an altar of worship, which would be a common and expected illustration, was not present within the PJG. It would suggest that the Chinese inmates may possibly have had a preference as to how their deities should be placed and, as a matter of respect, it may not have been considered suitable to have images of their deities, in the form of an altar representing a place of worship, situated within the space of their prison cell.

Though illustrated in a different way, drawings of mythical creatures such as Phoenixes and Dragons (Plate Appendix o, Pudu Jail's Graffiti Volume 1 of 2, page 88 and 154; refer also to Volume 2 of 2, page 207, 208), could refer to the Chinese lunar calendar<sup>69</sup>, but probably they signified something different and might well suggest something about their relationship to the inmate who drew these mythical creatures and wrote nuances and phrases which might be associated with the Chinese Triad or the underworld secret society groups in Malaysia. For example, Plate 36 (Chapter 3, page 197) showed that the text associated with the illustration of the dragon drawn above it indicated a form of declaration and assertiveness related to the 'Hong Shun Tang' group which may have been a dominant influence, or Chinese gang-related group, within Pudu Jail. However, this is only a suggestion which may be regarded as merely an exploratory topic. This type of illustration had a different purpose from the religion-affiliated graffiti described earlier, which conveyed more structural and religious connotations. The mythical creatures described here would have different characteristics, more connected with symbols and the secret-society gang-related idea.



As a way of explaining the representation of sacred spaces in the drawings of the prison graffiti within the PJG, religious gates were illustrations of spaces which the inmates might have known in the outside world prior to their imprisonment, spaces with which they might have been familiar so that they could recall most of the essential elements of those places. As examples had shown in the Muslim inmates' drawings of mosques, there were obvious references to actual physical spaces in the outside world, mimicking the position of the mosque between drawings of pillars.

Not all of the sacred space illustrations of the Islamic faith in the PJG depicted local mosques, as some of the plates also referred to the Ka'aba, their holiest city, to which the Muslims directed their prayers. This would be no different for the inmates. The drawings on the walls which represented these mosques would perhaps refer to them in two ways: first, they would replicate the prayer mats which are common in most Muslim homes, and second the drawing would come from the inmate's own personal experience of visiting that actual space. It would also be possible that they could draw these illustrations based on their own memories from having seen the same view of the Ka'aba in other types of medium, such as graphics from newspapers, posters or from television.

However, it would be interesting to know if these images were copied from the prayer mat. The dominant design of a Muslim prayer mat contains all the elements included in the designs of the Muslim's religious sacred places as depicted in the PJG (see Appendix k, page I). From the pillars to the internal segments, most Muslim prayer mats would contain the image of the Ka'aba and the background of the mosque, often as the central subject. The function of the prayer mat (or some may call it the prayer rug) is to represent a cordoned-off space which must not be entered or disturbed while the devotee uses it for his/her prayers. Though the

image of the sacred site does not have a compulsory element as regards the prayers, the depiction of the sacred site does not require further graphic input other than to remind the devotees that they are praying towards the site and consequently towards God.

It is interesting to note that the prayer mat is not a compulsory object to be used when a devotee conducts his/her prayers, as any clean cloth or textile material would be sufficient when prayers are conducted, when their knees, forehead and palms touch the ground as they conduct their prostrations. However, this type of prayer mat is common in most households of most Muslims in the region. These prayer mats have a practical function as a tool for the devotee, as they could be placed in any clean area of their home, where it would be laid facing towards the sacred site, the Ka'aba in Mecca. The area of the prayer mat became a space that must not be intruded into when the devotee begins to pray, as no one may cross in front of the way they face. They would not acknowledge other people during their prayers; this was not meant to be impolite, but reflected the need for the devotee to have absolute concentration for their prayers. This uninterrupted religious obligation, the *salat*, would be done five times a day at specified, dictated times<sup>70</sup>. Once the prayers were finished, the prayer mat would then be folded and put away in a clean place and the space returned back to its original function.

It would be important to point out, with regard to the placement of the prayer mats, which would usually be used on the ground, that the drawings of the Ka'aba in the PJG, were drawn on the walls instead. This can be explained, however, as, if this sacred site had been etched onto the floor of the prison cells, the inmates, accidentally or even intentionally, which would be considered disrespectful could have trampled it on.

The question remains, what would be the function that these drawings represented? They closely follow the design of the prayer mats but are not physically placed in the same way (on

the floor) but instead drawn onto the walls. While the function of the prayer mat is part of a Muslim's commitment to Islam, the graphics on the walls represent a form of declaration and visually speak of the inmate's alliance to that religion. The reproduction of the graphics of the sacred site of the Ka'aba, which, as I pointed out, in its collective representation used designs from the prayer mat, became an important aspect which could generate a sense of moral reasoning and also an unreserved shared belief.



The illustrations of the Hindu temple were different in appearance; the drawings of the pillars and the reference to local temples were more graphic and two-dimensional. Well-proportioned and symmetrical in structure, the illustration of its ornaments were done in much more intricate detail compared with the Muslim mosque. These references and the emptiness of the space between the pillars would suggest an entrance towards a greater presence and resonate a kind of spiritual compartment for the devotee.

I have mentioned previously the reference to the *garba-griha*, or the *garbhagriha* (Mazumdar and Mazumdar 2004) in Chapter 3 (page 145), which is described as a room or space which exists beyond the present physical space, and this may have been shown in these drawings of the Hindu temples' religious gates within the PJG.

What was depicted here was not only about the physical space but also about the emotional and subtle concepts of ephemeral spatial existence, by transcending or escaping into it (from the prison cells or even the current awareness of self) in a religious experience. The source of significance of this spiritual compartment lies in practices included in the spiritually sought-after intimacy between worshipper and deity.

Given the heterogeneity of religious gates within the PJG and the diversity of interpretative traditions within Hindu practice, the graffiti on the Hindu temple gates gave a clue to the

construction of a tightly integrated sense of self-awareness by the inmates – if this were to be based on structural interpretations of sacred sites (refer to Mazumdar and Mazumdar 2004). This would have its own paradoxical effect, as I would try to develop the most sensible interpretation and track down the motivations concerned with the aspects of sacred space. This would help to provide some suggestions as important considerations about the notion of one definite path for achieving a moral life by venturing into the act of transcending, spiritually, beyond the walls of the prison cell. The radiating effects of this suggestion showed that it would be a major challenge to prove it without any verification from the inmates. Hence, the significance of the Hindu temple gates in the PJG, I suggest, lies primarily in addressing this challenge.

'Spiritual compartment' could be a term to describe the empty space which lies in between the highly decorated ornaments, which were drawn with extreme care, especially when integrated into the overall symbols and icons. One could suggest that this form of space was some sort of area prepared for ritual attendance and participation in some type of religious practice and had shaped the artist/inmate over time. This suggests that prayer was part of a general matrix of disciplines and that the inmate, as a devotee, had carefully noted specific designs, with great attention to detail particularly in regard to religious motifs, prior to their incarceration. The artistic skill of the inmates demonstrates that they must have had a considerable amount of experience of dealing with high quality, which they might have gained from practising 'public' art; this might indicate former workers who created hand-painted cinema posters in the late 1980s and possibly show that these inmates had previously experienced working as blue-collared artisans.

Although this is only a suggestion, it would certainly be possible to point out the obvious skill that can be seen in the PJG's intricate graphical images of the Hindu temples and deities and this would suggest that the inmates responsible for these drawings and illustrations

demonstrated a high level of ability to draw and design, and to reproduce the deities in the right size, scale and proportions on the wall of the prison cell. Consequently, this would again suggest that the skill sets of these inmates were probably brought with them into the prison cells and were not learned during their time in prison; they already had the experience to draw or paint professionally which resulted in such intricate drawings of the Hindu religious gates and the representation of the deities.

However it is also important to mention that it is unlikely that these drawings could have been done solely from memory; they must have referred to magazine articles and other printed material which they found in the various cuttings showing the faces of celebrities and titles of magazine articles which other inmates used to construct their own narrative texts on the walls. Nonetheless, such transfers would take skill as well, as the drawings of the religious gates and the deities were on a much bigger scale (some as tall as one metre) than normal magazine prints. This would also convert these images into being religious in nature, giving those drawn onto the walls of the prison cell a different function from their original purpose in a magazine or printed material.

My point is not that the temple space drawn onto the prison-cell walls itself creates 'Hinduness', nor that those who practise that religion regularly are necessarily more authentically devout than others. My point is simply that the drawings of the Hindu temple gates in the PJG introduces a pattern of religious practice into everyday life, at least within the cell space itself. This would encourage devotees to assert and enact their belief as an unequivocal commitment to their deities while at the same time enabling the spiritual narratives, through their symbols, to take the believer into a different space, separate from the prison space, and to cultivate spirituality and the embodiment of a moral compass as part of the religious practice in which they took part. It would be the presence of the temple within the prison space which allowed the believer to be taken into this different, separate, space.



The symbol of the cross which was found in the PJG, also had its place within the religious gates theme. The motifs were much simpler, economic in their design which represented a symbolic graphic representation of the cross itself. The cross referred to the Christian iconography relating to the instrument of torture used to crucify their final prophet, Jesus Christ. Any ornamental designs surrounding the cross were minimal in most of the designs (for example refer to Appendix o, Pudu Jail's Graffiti Volume 1 of 2, page 49 & 56; also Volume 2 of 2, page 17) and were usually symmetrical and balanced in their graphic representation. One of these Christian graffiti found in Condemned Cell no. 4, in the Death Row block, had a large illustration of the cross with various texts from Holy books, Christian hymns and personalised poetry around it (Chapter 3, Figure 10, p.159-162). This made it uniquely different from the rest of the crosses found in other cellblocks. Although the large amount of religious scriptures around it made the large cross stand out, the crosses shown in a smaller scale in other cell blocks may have had a similar function as a reminder for the devotees to respect the symbol it represented.

Looking at these particular graffiti gave a deeper insight, not only into what the words from the Holy books represented, but also led one to surmise that these were written based on the inmate's own memories. Although it would be impossible to verify this claim, the Christian hymns which had been transcribed were missing lines or choruses in various places, suggesting that they were written from memory to the best of the inmate's ability. This is not to say that these texts from Holy books and Christian hymns could not have been present during the inmate's occupation of the cell, but what should be pointed out here is that the Christian hymns featured were deeply rooted in American Christian traditions, which would be unusual and unexpected in this region. Besides the foreign literature that was present such as the



translated Chinese poetry, which could have been written by the same inmate, was written in a style that pointed to older Chinese writings from pre-1949 China (Preston 2014).

These factors could not lead one to conclude that the graffiti observed in Plate 23 (Chapter 3, page 155) was drawn by an American-Chinese-Christian devotee who received his education in China prior to 1949. However, what could be seen here was that both kinds of literature, American Christian Hymns and a Chinese style of writing, had come together in an unusual manner as a form of personalised literacy which the inmate had transferred to the wall of the prison cell. This may turn out to be a unique source to be examined and considered as the entire composition of this image (Chapter 3, Plate 23, p. 157) within the PJG represented an important example of '*exculpation*', a term which Clear and Sumter (2002, 59) used to describe the inmate's choice of embracing religion as a method of combating their weaknesses by accepting the word of God.



To sum up the section on 'Religion' in this chapter, what was seen here were examples observed in the PJG graffiti which contained religious references, demonstrating several different approaches constructed by the inmates of Pudu Jail.

The Muslims used images which related to the sacred spaces and site of the Holy mosque of Ka'aba, along with written words from the Qur'an and also the name of God alongside the Prophet Muhammad's name. These texts were written as an attempt to create a practical way of having the cell space adorned with literature from the afore-mentioned Holy book, and the graphical representations of the sacred site served as no more than adornment and a reminder of those elements that have their own relationship with or point towards God. It did not turn the space entirely into a sacred site, but demonstrated more of an external representation of the devotees' preferences in their practice of and affiliations to the Islamic religion.

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With regard to Christian graffiti found within the PJG, one single image was noted which revealed a significant attempt to transform the space, although this would not discount the rest of the crosses found in other cell spaces. However, the presence of the large cross and the written words from the Holy books revealed that the inmate's perspective on a Christian-based religious affiliation was not to try to emulate religious spaces in the outside world such as churches; they had just used the symbol of the cross because of what it represented to the devotee. The Christian hymns and songs would carry weight as literal reminders for the devotee in his attempt to seek forgiveness. However, what is important to note in this particular case is the sacredness of the symbol, which would serve as a reminder of the transformation.

The Hindu inmates used the space as a rather fixed sacred space by placing religious elements and highly ornate graphic representations to transform their cell space. The idea that they were creating altar-like features from the religious gates seems plausible as an empty space between the designs was created alongside the more ornate features in two-dimensional designs which would refer to the temple in the outside world. The depiction of deities such as Lord Ganesha, Lord Krishna, and Lord Karura, were introduced to ordain the cell space which would suggest that the force from these deities within the prison cells would have a similar impact as that of deities from the outside world would have when it came to the inmates seeking their blessings. While there was a lack of visual references in the Chinese-Syncretic graffiti within the PJG, it is important to note that their approach to the sacred space was mainly defined through a different kind of appreciation as they would have preferred their deities to be in authentic spaces, so that the devotees could approach their Holy figures in established sites rather than having these figures drawn and then worshipped within the cell space. However, demigods such as 'Budai' or 'Hotei' were illustrated which shows an

appreciation of their characteristics. But these would not transform the cell space compared with the other religious graffiti.

Nevertheless, the PJG's theme of religion is strongly based on the representation of an attachment to religious and sacred places, providing a more varied sense of place attachment than has been previously available in literature on the subject of prison graffiti, and which, it is hoped, would begin to aid future research on the complex issues of the inmates' relationship to religion and their attachment to sacred places.

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## Places

The theme of 'Place' within the PJG exerts its influence through the inmates' ability to recall a particular space or attachment to a place using illustrations of physical features with symbolic meanings, with the former often being a clue to the latter. In this paper the emphasis is on those physical features of places that are clues to that place's history.

Awareness of the place history intensifies place attachment, however, probably also the reverse holds true.

(Lewicka 2008, 211).

As Lewicka (2008) pointed out, the attachment to places expressed by people is usually based on the place's past and its connection with those people's own roots. However, looking at what the prison inmates left behind in relation to their memory of places, it is difficult to predict what might be hinted at concerning the inmates' emotional attachment to a place, as there would not be any exact reference to a place other than what was left behind on the walls of the prison cells. To understand even the basic meaning encapsulated in these illustrations of places, and in the written texts as well, would require the presence of, and

descriptions by, the inmates themselves to elaborate. It would be ideal to be able to work using their narrations, but the principle purpose for this research paper is to look at these images and the text on a very basic level by describing the drawings and transcribing the images.

The inscriptions that can be included in the theme of 'Places', appeared in various forms and guises throughout the graffiti from the PJG. They were often spotted through small hints, such as in texts on the walls that included the names of places, alongside inmates' nicknames, which often incorporated place attachments relating to their sense of origin and belonging (refer to 'Names' in this Chapter, page 244; and also in Chapter 3, page 99), and similarly with sacred spaces. The theme of 'Places' discussed in this paper expresses a more fundamental level, in which I propose that evaluation should be at the level of the drawings and the narratives found in the PJG, and I would have to be content with what that signified within the PJG.

The term 'place', can be shown as physical features and with symbolic meanings (Lewicka 2008, 211). However, the meaning has to remain subjective and abstract in many ways when dealing with the examples found in the PJG. Though images on the walls could be regarded as a kind of diversion, as merely ornamental drawings within the prison cell, they could also reveal how the inmate was coping with the incarceration process.

I have already discussed Medicott's (2004, 115) ideas about how inmates' graffiti showed that they had struggled to hang on to what were presumably memories stored in their minds by projecting them into the prison space by means of a sketch (refer to Chapter 3, 163). The PJG has demonstrated various types of drawing relating to places, and just like other themes in this research paper, these remain in brief sketches as fragments of description of whatever the inmates can manage to recall. If the graffiti seen in the PJG is an act of 'telling' via a visual

landscape, this would give it a substantially different meaning to other readers (apart from inmates sharing the same cell) who might have a chance of observing any of the graffiti within the PJG; hypothetically it would seem that these senses of place remained exclusively important only to the inmates who had drawn them. Consequently, only they could appreciate the distinct nature of what these places meant to them; any other readers would not be able to appreciate the inmates' sense of bonding and the importance to them of places represented on the walls.

It could be suggested that these images and texts were narrated out of a 'potpourri of memories', a term which Medlicott (2004) cited from Proshansky et. al. (1983). The term 'potpourri of memories' would be appropriate if this were to act as a description of the PJG, in which these graffiti were seen by the inmates as partial narratives about their decision on what to write and draw onto the walls of their prison cells. We have to remember as well that the inmates were restrained within their cell spaces, thus their ability to maintain their literacy was restricted. This ties in with my reference to Wilson's (2004) term used in her theory of the 'third space', in which inmates were re-adjusted and had their own ways of interacting and communicating through their collective imagination. This is not to suggest that the drawings and texts made were falsified, or even able to be proved true or factual. Yet what this would seem to suggest here is that the drawings of the PJG in some ways referred to various intertwined events which were familiar to the inmates, either through their own personal experiences or in their thoughts and they managed to cope with their incarceration by designing their cell spaces in this way.

Segregation of prison inmates is common in most prisons in Malaysia, and it would be no different in an old colonial prison such as Pudu Jail. The segregation of inmates within small confined spaces, which were often further divided and, it was often reported, congested as well, would lead the occupants to express themselves visually through drawings on the walls of

the prison cells. It was noted that the drawings referring to places seemed to be divided into two types: one illustrating a connection to the outside world and the other depicting life inside the prison space.

The latter was initially hard to recognise, as the usual expectation of the 'place' was at first thought to be the depiction of a physical place, which in this example of drawings became a narrative scene using the prison walls to transmit an actual scene, which may have happened within the prison cell. The accompaniments to these images, or texts, were often the depiction, and description of the prison bars, other inmates, bad food, prison routines and so forth. These elements suggested an embodiment of prison life, whether it was dealing with the inter-relationship with other inmates or a depiction of monotonous routines, which would be far from acceptable, yet they had to put up with these routines until they could be released from the space they were constrained in.

It was noted that the depiction of the world outside, whether it showed religious spaces or scenes of suburban homes in their surroundings, was carefully illustrated and even ornamented, and usually illustrated within a frame. It could be discussed in various ways as to how these two types might differ from one another visually and according to subject, but what seemed to be common was the suggestion that these subjects and objects that were illustrated and written onto the walls of the prison cells were totally familiar to the inmates who had drawn them, which suggested that the images within the walls of Pudu Jail were based on what the inmates had known and experienced, rather than being merely from their imagination and therefore unknown to them.

Exploration of new ideas and a new inventory of the inmates' various thoughts might be possible, but it requires a greater examination of feelings and beliefs; yet it is impossible to disguise the fact that the inmates' physical absence from the spaces which they had yet to

explore would not result in them being able to draw them as they were yet unable to depict them visually. This is not to suggest that they lacked the ability to think imaginatively, as they did spend many hours behind closed doors, but the graffiti seen certainly appeared to be limited to the local surroundings and depictions based on the materials, places and cultures round about where the prison was situated. These drawings were sympathetic, honest, and revealing, as there was plenty of time, as well as anxiety and boredom to be faced by the inmates while they were being incarcerated.

Martel (2006) addressed the issue of the preservation of identity echoed by the prison inmates<sup>71</sup>, which seemed to be an empirical discussion about narratives preserved by and extracted from women inmates, giving the iconic cultural mantra 'there is no place like home' its full meaning (Martel 2006, 594). The meaning of 'home', which suggests a sense of belonging, represented a conflict within the prison space, a struggle between spatial and temporal representation. On this point, I return to Lewicka's (2008) term 'place identity', in which she uses a psychological approach as *self-categorization in terms of place* (Lewicka 2008, 212). The inmates of Pudu Jail may not have shown the full extent of their ability to depict their previous identities through graffiti alone, but the space and adaptations they all made to the mundane prison cells had made them more than just an 8' x 10' compartmental cell using the emotional bonds between the inmates which seemed to resonate through these graffiti.

In both approaches, Martel (2006) and Lewicka (2008) had their own arguments and analogies between an autobiographical approach and the affected individuals' relation to their collective memory process. The term 'self-categorization' as noted by Lewicka (2008) here would be a key factor for me for recognising the types of places drawn by the Pudu Jail's inmates, where these graffiti could be attributed to the inmates' background as well. The familiarity of the places, be it in the form of a religious space or even a country scene, or a cell-scene (refer to Chapter 3 Plate 24, page 165), acknowledged that the inmates could be expected to illustrate

their own background without their realising it. For example in the case of the drawings of the Kaa'ba, one would expect these to be done by the Muslim inmates, as only they would be able to relate to this image based on what they were taught through their upbringing and the teachings from such a religious background. They were also high likely to be Malays because statistically a portion of this race would be expected to be Muslims. This approach relates also to the rest of the graffiti done by other inmates with different nationalities and racial backgrounds.

The drawings of places within the PJG had their own biased contribution in terms of their accuracy to depict spaces. This would be one-sided, showing empathy in various ways, and even having a romantic appeal in a sense as to how the place attachment could be a product of different place identities. Thus different places contained different meanings from the personal point of view of the inmates. The types of drawings of places within the PJG showed particular predispositions as would be expected; for example, the drawings of '*kampung*' (village) scenes would typically be done by Malays as it would be a common way to suggest identity in relation to this group of inmates.

These particular examples were seen to be related to the concept of 'identity', as much as they could be connected to the word 'places', and this perhaps agrees with Lewicka's (2008) meaning of "place-identity", which means a set of place features that guarantee the place's distinctiveness and continuity in time (Lewicka 2008, 211). Continuity described here may be something intangible, but it could be agreed that the images illustrated the dimension of places outside the walls of the prison space, or even within, distinguished by features and memories of the places where the inmates had been, even if it was only the same cell-space in which they lived.



Prison involves a sudden removal of an individual and a complete separation from home, family and social life into a restricted, constrained environment (Ireland and Archer 2000, 98). The prison space becomes part of the mechanism of change, just as prison itself does, a place of persuasion, which also has a role as a place of rehabilitation. The struggle to keep their personal identity and 'place attachment', through narrating their memories, either verbally or visually, is certainly seen as an attempt on the behalf of the inmates to recall the space (Medlicott 2004, 115).

As Medlicott (2004, 116) noted, the importance for the inmates of their memories of the past seems to recede, as they begin to develop changed priorities. The time spent in prison affected their sense of identity and they began to re-prioritise what they needed to do while in prison in order to survive in the outside world upon their release. The drawings of places, in a sense, seem to become relics, a past which the inmates would not be able to return to.



## Portraits

A portrait, in its most basic definition, is an illustration of a person, be it in a photograph, painting, drawing, or even engraving. However, the key feature that it must demonstrate is the depiction of the subject's face, or head and down to his/her shoulders at the very least<sup>72</sup>.

Portraits in the PJG in general were those drawn with similar attributes, where they were not done in the usual way of someone sitting in front of the artist but were done from the inmates' memories, and would imitate the photographic portraits that were usually to be found as framed images in local homes.

The illustrated drawings of faces were constructed shapes of the head, usually oblong in shape, with the eyes looking directly at the viewer, where the differences of each individual portrayed could only be determined by their facial hair, ears and dark or light hairstyles. Whether these had any similarity to the real-life features of the subjects being drawn would remain unknown as the identity of the inmates and their drawings would remain unrevealed within the PJG. Any arguments as to likeness, which I refer to, would be based on Lewicka's (2008, 211) suggested manner of 'identity', in which she refers to Jacobson-Widding (1983) who subscribed to the form of 'sameness' as a form of continuity, which, in relation to the PJG, was drawn based purely on memories in relation to people and places. Perhaps this interpretation of 'identity' could be seen in relation to peoples' sense of their memory of other individuals in the same way as their memory of places.

Although the examples and the measured studies of Lewicka's (2008) paper were based on 'places', I used a similar term as the essence of portraiture's 'identity' which would be just as important as those referred to as having an emotional attachment to 'places' when describing the graffiti of the same commitment and level of interest that was done within the prison

space. This attribution of 'identity' was also based on the importance of or significance to the inmates' personal interest, rather than based on any monetary or commissioned works.

There were several types of this graffiti noted in the PJG; there were those which depicted individuals, usually drawn down to their chest, and these were usually loved ones: girlfriends, wives, relatives. Others would show groups, usually illustrations of cellmates within the cell space while the rest often illustrated commonly reproduced portraits of popular icons from the music or movie industries. These icons were often depicted in the same way as images that would normally be seen on posters, cover albums, and in printed media such as magazines or newspapers.

The drawings of cultural icons could be referred to as another type of 'declaration', which was supposedly an attempt by the inmates to be recognised by whoever he or she preferred to be associated with in the previous world, before his/her incarceration; this is very similar to the inmates' efforts of writing or drawing out their place of origin, religious affiliations, and nicknames. The 'declaration' coined here, illustrated the intention of the inmates to find a clique with similar or at least, agreeable interests, or to make affiliations with other inmates through a personal shared interest in music and movie actresses through visual representations on the walls of their prison cells. Such graffiti also developed further into an assortment of various popular idols, presumably with similar nuances attached to their 'rebellious culture' with which they would be associated, creating meaning and identity for the inmate who put it up on the walls of the prison cell. (refer also to Chapter 3, page 187, on the adoration and adulation of celebrities in dormitory observations made by Kenneth Pimple 1986).

Some of the graffiti portraits referred to popular cultural references such as musicians (i.e.- 'Bob Marley', 'Guns and Roses', etc.), and to various cartoon strips and magazines in fashion in

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Malaysia in the early to mid 1990s. Anti-authoritarianism also has its place within the PJG portraiture, as the wardens themselves were often illustrated or mentioned in written texts (refer to Appendix o, PJG Volume 2, page 188, image ref: PJG\_422\_071-D-lv3-10); in this case, such graffiti was found in various cells within the juvenile cellblocks. Though few were observed in the rest of the cellblocks (which were those of adult male inmates and female inmates), the variance from the juvenile depictions of anti-authority was present because of the short-stay within the prison cells and their transgressive behaviour still not being subdued. Although there would be a debate as to whether these were drawn or written in the early stage of their detention or throughout the duration of their stay, this would remain unknown as the process of rehabilitation may or may not affect their judgement because of intervention treatment.

The creation of these popular cultural references perhaps moved further away from the creation of identity, and became more the creation of personal boundaries within the prison cells, maintaining by some means a visual representation of the stated 'anti-authority'. Music and bands also featured; some had written or drawn album covers which pointed to Heavy Metal groups such as Metallica, Guns 'N' Roses, Deep Purple, and Black Sabbath; it could also be seen as a potent source of meaning and identity to be fans of such bands (Wallach, Berger and Greene 2011, 3). This all suggests that the application of boundary creation and re-appropriating of the prison cell space for the inmates worked in a similar way to the dormitory boundaries as observed by Pimple (1986), through applying a form of visual declaration drawn or applied onto the walls of the prison cells. Being fans of a certain kind of music was not just an example of being a fan, but rather it could suggest the use of these iconic features as a defensive barrier or a way of retreating into individual identities (and this could apply as well to the strong presence of religious affiliations and graffiti probably connected with secret societies).

Popular culture certainly had its effect and could be observed within the PJG, but the focus of the discussion in this particular part of this paper will be on the types of portraiture that represent more personalised portraits made by the inmates of Pudu Jail.



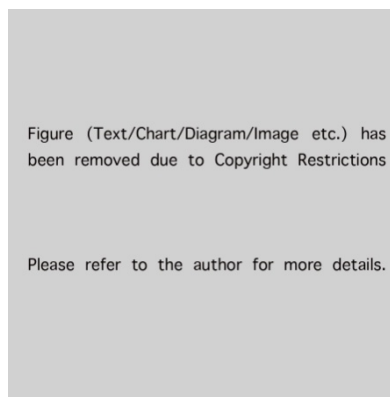
It would be difficult to tell whether these remnants of family-based portraiture emerged from the emotions raised by the lack of meaningful relationships and personal attachments, or through angst as a way of portraying external blame for their imprisonment. While the existence of self-portrayal was apparent on the walls of Pudu Jail, as these graffiti acted as a way of mirroring the self, they certainly had their own method of what appeared to be self-reflection, which varied from a depiction of themselves with others (family or lovers), or of other inmates sharing the prison cells.

I have referred to Symrin Gill and Tino Djumini's (2007) publication about the expression of family portraiture which had its own ideological implications about family images, particularly the family portraits that would be commonly found in most local homes in Malaysia and in its neighbouring countries which had their own focus on the institutionalised family. As the eldest, most senior member of the family was usually placed in the centre of any image, it would be interesting to find out whether this characteristic equally applied in the portraits of groups seen in the PJG.

There were very few portraits of groups of prison inmates in the graffiti (refer to Plate 24 and Plate 28, in Chapter 3, page 165 and 177), compared to individual portraits. However, it is interesting to point out that this type of portrait graffiti would reveal the relationship of the prison inmates to each other as a small glimpse of life within the prison cells. Usually, when looking at portraits, you see more of the drawn image of the person than the background, however, this was not always the case when looking at portraits from the PJG. The images, or

portraits were often drawn in a simplistic manner, and it needs to be understood that the ability to render properly a true likeness in terms of the image of the person whom the inmates were attempting to draw, would be limited depending on the surface material and tools used, and would certainly rely heavily on the inmates' own skills.

Limited though they may be, the basic thing to note here is that the portraits in the PJG could be recognised as graffiti of faces which were intended to be drawn as portraits; they were usually presented as the fully featured head of a person (eyes, ears, hair, lips, moles on the face, and so on), but it would be the eyes directed straight at the viewer which showed that the graffiti were meant solely as portraiture. The second point would be that the ornamental aspects of the individuals, from their dress to their jewellery, would enable the viewers not only to speculate about the racial background of the person depicted on the wall, but also at the same time allow them to gather information as to how these portraits illustrated the inmates' racial background as well. For example, there would be a high probability that the inmate who drew the image of a Malaysian Indian woman would be a Malaysian Indian himself; while this might seem to be a biased suggestion, it would be unlikely that an inmate of one race would produce drawings which depicted a specific portrait of an individual of another race.



**Plate 43 - Refer to Appendix o, PJG Volume 2, page 7, image ref: PJG\_240\_054c-lvl2-01, a collective faces of the Malaysian faces, imitating a style of local Malaysian cartoon. Graffiti observed in the lower part of the image, taken from Block C, level 2.**

However, it would be difficult to suggest that every inmate within Pudu Jail would prefer to draw only images of people of other races as this would not make sense on many levels of argument. What could challenge this notion would be when images of people became a collective narrative. In Plate 43, the inmate used a recognised style of cartoon which was common and well known in the local region from the local cartoon magazine, '*Gila-Gila*'. This particular style was an imitation of the work of a particular artist, *Don*<sup>73</sup>. The shapes of the portraits were anomalous as the heads drawn were elongated, with protruding eyes, smaller chins, broad noses and protruding teeth. However the detailing of facial hair, hairstyles, eyebrows and clothes was meticulous in differentiating one individual from the next.

The function of this particular graffiti may have been similar to comic strips, which contain their own satirical and critical nuances (refer to Mahmood 2010). As Plate 28 (Chapter 3, page 177) has shown these could also be seen as a kind of portraiture, although I would disagree to some extent with that as these drawings seem somehow to be disengaged from the personal and worked more as humour allowing whoever was viewing them to recognise and associate themselves (if possible) with the drawn characters on various satirical levels.

The portraitures of the PJG, which I would suggest contain their own criteria of unfamiliarity, as any observation of the individuals or groups portrayed on the walls of the prison cells of Pudu Jail would show them as illusive and arbitrary on a first look. They would convey different meanings and maintain the need to find a deeper association in these portraits demonstrating the exclusive importance of the image of a each drawn person to the inmate. This is not to say that this form of humorous illustration should not be considered as part of the collection, as it would still have had the function of revealing an association with local material culture originating from the outside world.

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Koopman's (1997) view of 'identity pointers' in graffiti portraiture in prison may be seen as an exploration of the prison experience, and this might also serve as a general canvas on which to describe what was observed overall in the PJG. The portraits in the PJG acted as a means of self-reference, whereby the viewers would be able to recognise the features of the drawn individuals or groups of people. However, the depictions would reveal only as much as the viewers were able to observe, and reflect the function or social placement these individuals might have had. The actual meaning and the original stories about these images would be inaccessible as these remained entirely within the minds of the inmates who drew them.

The inmates would begin to react in various ways to cope with their prison life and adjust to the incarceration process. What was seen here, in visual form, were the images of faces from Pudu Jail, which I like to think of as snapshots of identities, revealing memories in the form of drawings, a picturesque illustration of the inmates themselves and of those who had been close to them prior to their imprisonment. It acted in a sense, as a way for them to resist the conditioning of imprisonment, which could cause them to lose sight of what was significant to them.

I believe the nature of these portraits in the prison graffiti within Pudu Jail served as a simulated experience and were the remnants of a state of weakened identity as well as the inmates' memories and a complete renewal of themselves. It would, however, be arguably difficult to trace this within an actual drawing, as the images on the walls were just a slice of all that remained from the prison cells.



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## Animal

I have illustrated three examples of the types of representation in the theme of 'animals' within the PJG: the nostalgic relationship with a previous environment; religious symbolism or mythical representation; and anthropomorphism, which could be either an intellectual choice or a reference to local mysticism.

The attraction to the natural world, particularly the animal kingdom, has its own appeal as a narrative in the graffiti, which was found on the walls of Pudu Jail. These three categories of animals and creatures that were illustrated in the PJG, were the first example of the inmates' way of using illustrations of animals to furnish the landscape of the places which they recalled as home. Pudu Jail does not appear to have had any programmes in which the inmates had to carry out any form of animal care or feel a sense of companionship to help with recidivism or their rehabilitation process. Thus we are left with only the inmates' natural memories and what was left of their relationships to animals in various personalised bonds as illustrated on the walls of the prison.

I noted what Deaton (2005), Jerolmack (2007), and Furst (2007) had said about how the relationship between the inmates and their conduct with animals had led to various methodologies being used to assess behavioural and emotional variables and functions, although their studies had created very different perspectives and a symbolic relationship with the language of interaction had an indirect effect on the psychosocial state of the prison inmates; however, I also referred to Beer's (2005) point on the human desire to adopt animal characteristics in terms of anthropomorphism, which they usually did only partly, rather than fully, in order to compensate for the way their senses were being dulled. Beer (2005) gave examples of various creatures which they saw as a way of empathising with their human

inability to cope with their current state, and instead having the desire to adapt to or emulate the creatures' abilities to look anywhere outside the walls of the prison cells. Although this would be an interesting angle on this particular matter, the graffiti found in the PJG with regard to this seemed to question how much value was put on the human self, physically and spiritually, for the inmates to dwell on.

While there were exotic scenes with birds and animals peering out over the landscape, there was an absence of common local pets, such as cats and dogs on the walls of the prison cells. Such stimulation and affection between the inmates and animals may reveal a different paradigm, as any interaction with actual animals was not part of any rehabilitation programme within the prison system of Pudu Jail. The drawings of animals and creatures noted in the PJG were taken to have more of a symbolic presence and meaning, representing and embodying adjectives such as strong, vigorous, tranquil and so forth, which would be other than what was directly depicted of the creature. In the case of the graffiti illustrating birds perched on a tree branch under a bright full moon, this might suggest more of an emotional attachment, a symbolic representation of a relationship, which could either mean a loving relationship or could represent the loneliness felt by the inmates.

It would be difficult to judge whether this was attachment to animals on a personal relationship basis, as the drawings were too different and abstract to suggest their own narratives. As the inmates' expression of self-identification could be recognised in other variants of the suggested themes in this chapter such as how the inmates coped with the process of 'total institution', as Goffman (1961) put it, the inter-personal relationships with other humans (those on the outside of the prison walls and those within), places, time, and sacred places, these could be compartmentalised. However, the lack of graffiti of personal domesticated pets may not prove a lack of personal attachment to such creatures, but it may

suggest that the drawings of animals on the walls of the prison cells may have represented a different bond and self-identification.

In a spiritual sense, Braginsky (1993) noted that there were religious references to the spirit of man being seen as an abstraction and a metaphorical analogy. Although it was difficult to find meaning in the anthropomorphic representation and deductions in his writing, it contributed to this particular idea as being part of a coordination of humans' own carnal desires, which corresponded with the experience and desires expressed in the literature that the reader (or in this case, the inmate) subscribed to. Though I do not agree with many of the pseudo-analogies in this particular article, I cannot deny the expectation that other spiritual elements might have had a hand in forming the thoughts which the inmates of Pudu Jail might bring into the cells.

Whether or not the claim about the two merged elements may have its own discourse on the issue of *aniconism*, the practice of or belief in the avoidance or shunning of images of any human beings or living creatures, the documentation of such relationships challenges any interaction on the part of those who had failed to see human-animal interaction as anything other than just a mimetic representation, thus in this way leaving any real-life experience of actual reference to any living being (which in this case were the animals and creatures) as no more than just aesthetic values and due to their state of mind.

I used the term anthropomorphism which involves projecting human characteristics onto non-human forms, particularly assigning the features of humans onto other beings, other living forms, or even non-living forms (Horowitz and Bekoff 2007). I mentioned as well, in relation to this matter, that there could be relevance here regarding anthropomorphism in the form of fantasy in common cultural literature that emulates or depicts human behaviour as being reminiscent of animal behaviour (see Beer 2005; Wang and Dowker 2007). This would be a reasonable thing to suggest, in relating roles and symbolic representation, be it animal or a

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hybrid of various creatures, which in most cases would represent an ideal character standing as a protagonist, reproducing established stories and fables which the inmates would have read or heard prior to their imprisonment.

I also noted how Qur'anic calligraphy often contains designs in the shape of animals. These were mainly worked purely as decorative elements and were probably copied from posters which the inmates had made in specific wood workshops in which they added various decorative elements to the products which are sold to the public in a project organised by the Malaysian Prison Department. These images had no other purpose for changing the prison space, they were merely an applied practice which the inmates had learned and then re-applied within the prison cells. What these forms of graffiti do reveal is that the Qur'an could use various designs in a respectful way, which also plays around with the idea that animals, or any living forms, could be reproduced as stylised designs, without needing to actually illustrate the living beings directly.

In the case of symbolic creatures, particularly if these were drawn in a two-dimensional design, it would not be improbable to suggest that these were used to indicate the presence of secret societies such as the Chinese Malaysian Triad, the Malay underground groups, or any of the other various gangs which had their own divisions, families and sects within Pudu Jail. With powerful ties to the country's political powers and the presence of secret societies in territorial areas in the outside world, it would certainly be possible that the same influences would be applied in order to get a foothold within the prison cells, and to a great extent, have an impact on the entire prison block. The effect of this kind of drawing, such as the mythical Chinese dragon, or even the simple three lines (representing the Malay gang) carried their own strong and very specific association with fraternity and loyalty, and emphasised the hierarchy of power, acting as a proclamation on behalf of the group, demonstrating power, dominance and its own authority while maintaining its own elusiveness.



These elements (illustrations of human/animal creatures) may be related to 'outsider art', which may be shown in Plate 38 (Chapter 3, page 203). This particular term came about through the observation of Andrew Kennedy, a psychiatric patient at the Glasgow Royal Asylum and later at the Chrichton Royal Hospital in Dumfries, Scotland, who began to produce drawings and volumes of philosophical writings, and would cease from aggravating others and remain unperturbed during these creative acts (Parr 2006, 150). These actions, according to Hester Parr (2006, 150), clearly demonstrated the boundaries of madness and rationality through the expressions of a mentally-ill self.

On another note, the term 'outsider art' had different parameters if referring to Jean Dubuffet's 'Art Brut' (literally 'Raw Art') in 1945<sup>74</sup>, in which he described the creative work produced by individuals that was naïve in the eyes of the art world, with visual aesthetics placed on the very edge of the established mainstream art movements (Glazer 2009, 780; Parr 2006, 152). However, this evaluation which Dubuffet coined, which was originally a form of clinical therapy, later known as art therapy, seems to have receded to the shadows of history and became 'valueless' because of its clinical application (Parr 2006, 152).

I noted previously in Chapter 2 (page 69) on Schrift's (2006) study of an Angola prison's art, which gives an intriguing example of looking at prison art that falls short of being compartmentalised into the category of 'outsider art' if that describes the oddities of anthropomorphic, skewed illustrations of 'man-animals' as seen in Plate 38. This particular term, 'outsider art', as she suggested, was applied to most art made by the inmates such as tattoos, autobiographical drawings and paintings, soap arts, toilet-paper sculptures and so forth, usually done in a non-traditional form of visual art or craft (Schrift 2006, 258). Art produced within a commercially driven project may respond to the needs of the inmates for

something therapeutic and all the more so if it has an achievable goal of employing 'folkloric' aesthetics to meet consumer demand, so that the artworks they made could coincidentally be sold in the public market. This is especially interesting if its appearance fits with the themes of redemption or a form of religious renewal (Schrift 2006, 270) within the incarceration process. What is interesting is how Schrift (2006) observed that the alteration of the inmates' work was solely dependent on what the audience (in this case, the buyers) wanted or desired to look at: more religious symbols or texts, patriotically themed, and with less dark subject matter. The actions of drawing or making art for the purpose of selling it to the public perhaps diluted the actual or original art made by the inmates, thus raising the question of whether these works truly represented the premise of prison art.

Artworks, such as the prison graffiti seen in Pudu Jail, certainly had a different look and was unconnected with any form of commercial gain such as the art made for the sake of selling products that could be seen in the Malaysian Prison Craftworks Department (refer to the products seen on the Malaysian Prison Department's website<sup>1</sup>). Thus the craftwork, such as soap arts, tattoos, game pieces and so forth, which were made by the inmates within the prison, were used to specifically counteract time in prison which carries no worth in the public domain. This perhaps may be, on some level, similar to the function of 'outsider art' which, as pointed out by Parr (2006), was to contain and act as a communication between members of the institutionalised community, but was certainly different from the expectations of DuBuffet's 'art brut', whereby artworks were created through the means of invention.

On another point, I would argue that prison graffiti does not offer any form of presentation which could be called 'outsider art' on account of the way it is presented, contained within the prison cells. It may have its share of therapeutic values, visually dysfunctional in some cases, being the product of a total institution, namely a shared quality that may have therapeutic

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<sup>1</sup> <http://jpmportal.prison.gov.my/tempahan/>; accessed 20th February 2014)

values. However, there would be no circumstances in which it could be seen in any sense as having a commodity value due to it being on the prison walls.

This is not to discount the practising of art by the inmates for commercial reasons or to claim that their values are irrelevant when it comes to self-reflection, but it was obvious, because of the medium in which the graffiti was made, which was on the walls of the prison cells, that this art had different ulterior motives which were channelled differently such as the transformation of the space and the re-appropriation of that space.

In the case of graffiti, Wilson (2008) confirmed that this kind of phenomenon was due to the fact that the graffiti was drawn with no discernible audience in mind, which puts it into the category of a 'sign evidently intended purely as self-affirmation' (J. Z. Wilson 2008, 70). Based on this claim, the prison graffiti of the PJG represented material, which would have its own rich visual cultural language and differentiated itself as a complex category on its own.



This particular comment on anthropomorphism will not delve into the deep association of magic and mysteries in the shamanic practices of the Malay, which may, or may not, have existed behind the cell doors. Literature about dark spiritual practices always intrigues people, providing incriminating evidence, which was difficult to prove based only on visual representations of 'man-beasts' across the walls of Pudu Jail.

The local courts had difficulty with the legality of considering any form of criminality as a mystical practice, whether it was in the form of chants, visual signs or symbols which might relate to it. Such things were especially difficult to prove as not only did it require tangible and physical evidence of affliction or harm, but prosecutions could not take place based merely on subjective allegations (see Ahmad, Abdul Aziz and Jasni n.d.; Nicholas 2009). Nonetheless, it

may have had, in its own way, a verbal and narrative influence on local beliefs (see Nicholas, 2004;2009).

I want to elaborate at this point, as an observer of the animal-associated graffiti within the PJG, particularly concerning the matter of anthropomorphism and its link to the world of the unknown. It may have had an effect on inmates' literacy, which was brought into the prison cells, rather than something, which was learnt within. Such beliefs would not be spoken about freely among the inmates, as the administration of Islamic teaching in the majority of Malaysian prisons would forbid and not tolerate such practices. Though I would not discount the belief that such practices were present as quiet whispers in the shadows, I would agree with the ironic view of Nicholas' (2004; 2009) research on superstitious beliefs and practices in the region: "I do not believe in *them* (ghosts or any other form of supernatural elements), but they do exist".

It would be difficult and a complicated procedure to evaluate this idea further in this research paper, as it would need direct observation and interviews, at great length, with the prison inmates to examine statements about their religious beliefs. Even though those beliefs were in conflict with the syncretic beliefs of animism and the supernatural, they were proved to be common knowledge amongst the locals and never ceased to fascinate in much the same way as tales of folklore.

There is the question of whether belief in supernatural elements could be seen directly applied within the prison cells. If such beliefs were not condoned and even thinking about them as being possibly true would jeopardise the inmates' spiritual and religious practices, why would they be seen on the prison walls as noted in Plate 39 (Chapter 3, page 203)?

The basic objective of observing these drawings was to find any possible relevance with or link to any form of cultural belief and certainly one would commonly expect to find evidence of



mystical beliefs as well. This was reviewed in previous studies of Winsteadt 1951, Nicholas (2004, 2009), and observations from Swettenham (1895); it had been noted for a long time that these beliefs were rooted in almost all levels of local Malaysian and neighbouring societies. So it cannot be discounted that such belief in mysticism and the supernatural, ingrained in the common folk of the region, would be seen narrated in the graffiti on the walls just in the same way that foreign literature would depict the images of mermaids or stories about Pegasus.

But to accept that shamanism was present would need some proof that such practices could be observed somewhere within the prison; I believe that it would be unlikely to get such information directly from the inmates as this would need further proof and validation. I only had a brief conversation in passing with the ex-wardens of Pudu Jail, but I would strongly emphasise that to verify such existence of shamanism within the prison walls would require greater access and entirely different research objectives. At this particular point, I would be sceptical about claiming that the images seen in the PJG would prove to show any form of mystical practice, although it might just be a possibility.



## On Texts

Although it seems that the walls of the prison cells of Pudu Jail were periodically painted to maintain the surfaces and appearance of the prison, the inmates would presumably consider drawing and writing on the walls of their prison cell because the walls would be, for them, like a fresh canvas. The texts were much easier to understand with little to ponder over in terms of what the words might have meant compared to the images. This would not be to suggest that one should ignore the fact that any of these writings might have had hidden or subtle meanings.

Baer (2005, 211) had noted, during his prison visits, that the texts he observed were meant to be easily read and interpreted, and could reveal a significant amount about life within the prison cells. I agreed with various points in his paper about visual materials extracted from prisons, in a similar proportion to those from the PJG, that if the inmates were unable to vent their feelings through drawings on the walls, they would resort to writing, because they could perhaps give a more direct indication as to what they were thinking and feeling at the time, compared with the subjective interpretations taken from illustrations and drawings. Looking at what kinds of writing were done in the PJG, it was observed that the variety of subject matters was substantial and wide-ranging. However, the best way to tackle them would be to look at what characteristics these writings showed as that would give helpful clues towards defining the types of text that were done. It is interesting to note that the language used would be understood by any similarly literate inmates, which allowed the texts to be transferable. This would suggest that the graffiti texts were meant to be read by other inmates as well. This kind of writing therefore had the chance to influence people so it could be suggested that it was actually a form of negotiation.

Negotiation, in this particular case, would be with the other inmates who occupied the same cell space. These texts, almost directly engaged other inmates compared with the drawings, which could remain understandable only to the artist. These 'negotiations' which questioned their stay in prison, were much like a one-sided inquiry which coerced the readers (other inmates) to evaluate their hopes or to repent about their stay in prison in order to have a second chance.

These direct texts were usually left unchallenged by any other form of response; for example, there was no other graffiti of texts present to correspond with the series of questions noted on walls, such as happened with the toilet graffiti (see Whiting and Koller 2007; Dundes 1966). Although inmates could be sharing the prison cell it would still be looked on as a private space to some extent. It would be possible to suggest that such exchanges did not happen because these inmates shared the cell space, compared with the toilet graffiti where the occupants were anonymous and there would be no possibility of the authors meeting each other in person. It might be suggested that, if the inmates were undertaking any form of retaliation through written words in the prison cell, this could be seen as an act of disrespect and could easily lead to tension.

It is also important to note, during the observation of text and drawings of the graffiti within the PJG, that there was no sign of any of it being overwritten with or altered by other graffiti<sup>75</sup>, which suggested that most of the graffiti marked on the walls of Pudu Jail had remained intact just as how it had originally been drawn and written. This could be a small example of territorial claim with respect to the walls, since cell space was shared and restricted in the first place. My point here is that the texts and images in Pudu Jail had their own territorial space in which they each maintained their presence, yet complemented each other by maintaining a similar direction in terms of their subject.

What this would suggest is that the text-based graffiti would be evident in larger quantities than the drawings due to it being written in a smaller size, yet each one would need to be read individually, which would not be the case with the illustrated graffiti. While the drawn graffiti was usually larger in size and was very obvious within the cell rooms, text-based graffiti remained smaller in scale and personalised and the wall would still have space to allow any of the other inmates to write on it, just as long as there was no conflict of interest or challenge to others implicated by the extra writing on the walls.

Overall, the texts written by the inmates revealed their current and temporal emotional state. These *in situ* statements were usually in apologetic tones, as these graffiti were predominantly written about the inmates' fate of being in prison and asking for forgiveness from their loved ones. Though these may raise the question as to who were, supposedly, to read these and feel empathetic towards the inmates' grief; if they were directed to their loved ones, they were obviously in the outside world. Certainly such writing could not obscure the sorrowful words like the drawing of a loved one could, as the words could be read directly by other inmates.

Prison graffiti in forms of notations perhaps served as a direct and straightforward way of reading. Perhaps the inmates preferred to write rather than to draw because they wanted to share their words with other inmates who might be feeling similar grief. The stories were written like an open letter, yet what might be considered as the private story of one inmate, could be watered down enough for the readers (other inmates) to read them and they might or might not relate to them and ponder about them.

They also used lyrics and songs from popular culture within the region, so that specific choices in the type of lyrics written down were based on lost love and failed relationships, which the inmates of Pudu Jail had seemingly decided to use, re-appropriating the lyrics in relation to their feelings. These songs expressed their sorrow and, used by the inmates, the lyrics had an

emotional impact and certainly had different associations compared with their original context in the outside world. What this showed was that these songs and lyrics were personalised and acted as a representation of the inmates' feelings. For example, *Titip Rindu Buat Ayah*<sup>76</sup> (Entrusted Love and Longing for Dear Father), a song by Ebeit G. Ade, an Indonesian singer and songwriter, contained lyrics about a son reminiscing about his father, a hard-working farmer. This would certainly mean something different for the inmate who had used this song, which suggests that the lyrics might have increased his grief and his empathy for his father to a greater extent compared with the original rendition of the song by the songwriter himself.

Alternatively, the inmates of Pudu Jail composed their own four-sentence stanzas of *Pantun* (short evocative verses), *syair* (narrative poems), or *peribahasa* (collections of sayings) which contained various examples of a play on words which were subtle and contained multiple meanings. I have referred to Goddard's (1997) paper on his evaluation of the Malay's 'rule of speaking', which could also be applied to the culture-specific ideas found within the texts of graffiti in the PJG. With regard to the Malay texts, which are the dominant part of the PJG, these maintained in various places the characteristics, which still apply to the Malay tradition (*adat*), in which demonstrating value through words allows a refined restraint from an actual direct criticism (Goddard 1997, 186).

Thinking in general about the usage of the Malay texts in the PJG, the focal point of the inmates' use of *pantun*, *syair*, and *peribahasa*, found on the prison walls, related to the fundamental concept that the inmates had a keen social sense of *malu*<sup>77</sup>, which directly translated means a sense of shame or shyness, a notion of trying to ascertain what others might think of them and how that might jeopardise their 'dignity' and 'self-respect' (refer to Goddard 1997, 187-88). These apologetic and remorseful tones dominate the narratives of the PJG and occurred almost throughout the written texts in the PJG.

Not all texts in the PJG refer to a relative comparison on the level of relationships of one to another; a good example is the texts transcribed and translated from the condemned cell in Block D (refer to Plate 23 & Figure 10, in Chapter 3, page 155 & 157), Called *Salvation*, it uses the symbolic meaning of the swan geese, common in Chinese literature associated with departures, homesickness and loneliness expressed in more melancholic tones (Preston 2014). What was different in this cell was that the writing seen on this particular wall combined Christianity, American-based Christian hymns, and the kind of Chinese poetry written in a style which was supposedly phased out in China in 1949. These gave various clues as to the background of the inmate responsible for this graffiti, as the condemned cell would only be occupied by one inmate at a time. There is a strong probability that this graffiti was done by an inmate who apparently had a wide range of knowledge and Western cultural affiliations, which would not indicate a Malaysian background.

Obscenities and anti-authority statements were also noted in the PJG, and while these were usually contained in short, spontaneous phrases, these graffiti were expressed as visible sentiments. Resistance of authority in the writing was very clearly aimed at the prison itself, although it would suggest that the frustration and resentment were aimed at the entire routine and enforcement of discipline rather than at the physical structure of the prison itself (refer to Plate 40 , Chapter 3, page 213<sup>2</sup>). However, examples of retaliation in the form of text were surprisingly few. This could have been because the walls would have been seen by the wardens which may have discouraged the inmates from lashing out at anyone specific, or other inmates may have suggested that the use of strong words was rude or inappropriate (*biadap*). Consequently, retaliation was very evident in alternatives ways, usually shown visually in an illustrated form which could not be easily read visually or directly understood,

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<sup>2</sup> Refer also to Appendix o; Pudu Jail's Graffiti, Volume 2 of 2, page 188, of a crossed-out portrait sketch of a warden.

thus masking the fact that the graffiti was a direct form of resentment, making it more personalised and subjective.

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## **Conclusion**

A similar trait shared among all the graffiti is that these images and texts were all based on the inmates' memories with very little or no access to the actual source material. From places to individuals, food to religious spaces, all were scratched freehand onto the walls of the prison cells. Inmates were left to conjure up drawings and texts based on their literacy and whatever memories remained of the things they knew.

The images and text were drawn, from music to popular celebrities, based on their own strengths and the current conditions in which they found themselves; they would take into account the inmates with whom they shared the cells, as they would have to negotiate first about what would be common to them all so as to stay in agreement with one another.

Memories may have become diminished as they would have gone through the rigorous processes of incarceration and all the disciplinary routines; however what they left on the walls of Pudu Jail left various trails which defined their personal past histories. These graffiti were not only seen as memorial scriptures, they could also be used to connect an inmate with other inmates through his affiliations, not only of a religious nature, but also depending on their point of origin.

The inmates of Pudu Jail experienced their share of disciplinary routines, which mostly arose through various religious indoctrinations, applied vigorously through lectures and activities given by organisations from the outside world. It was noted that inmates appeared to be susceptible to being influenced and were easily programmed to convert and re-enforce their

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religious beliefs and practices. This would then persuade them to use the ample time they had, because of being idle, to transform a portion of their prison cell to be dedicated to their religious practices.

Time would certainly be measured by the inmates through the marks they made on the walls; some attempted to count the days they had spent in the prison while others measured the time up to a specific event which turned their stay in prison and the actual cell space, into a temporal space. Continuous, repetitive routines not only made physical demands on them as well as the mental effects of the religious teachings, but prison meals also took their toll on the inmates' motivation to do anything whenever they could manage to imagine the day of their release. These were all subtly noted, yet apparent, on the walls of the prison. The issue of diet would be raised in future research as to its implications not only as a part of rehabilitation, but also the way it helped to recall their cultural values through the preparation of a recognisable diet in terms of appearance and taste, which they would experience at a regular time of the day when the inmates would gather and have a shared meal.

Transformation of space, be it temporary or even for some, permanent, was apparent when it came to religious connections. Several religious requirements required the devotee to allocate both time and a dedicated portion of space to accommodate their body during rituals and postures. The inmates began to deal with their need to alter the appearance of the bland space of the prison cell. While in most cases, it would not be an absolute condition required of the devotees that they manage their prayers, they would begin to ornament the space which was to become their sacred space, suggesting that these ornaments may have 'helped' the devotees to conduct their prayers because of familiar objects and decoration. For some, these decorative acts served also as an invisible barrier to exclude non-devotees and separate off the space within the small prison cell. They would also serve to demonstrate a sense of devotion, a declaration of spirituality to the rest of the inmates within the prison cells and also to any new



occupants of their cell. In a sense, which I ascribe to Flemings (2001), being surrounded by religious icons or texts would mean that one might be perceived as 'being' and doing good.

The influence of religion may not have been the only source of inspiration, as the inmates sometimes used motifs of flora and fauna to decorate their cell space. Animal motifs were used in various guises, from simple depiction, to complete fantasy based on literature which the inmates might have remembered and had reformulated the protagonistic characters as a way of coping, leading all the way towards the possibility of shamanism and mystical beliefs, which would be unspoken but illustrated on the wall of the prison cells.

Creatures which were illustrated on the walls were drawn with the intention of their being in a sense a representation rather than the depiction of the creature itself. Whether it was animals that really existed, or mythical creatures from fables and common folklore, the illustration of animals, which were done in an anthropomorphic way taking into account any human characteristics, and such fantasies would be commonly regarded as an escapist route for them.

While in some sense the odd combination of human anatomy with that of creatures could possibly be considered as a kind of 'outsider art', I had discarded this term as, in fact, the purpose of creating drawings merely for the sake of invention does not fit with the motives behind the PJG. Each drawing or text within the PJG had its own set of intentions, no matter how deep or shallow the feelings about them held by the inmates of Pudu Jail may have been. The significance of 'self-affirmation' is important, and the journey of coping with prison identity through relinquishing most of their possessions and status meant that what remained would be their most significant memories. They would recall what mattered to them, what embodied a sense of familiarity and would re-appropriate their prison space accordingly. In addition, these drawings were done on a medium (the prison cell walls) which it was not in any

way possible to improve, and these different conditions mean that in no way could these images be described as 'outsider art'.

Though retaliation or resistance in texts may not be visible, graffiti in the form of texts still constituted a large section in which the inmates began to have their say and transfer their thoughts onto the prison walls. This spread of written and drawn images seemed to create chains with other graffiti joining with one another, creating a mass of visual noise like a pattern on the wall, decorating the space. This may be reminiscent of the 'Broken Windows' theory, a study done by James Wilson and George Kelling (1982), where they discussed the idea that deterioration of the urban environment became more apparent and would spread further if graffiti or despoiled urban areas were left to decline even more. Whereas Wilson and Kelling (1982, 1) noted that this would, in effect, spread anti-social behaviour and create a 'fearful' and 'risky' environment in a public domain, this would not seem to be the case with prison graffiti. As I have pointed out in various parts of this chapter, graffiti seems to offer direct and indirect engagement and, done by the inmates, was meant exclusively for the inmates.

The 'self-affirmations' as noted by Wilson (2008, 70) would be seen on various levels with thematic variations within the PJG. Although the graffiti done within the prison was made within the prison cells this was seemingly allowed by the wardens who recognised that the inmates would have need of some kind of outlet, with at least some element of creativity. The local explanation for this form of activity would be that it was to '*release tension*', a paratactic mode of expression, an orally oriented phrase which the urban Malay language speakers could be lulled into thinking that, when they use such a mode of urban formulaic expression, would refer to an activity that is in some way related to stress relief (refer to Govindasamy and Kahn, 2006).

Symbols and other motifs, which were covered briefly in Chapter 3, occurred as various articles covering a range of subjects from automotives, icons and corporate logos, political symbols, cigarettes, boats and ships, flowers, knives, heart-shapes and various others. These would suggest merely random motifs on various personal levels, yet they would vary in meaning as they would have a very different significance for the inmates (even just as random sketches) than their original depiction would suggest. Just as the drawings of places, sacred spaces, the lyrics of music and poetry were originally created in another space (the outside world), as the inmates began to replicate images of these articles, they began to take on other shapes which would be just as subjective and engage the viewer as imprints within the prison cells.

Through direct reading, transcribing and translation it was obvious that the PJG is not to be looked upon as a trivial subject. Every mark made by these inmates carries its own intensity, as it required considerable physical pressure with the hands to scratch these significant markings, which shows a more determined intention to leave the messages intended behind than would be evident in the more casual methods of recording by writing on paper. The walls, which had been created as a barrier between themselves and the world, had now become the medium and the keeper of such messages.

## Chapter 4 Notes

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<sup>63</sup> Refer to Hanes (2005); Yogan and Johnson (2006); Johnson (2009); Koopman (1997); Baer (2005); Klofas and Cutshall (1985)

<sup>64</sup> Refer to Kupfer (2011); J. Z. Wilson (2008a; 2008b) in Chapter 2. Refer also to the current research paper by Costanzo, Bull and Smith (2013) paper on referring graffiti in relation to the current social, political and also based on historical evidence which determine the shape of prison graffiti.

<sup>65</sup> Report from the News Strait Times, 25 December 1985, which stated that Pudu Jail had accommodated around 5,000 inmates even though it was only supposed to hold 800 inmates.

<sup>66</sup> Sykes and Messinger (1960) argued that prisoners develop an 'inmate code' of values which govern social relations within the prison. The code centres on:

- loyalty towards other prisoners (don't interfere with inmates' legitimate or illegitimate interests, don't grass/rat on another prisoner);
- absence of arguments between prisoners (play it cool, do your own time);
- avoidance of exploitation (don't steal from cons, don't break your word, don't be a racketeer, be right);
- maintenance of self (don't weaken, be tough, be a man); and
- distrust of prison staff (don't be a sucker, be sharp).

(Phillips 2007, 76)

<sup>67</sup> Refer to Appendix o, PJG Volume 1, page 186, image ref: PJG\_184\_048c-lvl2-12; from cell block C, level 2

x KATA KENANGAN x

Masa-masaku dipenjara tak pernah kulupakan  
Seumur hidup, tiap pagi ku buang tong sambil berlari  
& tiap hari makan ikan asin dan dapat pisang ayam yang kecil  
Dan menyanyi sambil berteriak  
Itulah kisah derita ku dan kalau aku bawa buang  
Aku sedih meninggalkan Malaysia  
Selamat tinggal Malaysia  
Aku mau pulang - tanam jagung  
From - Pendatang haram

*translation*

x Words of Remembrance x

I shall not forget my time in prison  
For my whole life, every morning I had to clear the waste pail while running  
And every day I had to eat salted fish along with a banana with a small portion of chicken  
And I sang while screaming  
This is my story of suffering that I shall carry on to forget  
I am sad to leave Malaysia  
Goodbye Malaysia  
I want to return (home) - planting corn  
From - Illegal Immigrant

<sup>68</sup> It was noted in Chapter 3's endnote, xv (page 234) that the inmates' used their initiative in their efforts to make use of the prison environment and how, using the bare minimum of ingredients taken

from the prison's canteen and some of the prison tools, they had managed to bake their own cake in order to celebrate an event or festivity within the prison cells.

<sup>69</sup> The Chinese Lunar calendar is divided into a cycle of twelve years. Each year is named after an animal: Rat, Ox, Tiger, Hare, Dragon, Snake, Horse, Sheep, Monkey, Chicken, Dog and Pig.  
(Haji Ishak 2009, 8-9)

<sup>70</sup> The rigid boundaries of the ritual time-space of the salat, however, are not only visible in the elaborate entry procedures. Once within the ritual time-space the practitioner must not abort the salat prematurely or leave it because of any distraction until it is concluded.  
(Henkel 2005, 497)

<sup>71</sup> Joane Martel (2006, 588) evaluated the experiential narratives of women segregated in a federal and/or a provincial prison in Canada, based on her previous pilot research in 1995.

<sup>72</sup> Refer to Oxford Dictionary's definition;  
<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/portrait>, accessed February 20th 2014.

<sup>73</sup> Based on e-mail correspondence (14th January 2014) with Prof Dr. Mulyadi Mahmood, a friend and previous colleague who had been awarded his doctorate for his research on historical and contemporary cartoons in Malaya / Malaysia, which inadvertently gave him the moniker of 'Dr. Cartoon'.

<sup>74</sup> Refer also to Dubuffet's foundation summary on Outsiders' Art:  
[http://www.dubuffetfondation.com/artbrut\\_f\\_ang.htm](http://www.dubuffetfondation.com/artbrut_f_ang.htm)  
Accessed 15th February 2014

<sup>75</sup> Though it was noted that in some drawings of full-figured females, marks had been added to the bodies to indicate nipples and pubic hair, thus 'sexualising' the subject, which suggested that this was done by different inmates based on overlapping, different strokes and usually observed of different materials used in the mark-makings as well.

<sup>76</sup> Image referred to PJG's *Titip Rindu Buat Ayah*; refer to Appendix o, PJG Volume 2, page 179, image ref: PJG\_412\_070-D-lv13-14. Graffiti observed in cell room located in Block D, level 3.

<sup>77</sup> Swift (1965:110) equates *malu* with "hypersensitiveness to what other people are thinking about one" though note the ethnocentric perspective reflected in the prefix 'hyper-'.  
(Goddard 1997, 187)

K. Ismail (2014)

## Chapter 4

Discussion of the Pudu Jail's Graffiti  
Pudu Jail's Graffiti: Beyond the Prison Cells

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# Chapter 5

Research Conclusion

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## Chapter 5 Introduction

This Chapter marked the summary for this research marks as the end of my research journey, since the day I set foot in Pudu Jail in late 2002. This thesis had confirmed the potential of more research possibilities in defining more contexts that could be extracted in the PJG. The aspiration to grow of one research journey is the ways I see in moving forward for what could be very few research in the field of prison graffiti.

This chapter would view the summary of this thesis, alongside of brief reviews of other research on prison graffiti, alongside with my position on the Pudu Jail's graffiti.

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## Research Discussion and Contribution

Prisons aren't people, they're situations; they can't carry a plot on their own. The three most obvious ways of creating a story about prisons are by showing people (1) rebelling against them, (2) trying to get out of them, and (3) trying to change them. In all three cases, prison becomes the antagonist.

(Cox 2009, 156)

Perhaps how it came initially to be a research project was through my wondering why a prison such as Pudu Jail appeared to be such an ominous and dark place during my previous visit. It seemed a remnant of an old past with very little to reveal about the stories of the previous occupants.

Stephen Cox's (2009) view of prison was that it was a duel between two sides: the will of the inmates against the intimidating institutional setting of the prison. Perhaps it was curiosity about the hidden stories behind these walls, which led me to agree with Cox's (2009) point of view, to look at what seemed to be a great narrative to explore. It was my urge to give a closer

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### Pudu Jail's Graffiti: Beyond the Prison Cells

account of what was unknown and hidden that gave me the enthusiasm to consider that the aim of this photographic portfolio of graffiti in Pudu Jail might help to throw light on the challenges faced by the inmates.

It would be possible to see Pudu prison life as organic and flexible, as it entailed different, unorthodox ways of dealing with the whole institutional life, with the space being used by many unknown bodies (the inmates) with different reasons for being there and different backgrounds, leading to a tremendous variety of ways in which the data observed could be used. One could not possibly arrive at the conclusion that all prisoners think and respond through graffiti in the same way. Therefore prison graffiti cannot be quantified equally at the same level, based on the value of what was perceived by the reader against the level of commitment of the inmates' attempt to re-appropriate their cell spaces.

There would be many more stories to be told of the rest of the graffiti that was left out from this thesis, and it will raise more variants and the possibilities in tying the links of its making towards the vernacular culture which surrounds it.

By constantly referring to the subject, the use of visual ethnographic through content analysis research method lends itself to reflexivity (direct analysis) in order to find the hidden visual voices within institutional spaces. With the various partial narratives, I had began to fill in the narrative gaps with various visible clues from what was transcribed and translated, from personal knowledge and other literature which might be relevant and connected, which meant turning this part of the research in order to read and develop the meaning of the images.

What was revealed in the direct analysis process gave me a greater insight into the basic narrative of the prison space and brought out the reflexivity of my own personal heritage, and shifted my own preconception of related local knowledge of the prison community that I had visited in the past. Being Malay, a Muslim and a Malaysian, I could not help but relate to most

of these narratives in empathising with the world of the inmates during the research process. Yet I learned it would take further appreciation of the overall values, or what was left of them, of the Pudu prison inmates.

The study of the prison graffiti within Pudu Jail has shown its ideas on the presence of vernacular cultures, which parallel with similar research, which had been done of graffiti within prisons. Looking back on both Anita Wilson (2004) and Jaqueline Wilson (2008a; 2008b; 2008c) included their experiences in their hypotheses, which shed some light on prison graffiti, and how it reflected that the inmates, who they observed (through the graffiti), demonstrated similar themes (such as time, humour, issues of masculinity, poetry, etc.). However, they did not consider this to be absolute, as they did not want prison graffiti to be 'pigeon-holed' but rather to remain open-ended. I believe this would be similar in the case of PJG as well.

What they did discuss was that the variations represented not just one cumulative story in each of the graffiti, but rather were reflexive accounts that involved the researcher along with the inmates. At this point their views differed as Anita Wilson (2004) discussed the application of third-space theory, which highlights the inmates' ability to learn and re-apply their knowledge through the improvisation of available materials and through socialising within and beyond the cell walls. Jaqueline Wilson's (2008a; 2008b; 2008c) studies on the other hand dealt with various points about the interest of the space being that it was a focal point involving 'Dark Tourism', masculinity, relationships and desires, which emphasised that what the inmates had left behind should be a truly essential validating component in researching any institutional places.

Current research by Constanzo, Bull and Smith (2013) approached prison graffiti through contextualising the texts and images, which were found. I agree at various points that to show a link between these images demonstrated an effort to have graffiti to be seen as valid data, which could probably be connected to the resources of the outside world. While this might be

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ideal, the need to observe and find connections through various relevant sources would impose a higher premium on the quality of the graffiti: the graffiti would have to contain specific dates, and there would need to be access to internal information or even structured interviews with the inmates and their associated wardens.

The visual ethnographic studies of prison graffiti by Constanzo, Bull and Smith (2013) balances out Anita Wilson's (2004) arguments in utilising inmates' perspective to explain their rationale interest in the alteration of prison cell space. Whereas Jacqueline Wilson's (2008) approach maintained a different perspective by using unobtrusive methods of observation, which also encompassed historical, political and feminist views when considering the effect of the inmates' reflexivity.

The main question here would be: what if these were not readily available? There would be a certain limited amount of information to be gained through the news media, reports, government's documents, or local historical accounts, which might throw some light into the prison cells. This, however, could not be justified if any of the prison graffiti that was found and observed had to be discounted because of a lack of information revealing why the graffiti was there and what it might relate to.

Reflexivity here was the key point in reading the prison graffiti for this research, as these had carried the suggestions of it being more than just decorative elements within the space. Though it would have various points in historical, political, cultural, popular literatures and media of the time.

Pudu prison graffiti prompted another way of looking at its thematic content. The question was could any of the drawings and writings in the graffiti be the product of hallucination? So far, the drawings had revealed various local subjects and were restricted to what seemed to be familiar subjects, objects, places, songs, poetries, languages, religious symbols, icons, sermons,

creatures, faces, schedules and recognised affiliates (first person/inmates' names). It would be accepted in this study, so far, that the PJG contained familiar cultural references and localised knowledge based on the expected demographic of the prison facility and the time frame which the prison inmates were last held, which such visual and textual aspects had been brought into Pudu prison's spaces and drawn accordingly by the inmates.

Prison inmates had to resort to 'self-affirmation' as Jacqueline Wilson (2008b, 70) pointed out, because of the immediate deprivation of their past, and their identity being replaced as soon as they were admitted into the prison. They managed to use what was left of their knowledge, or even overcome the trauma of being placed involuntarily in prison, so that their need to re-appropriate and alter the prison cells helped to 're-ignite' some of what was lost<sup>78</sup>. This had then developed the inmates' creative skills and their improvisation of materials, which were available to them, to alter and transform the space so as to be visually similar to what was significant for them.

Yet, their attempts to re-ignite who the inmates were, their past relationships, and events of what was important and significant to them, were etched into the walls of the cells in which they lived. The graffiti came to represent what could be considered as remnants of the inmates within those cells who had confronted the space and approached it with their own ways of re-appropriating it.

Even though the inmates had to go through rigorous physical and mental routines, which would represent the main objective of the prison system to change their previous habits, what would be important to note would be their return to the same space at the end of the day. As they would certainly see the marks left by themselves (the inmates), this would help, even temporarily, to disengage themselves from the stagnant confined area and routine idleness.

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It is possible that some of these graffiti could be seen as remnants from re-enforcement in the prison's disciplinary methods, for example in those cells filled with religious inscriptions, could be suggested as an indirect effect from continuous religious, daily disciplinary routine. This in effect, might explain why many of the graffiti in the PJG showed the transformation of the cell space through visual religious articles, which turned the solitary confinement into a simulated form of sacred space.

It was noted that the core routines of the Malaysian prison day were to instil discipline rather than letting any idleness sets in. They had to face not only militaristic routines of marching, with a rigid adherence to the timetable of group activities, but that they also emphasised a religious imposition (mainly the Muslims) through lectures and compulsory group praying throughout the day.

As the inmates returns to their cells, it would be suggested that they would have had begun to alter the space which contain the religious qualities to re-enforce those teachings, whether they were done intentionally or subconsciously.

As was mentioned earlier, many of the images found in the PJG were a series of 'collages' (Chapter 3, page 166), which could, perhaps, be a way of describing the partial narratives that seemed to have no beginning, and were certainly missing a conclusion, which had been omitted. The graffiti done by the inmates was about what they knew and understood in that moment, and was often based on an event, which was most vivid in their minds. It might be memories of their recent past, or something from recent activities within the prison premises, demonstrating that these markings contained what was relevant, personally, to the inmates.

Another consideration would be how they got hold of materials to use for making the graffiti: the inmates also had to work, which would give them a source and choice of tools with which to leave marks on the walls. Compared to graffiti done in an urban space, prison graffiti was

carried out in a different way as it had to be done with whatever limited and available resources they could find, which were usually not meant to be used as they were for defacing the walls. The markings were deliberately etched onto hard surfaces, and this would be a slow process and usually on a much smaller scale as the tools they used could only mark the surface (objects with hard points, carbon pencils, inks, brushes, etc), and required the use of a larger amount of energy for each letter and line that was drawn. The inmates were limited to their prison-issue clothing, towels, bed sheets and basic grooming tools but the very act of re-appropriating and transforming the space into a familiar, representational space would have reminded them of home, or at least given them the gist of that.

Each of the Pudu Jail's graffiti would have its own personalised aspects as far as editorial content was concerned; as prison cell's graffiti were done by the inmates, which exclusively meant for their pleasure and re-purposing their space (religious function and cultural memories).

Other inmates who shared the same cell space would see these graffiti being done, and the wardens would easily see them as they routinely inspected the cells. Thus, the editorial consideration of the community within the cell space, alongside with routine inspection, would maintain some form of editorial considerations of most graffiti from being excessively vulgar.

Consequently, because of these considerations and the choice of words and images, it was noted in the PJG there were very few profanities or obscenities in the words or illustrations. Though, such excess profanities would not be the limited expression for editorial consideration what needs to be on the wall other than frustrations and anger. For it being in a 'quasi-private space' (J. Wilson, 2008b, 70), it still did not deter the inmates from expressing what mattered most to them, and it held clues for finding a link to where they came from (based on the reference of visual demographic, description of place, popular literatures of the time, political statements, etc.).

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## Pudu Jail's Graffiti: Beyond the Prison Cells

Though the topics varied from one narrative to the next, what was common was that these details were etched and drawn onto the walls as a reminder to the inmates of what was significant to them, from the most mundane subjects all the way up to showing a high level of reverence for their maker. These graffiti had not only recorded aspects of their lives as a devotee to their religion, as the graffiti were used as markings to transform the space, temporarily, into a personalised place of worship.

The use of texts or narratives in the PJG became an additional conduit for relaying messages within the prison cells as well. In general, the text-based graffiti's narratives were more of direct descriptions, or queries, and some showed a subtle style of personalised intervention. This form of graffiti had various functions, and seemed to be acting as indirect, one-way dialogues. In some cases these might have had the subconscious effect; strong or subtle suggestions, in encouraging the inmates to mull over their mistakes, which had led to them being in prison.

Such wall dialogues were based on common local cultural practices, which maintained restraint from confrontational behaviour and encouraged conservative speech and mannerisms (typically for the Malays). Thus the wall had become the broadcast medium, a subtle advisory tool that could also be seen as an astute form of stimulus.





## Conclusion

As a whole, this study suggests that the prison graffiti from Pudu Jail was in line with research questions based on indirect evidence derived from the portfolio of the Pudu Jail's graffiti. It continued to reflect vernacular cultural practices stemming from the religious beliefs, personal memories, and popular culture (music, celebrities and literature) of the local and neighbouring countries where the inmates originate of the time.

In some parts of the prison's graffiti, it was possible that such visual reflections of popular culture, and even religious texts and images, would indeed become an embodiment of the prison cell space as an indirect means of bringing the viewers towards an understanding of these visual narratives. Thus, as a reader myself, I had discovered that these kinds of wall marking carried their own community codes and internal hierarchies which may have influenced the inmates or the prison cells' previous occupants.

Future studies in prison graffiti using a content analysis approach, with the potential to refer to its context as well, will help to clarify the nature, purpose and amount of diversity in the prison graffiti, and allow us to assess whether the results reflect vernacular and popular culture as being representative of the inmates' narratives as well.

There is the intention for this entire collection of images to be prepared for an exhibition if possible. By recognising the values and narratives for these images, it would favour towards a reflective arrangements for the Pudu Jail's Graffiti.

This is an original research into the graffiti which was found within the cells of the Pudu Jail, as it was approached in stages of content and context research summaries in order to arrive

towards the conclusion of the graffiti's role and its function to alter the space it embodies.

How these forms of graffiti closely resembles a diary's daily entries: a mixture of memories, events, places, the professing of love, religious commitments and various tell-tale signs of messages that seemed to have been made exclusively for the inmates themselves.

Alongside with other form of markings which repeats and / or emulated the spaces which exists in the outside world, these personalised marks would suggest it differed significantly not only of what these graffiti portrayed, but it involved the inmates' sense of belonging, returning to the past, and replacing the sterility function of the cell space.

I hope that this research would become a part of the continuing studies in prison graffiti. As this research came from a different background, from the author to the subject itself, where the context of the PJG showed the graffiti contained references relating to the cultural locality that is predominantly in the region of Southeast Asia, with great concentrations of culturally relevant to the Malaysian Peninsular and its region due to its situated demographic.

While using content methodology to categorise the contents in order to draw out the discourse that they contained through studies of context, I experienced various exhilarating moments in learning about cultural, sociological and local folkloric practices that were related to the graffiti found in the PJG. There were various points where it had challenged and reformed my biased views and gave me a fresh new understanding of what might have been being said about various subjects (from perception of names, micro-cultural practices, pragmatic religious culture within the prison, etc.) which could indicate that they were important to and significant for these inmates. By adding a new perspective and further knowledge to the current studies of prison graffiti, I feel that this may have immense potential to contribute to how we view the dimension of prison graffiti.

## Chapter 5 Notes

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<sup>78</sup> The deprivation model was initially proposed by Sykes to explain the inmate's response to the pain of imprisonment (Sykes, 1958). Under this model, inmates are seen as being deprived of five basic needs: personal security, heterosexual relationships, material possessions, autonomy and social acceptance (Sykes, 1958; Sykes and Messinger, 1960)

(Clear and Sumter 2002, 130)

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**a. Preliminary Statistical Count on the Pudu Jail's Graffiti (Nov-Dec 2011)**

*(i) Text-Based Graffiti*

Table 1 - Text-Based Graffiti from the PJG

Total Text Based Graffiti		
Category	Count	Percentage
<b>Markings</b>		
Scratch	9	7.76%
Paint	5	4.31%
Indentations	5	4.31%
Clippings	3	2.59%
Stickers	3	2.59%
Carbon	51	43.97%
Ink	39	33.62%
Others	1	0.86%
Total	116	100.00%
<b>Graffiti Observed</b>		
Complete	75	67.57%
Partial (Outside F-O-R)	11	9.91%
Partial (Faded)	25	22.52%
Total	111	100.00%
<b>Type of Graffiti</b>		
Tag / Prisoners' Number	13	6.40%
Calendar (Text)	4	1.97%
Calendar (Numerical)	16	7.88%
Location	15	7.39%
Name (Male)	29	14.29%
Name (Female)	8	3.94%
Sexual Indication	2	0.99%
Cultural Reference	8	3.94%
Religious References	17	8.37%
Count	19	9.36%
Initials	10	4.93%
Symbols / Icons	10	4.93%
Notations	52	25.62%
Total	203	100.00%
<b>Language</b>		
English	44	40.74%
Malay	45	41.67%
Chinese	1	0.93%
Arab	12	11.11%
Indian (Tamil)	2	1.85%
Others	4	3.70%
Total	108	100.00%

*(ii) Image-Based Graffiti*

Table 2 - Image-Based graffiti from the PJG

<b>Total Image Based Graffiti</b>		
<b>Category</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Markings</b>		
Scratch	4	4.17%
Paint	19	19.79%
Indentations	5	5.21%
Clippings	15	15.63%
Photographs	3	3.13%
Stickers	8	8.33%
Carbon	25	26.04%
Ink	16	16.67%
Others	1	1.04%
<b>Total</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Graffiti Observed</b>		
Complete	63	75.00%
Partial (Outside Frame of Reference)	6	7.14%
Partial (Faded)	15	17.86%
<b>Total</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Type of Graffiti</b>		
Location	4	2.67%
Person (Individual)	18	12.00%
Person (Group, >2)	4	2.67%
Religious	11	7.33%
Gender (Male)	7	4.67%
Gender (Female)	14	9.33%
Sexual Indication (Male)	1	0.67%
Sexual Indication (Female)	4	2.67%
Animals	12	8.00%
Plants	6	4.00%
Transportations	5	3.33%
Structures / Buildings	5	3.33%
Small Items / Objects	19	12.67%
Symbols	26	17.33%
Others	14	9.33%
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100%</b>

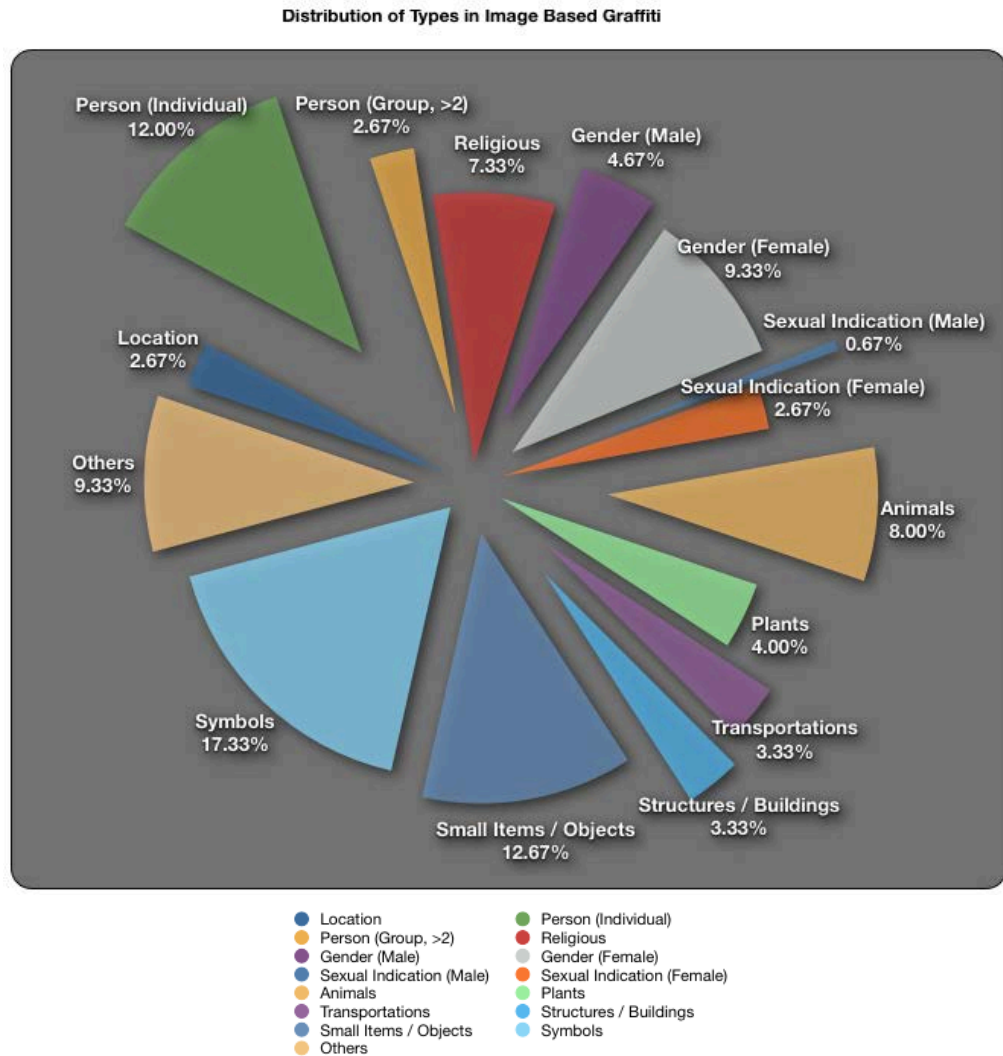


Chart 1 - Chart Distribution of image-based graffiti

***(iii) Distribution of General Categories in the Image-Based Graffiti***

The distribution of the image-based graffiti shown in Chart 1 above indicated the segregations of categories of the drawings, illustrations, symbols, logo, and any pictorial being observed in the PJG. The examination in these categories identifies the frequencies in the types of subjects and the visual thought processes of the inmates. These samples were taken from the Short-term prison blocks (Block A & B), in which might suggest the strength of other miscellaneous subjects besides the core themes of the PJG.

Distribution of Types in Text Based Graffiti

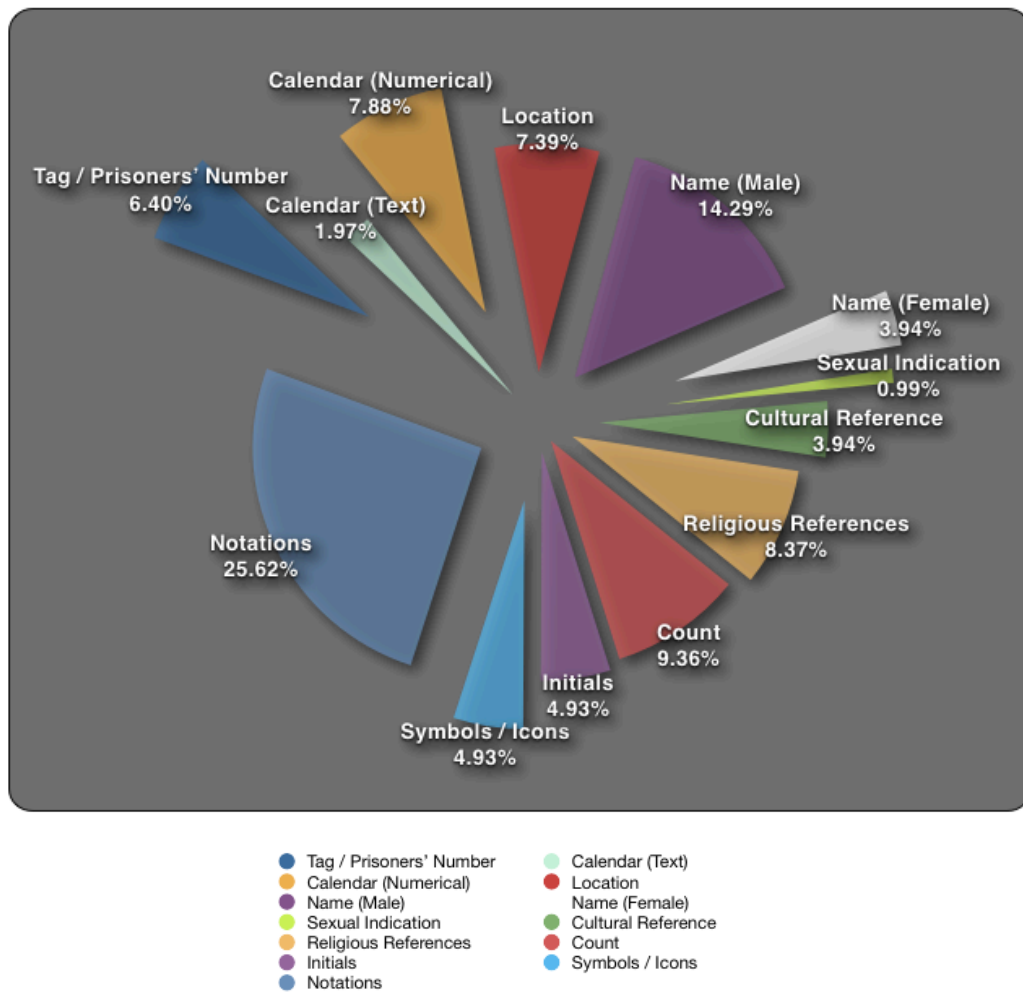


Chart 2 - Chart distribution of text-based graffiti from the PJG

*(iv) Distribution of Categories in Text-Based Graffiti*

The frequencies in these categories had given similar cohesive estimations in to the distributions in the types of the graffiti seen in the preliminary review in Chart 2. The distributions of the charts' dimensions had given the relative textual and values in representing the approach in the placements of images within the portfolio.

It would be possible to conduct a comparative generalization, which might illustrate the models that carries the conventional values and based on these variables in recognizing which comes first as a signified.

This may open a connective pattern of social values within the memories of the past occupants in the illustrated inter-personal relationship towards the images, which depicted the varieties drawn onto the walls of the cellular space.

*(v) Total of Graffiti Observed from 51 Plates of 462 (November-December 2011)*

Graffiti Observed	Text Based	Image Based	Subtotal
Complete	75	63	<b>138</b>
Partial (Outside Frame of Reference)	11	6	<b>17</b>
Partial (Faded, Damaged, or Torn)	25	15	<b>40</b>
Subtotal	<b>111</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>195</b>
<b>Total Graffiti Observed</b>			
Current Images Processed		51 of 462	11.04%

Table 3 - Preliminary table of graffiti distribution observed from 51 plates

~

*(vi) Preliminary Display of graffiti counts from the PJG*



Figure 22 - Preliminary observations made on types of graffiti, 2010

**b. Pudu Jail distribution of inmates (based on 2003 notes)**

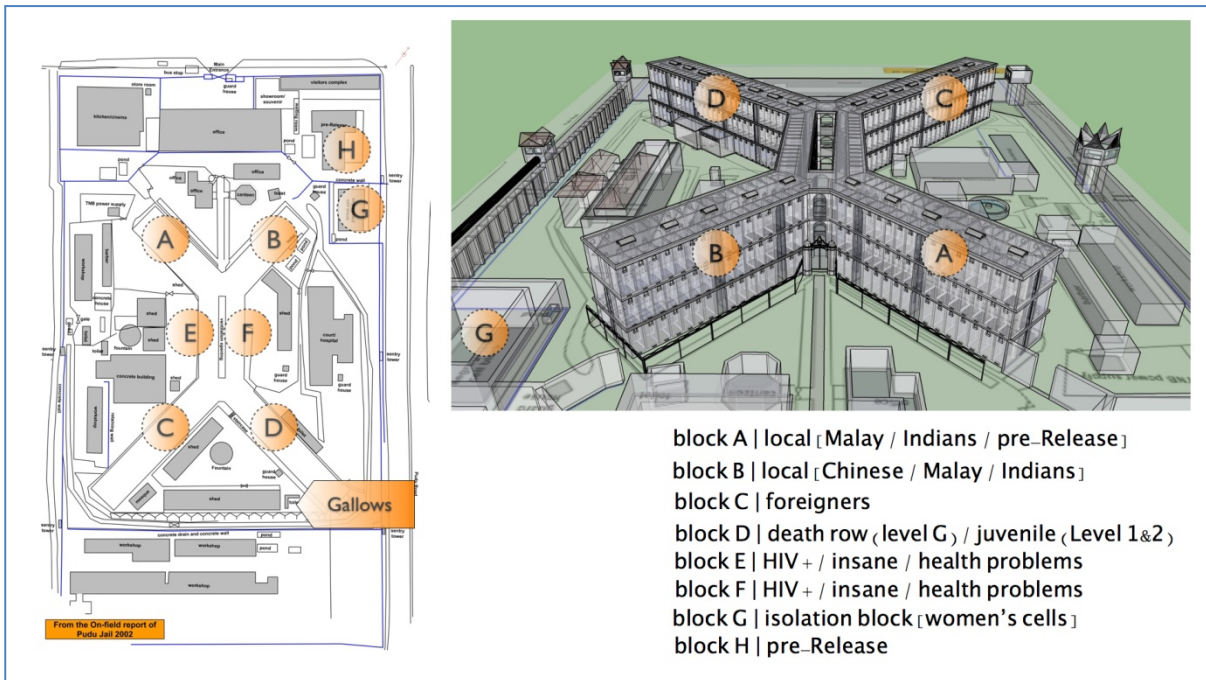


Figure 23 - Inmates' distribution within Pudu Jail, note by the author in 2003

~

**c. Sketch of the 2nd Floor of the cell spaces of the main prison block**

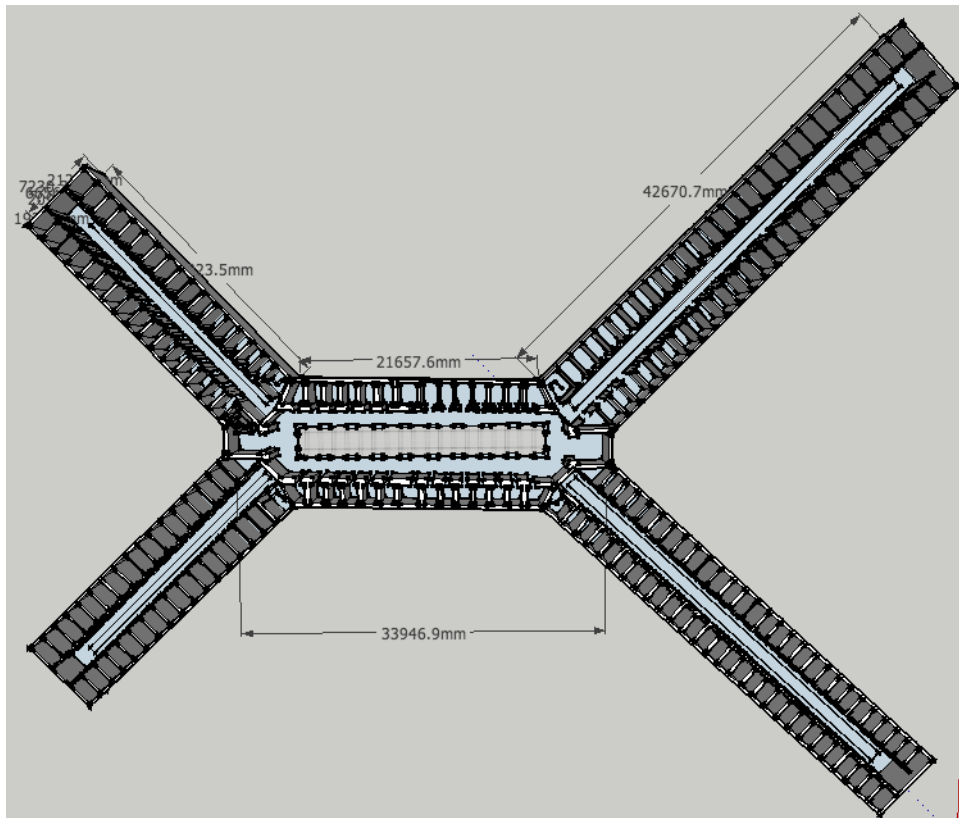


Figure 24 - Sample of 3D sketch of the Pudu Jail main block, level 2





#### d. 3D sketch of the Pudu Jail

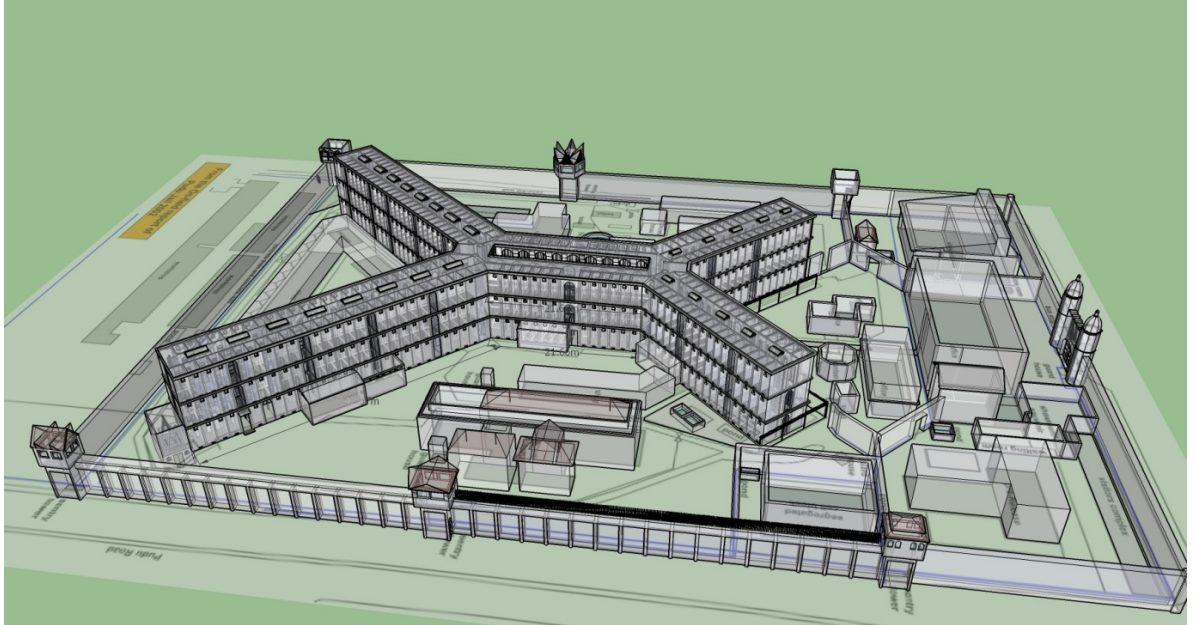


Figure 25 - 3D Sketch of Pudu Jail

Re-building the Pudu Jail's plans and layout in digital 3-D: In understanding the building's facade via interior & exterior and its spatial surroundings, the detailed description of the cells, and its spatial outlines, charts and the graffiti's distributions as a part of the documentation procedure. The layout of the Pudu Jail's blueprint in 3-D mapping via Google Sketchup based on the recollection from on-site observation and various secondary sources would provide the acceleration needed to digest the spatial layout.

Refer to the Google Sketch-up Software:

<http://www.sketchup.com>

(accessed 30th Dec 2011)

### e. The Pudu Jail's Cells

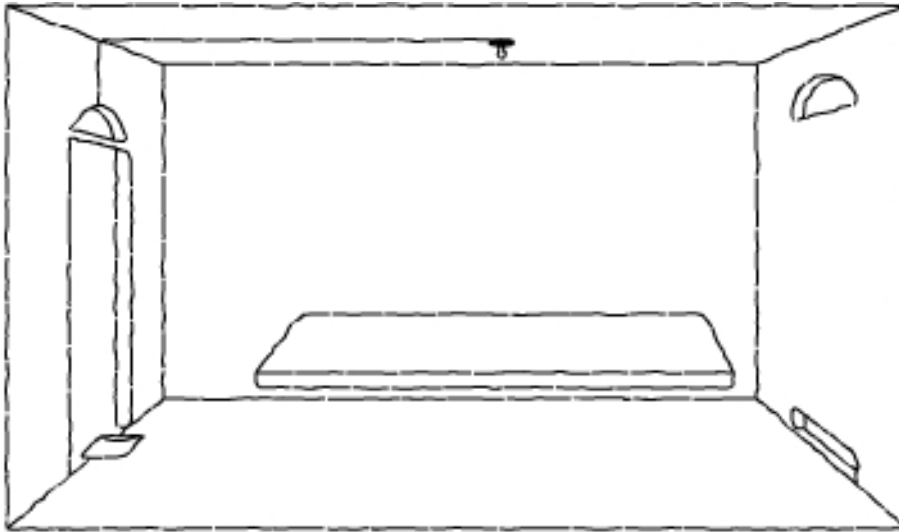


Figure 26 - Sketch of the cell space of the Pudu Jail

Average dimension of cell space: 8' x 10'

The common cells within the three floors were divided into five sub-blocks: Block A, B<sup>1</sup>, C<sup>2</sup>, D<sup>3</sup>, and E<sup>4</sup>, (Block F: Isolation cell block, Block G: the women prisoners' block) was designed for at a maximum numbers of 5 inmates at a time. Its floor space was estimated at 7ft. (width) x12 ft. (length), with the height of the cell unit at an average of 8.5-9 feet. An elevated cement sleeping benches measured at 6½ ft. (length) x 1ft. (height elevated from the floor) x 2 ft. (width) x ½ ft. (thick).

Commonly there would be one removable sewage pail or basket in each cell. On the back wall; there are two openings; one lays at the feet of the wall, bearing only with an opening gap of estimated 6 inches (length) of 5-6 inches (height) x 10-12 inches (width) opening, and the other was on the top of the ceiling, with a semi circle opening (10-12 inches in diameter), which were partitioned with several iron bars on both holes.

The cell door, made of solid timber wood, has a small peep-hole which were almost vary in shapes from one door to the next (from 2 inches sized hole to a 4 inches square openings). Though most of the doors were found missing from the cell rooms (observed during documentation period in 2002-03), but it was noted the doors and iron locks in the cell block D were left untouched. A dug-out cement at the feet of the door measuring around 2-2½ inches

---

<sup>1</sup> Block A & B mainly deals with Drug cases

<sup>2</sup> Block C were mainly foreigners

<sup>3</sup> Block D's 1<sup>st</sup> floor (or lower ground) and parts of the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor were meant for pending death penalty by the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> floors hall, lies the gallows. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor were reserved for juvenile, with different entrance and exits from the death row inmates.

<sup>4</sup> Block E's were meant for mental patients, it also housed for a library, a medical officer's room, and a storage room.

deep and 12 inches in length; which letters, parcels, news from the outside world, and sometimes official papers are passed. The walls were covered in plasters and watered down white paint from the on-site observation.

#### f. The Cell Blocks

The Pudu Jail prison had not suffered from a severe overcrowding situation except for a limited period during 1985, where the prison facility was overwhelmed with estimated inmates of 6,550<sup>5</sup> (Pudu Jail could only accommodate around 900-950 prisoners of the 250 cells, which the average of 26.2 prisoners per cell, which was impossible fitting for comfort as the dimension of each cells being calculated).

Cell counts: Block A: 84 cells, Block B: 83 cells, Block C: 132 cells, Block D: 2 <sup>nd</sup> & 3 <sup>rd</sup> floor: 88 cells, Death Row 1 <sup>st</sup> floor: 8 cells (total cells observed: 395 cells).
--

Excluding the last 8 cells in Block D, without the count of Block E, F, and G, the numbers of maximum accommodation of 5 inmates of the 388 cells, would be 1,940. Which had originally were more than the estimated 900-950 as reported. Hence, the estimated numbers of prisoners' per cell were more agreeable to the prisoners' reallocation, numbering 1,585, to Sungai Buloh's Prison facility in 1997.

Refer also to the "Measured Drawing: Pudu Jail", by the Bachelor of Science in Architecture, session 1997/98, University Malaya, for more detailed measurements of the Pudu Jail.

---

<sup>5</sup> "Berita Penjara" No.2, December 1996, Jabatan Penjara Malaysia. Archive ref no. 1997/000050

g. On-field sketch of the Pudu Prison's grounds, 2002-03

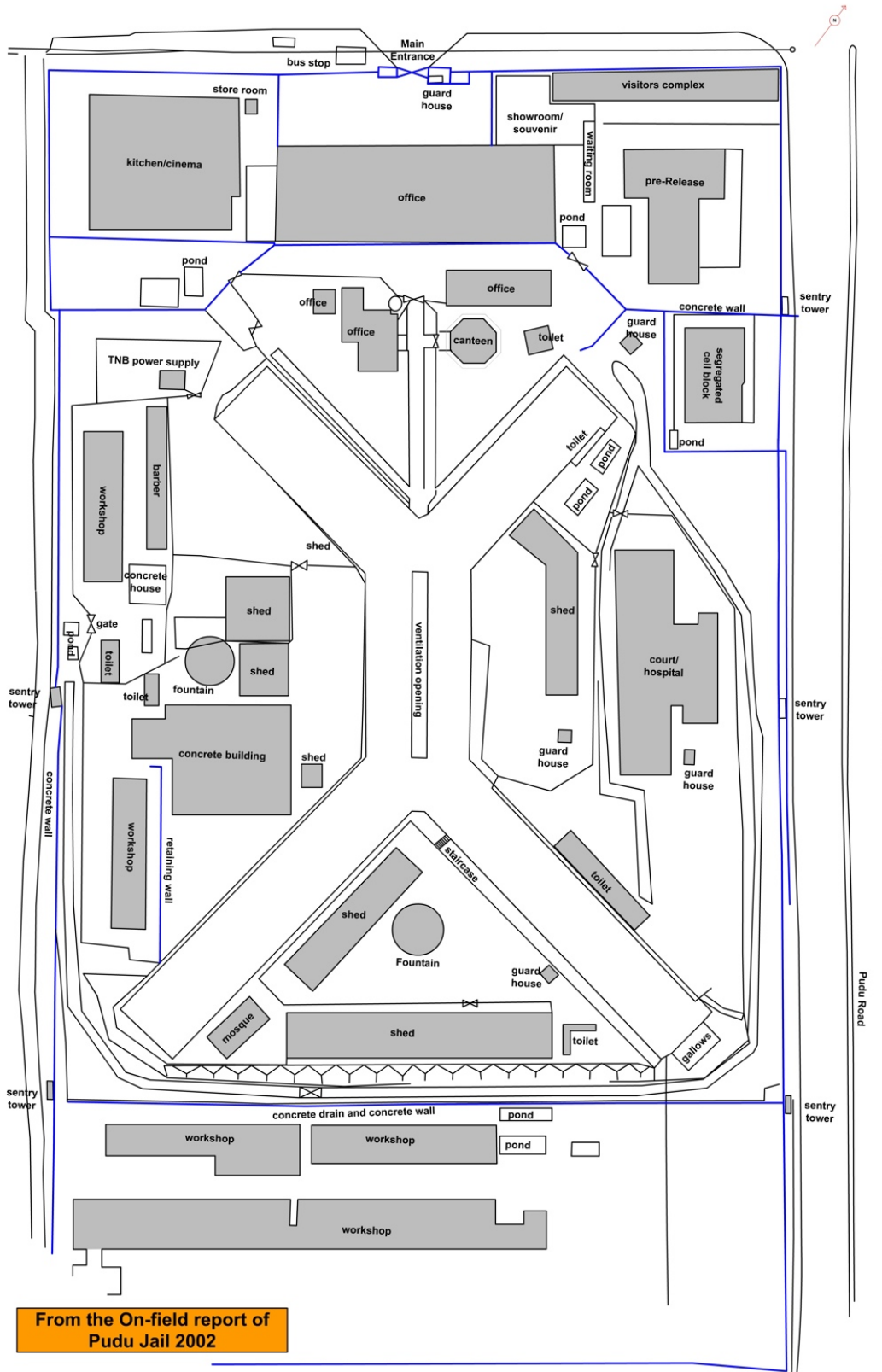


Figure 27 - On-site Sketch of the Pudu Jail during documentation 2002-03 by the author



**h. Prison Map of the Pudu Jail's Drainage system proposed by C.E. Spooner.  
Retrieved from the Malaysian National Archive**

Figure (Text/Chart/Diagram/Image etc.) has been removed due to Copyright Restrictions

Please refer to the author for more details.

**Figure 28 - Blueprint copy of the Pudu Jail by C.S. Spooner 1896. Retrieved from the Malaysian National Archive**

As most of the buildings with high volume of occupants would require, a surface drainage system was built to provide a proper expel of sewerage. C.E. Spooner stated in his letter<sup>6</sup> to the Government Secretary of Selangor, the arrangement for the drainage will be running parallel with all the buildings, the land would be levelled as indicated; the drainage would have only one outflow running along the gallows (Block D) and carried under the South-East walls.

---

<sup>6</sup> Ref#: 1957/ 0057839, "Report on drainage & latrine accommodation at the new gaol"

Prior to the country's independence in 1957, there were no proper sewerage systems in Malaya. The need for proper sewerage treatment wasn't in demand due to the low population densities and very limited urbanized developments. Sewage treatment was mainly by way of primitive methods such as pit and bucket latrines, over-hanging latrines and direct discharge to rivers and seas. When Malaya began to develop itself and move from an agriculture-based to an industry-based country, the need for proper sanitation arose later with the treatment of Septic tanks in the 60's and biological oxidation in the 70's. (R.G. Candiah<sup>7</sup>, 2004). Although such development of the sewerage system was considerable construction throughout the city, the Pudu Prison, remained on surface level for its sewerage piping rather than underground sewerage, as it was linked with the same outlet to the main sewerage line in Jalan Pudu.



### i. Malaysian Prison estimated expenses for one prisoner per day (Year 2011)

Articles	Cost Estimate (in Malaysian Ringgit)	* Cost Estimate (in Pound Sterling)
Food/drinks (price of raw foods, groceries, preparation, and kitchen safety control)	RM 7.98	£ 1.68
Service costs (envelopes/stamps/ electricity/water/sports/reading materials and medical costs)	RM 1.07	£ 0.22
Clothes (pants/shirts/towel/etc)	RM 1.27	£ 0.27
Daily expenses (toothpaste/toothbrush/ soap)	RM 0.24	£ 0.05
Hygiene	RM 4.43	£ 0.93
Meeting supervision and safety control	RM 0.69	£ 0.15
Record and Registration Office management	RM 2.48	£ 0.52
Safety management and control	RM 13.75	£ 2.89
Rehabilitation programme	RM 3.09	£ 0.65
<b>TOTAL COSTS</b>	<b>RM 35.00 per day</b>	<b>£ 7.36 per day</b>

(Yaacob 2012, 1495)

Table 4 - Malaysian Prison inmates daily expenses. Reported by Hakimah Yaacob 2012

\* - Cost estimation in Pound Sterling, based on historical currency conversion in January 1st, 2011 at the exchange rate of 1.00 MYR = 0.210195 GBP.

Refer to <http://fxtop.com/en/currency-converter-past.php>, accessed 30th December 2013

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<sup>7</sup> Institution of Engineers Malaysia's Bulletin, "JURUTERA" September Issue 2004

**j. Prisoners Daily Diet** (Malaysian Institute of Law 2006, pp. 169-175)

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**k. Sample of Muslims' Praying Mat**



Plate 44 - Sample of Muslim Praying Mat manufactured design, commonly found in most local Muslim devotees' homes in Malaysia

## I. Prison Visit, Sungai Udang 2012

The absence of graffiti in prison cells struck me on the visit I made in Malaysia in 2012, to observe the modern facilities in Sungai Udang prison. I saw that the prisoners we visited, both men and women, squatted with their heads down, facing the ground, in our presence. None dared to look up and answer "Tuan", which directly translated means, "Master", whenever spoken to by their officers.

I suspect this was not a representative situation as I was escorted by the Director General of Malaysian Prisons himself during the visit. However, I was assured that this was the common behaviour expected of the prisoners whenever a higher senior warden or officer was present, with or without visitors. On my visit, I had peered into most of the cells and had observed the impressive control that they had obviously applied to ensure that the prison cells were pristinely organised, almost without, or had only very faint signs of graffiti. Subtle indentations on the walls revealed that attempts to add prison graffiti had been made, however, these had been quickly whitewashed and rendered totally illegible, defeating any attempt to study them. Unable to access such evidence, the only way to study any signs of self-assertion would be, almost exclusively, through personal interviews with the prisoners themselves. This raises several problems as most research involving interviews with any convicts would require permission from higher authorities within the Ministry of Home Affairs, and, in most cases, to my knowledge, had proved futile. Any such contact with prisoners, to be written and published as research, would be put through a thorough editorial process which usually results in the research paper being 'sanitised' and certainly lacks any autonomous control from the researchers themselves. In most informal responses from the Prison Department the situation remains the same as they consider any review done within the prisons as sensitive material and papers must be submitted to their administrations. This refusal is, perhaps, a backlash for the authoritative power, and prevents any surveys being done from within (see Whalen (2006).

Figure (Text/Chart/Diagram/Image etc.) has been removed due to Copyright Restrictions

Please refer to the author for more details.

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### Plate 45 - Images retrieved from Mohd Noah's (2012) Conference proceedings and report.

New cell space and design from Sungai Udang Prison Complex, Malacca, Malaysia, built in 2010. Similar designs were adapted throughout most of the recently built prisons in Malaysia, such as Bentong Prison (2005), Kluang Prison (2004), Dungun Correctional Centre (2011), Johor Bahru Remand Centre (2010) and Perlis Prison (2011).

The cells are governed with a strict regime of cleanliness and militaristic routines to prevent any form of alteration. None are spared from the sight of the wardens and certainly routine cell inspections deter any form of damage or alteration (see appendices). These empty spaces somehow reflect the 'ideal' that convicts should be denied any chance to produce any graffiti that would reflect the intricacies of prison

Appendices  
Pudu Jail's Graffiti: Beyond the Prison Cells

life or its regulations. The routine checks and constant observation thus appeared to be an efficient means of quashing even the possibility of dissident behaviour. Daily life, if discussed at all, amounted to nothing more than an inevitable march towards the sterility of the prison becoming the best mechanism for making the body docile. The absence of graffiti, perhaps, would be unusual, as the presence of graffiti is considered by as the 'most natural avenue of non-violent self-expression' (Wilson 2008c, 334). Sungai Udang prison might just be an exceptional case, where the actions of determined wardens ensured a clean and pristine prison, along with the fact that it is a considerably new and expensive prison only built some years ago. This might change with time and with the considerable strain of regular yearly maintenance and keeping the wardens' interested in looking after the facilities.

But this doesn't answer the important questions about understanding the use of space by the general prison population. Most normal accounts can be found in statistical data, plans and deterrent goals for achieving stability and control in a prison population. A review from the Deputy Commissioner of Prisons, Abdul Aziz Mohamad, during the proceedings of an annual Prison Conference for directors of prisons in Kuala Lumpur in 2012, Mohamad (2012) had presented the outlined issues of overcrowding and presented resolutions and strategies to address this through the future designs of the country's prisons, either by refurbishing or expanding the space. This presentation played along the line in keeping with the image of managerial perspective, as I regularly questioned him in regards to the current motivation in better conditions of the prisoners' upkeep, updates on mental and physical healthcare, and motivational workshops, on several occasions during and after the proceedings, which most were replied with reservations. I knew then pushing my way to pick into their incarceration programmes would quickly seal any further dialogue.



**m. Past exhibition of the Pudu Jail's Graffiti (Selected works from the Portfolio)**



**Plate 46 - Pudu Jail's Graffiti Past Exhibitions**

Left to Right : "New Wave of Responsive Images" Exhibition at the Nikon Ginza Salon for the Tokyo Month of Photography. A travelling exhibition of 10 Malaysian Photographers that was held in Istanbul & Japan. Solo Exhibition "Live Animals Inside!", "New Wave of Responsive Images", & "Last Voices of Pudu Jail"

**Pudu Jail's Graffiti's past exhibitions:**

1. International Orange Photography Festival, Contemporary Photography from South East Asia, Changsha, Hunan Province, China, Selected Works, 2010
2. "The Malaysian Exhibition", Selected work; Higashikawa, Hokkaido, Japan, 2009
3. Tokyo Month of Photography 2009, International exhibition "Photographers Asia 2009: Malaysia", Selected Works, Ginza Nikon Salon, 2009
4. "New Wave of Responsive Images", Selected Works, Istanbul 2009
5. "Atonement: Last Voices of the Pudu Jail", Bastion House, Malaysia, 2009
6. Singapore International Photography Festival 2008, Selected works  
2902 Gallery & National Museum of Singapore; Singapore 2008  
Traveling Exhibition: Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok & Manila, 2008-2009
7. Solo Exhibition: "live animals inside!", Wei Ling's Gallery, KL, Malaysia 2008

#### **n. Presentation and Conferences Attended; where the subject of research had been presented**

- Paper Presentation, "Museums of Memories", University of Plymouth, 2014.
- Guest Participant, "2nd Annual Prison & Correctional Facilities Asia" Conference, Kuala Lumpur 2012
- Paper Presentation, "Radical Aesthetics: Critical Dialogue", Loughborough University, UK 2012
- Paper Presentation, "Experiencing Prison" Conference, Poland, Warsaw, 2011
- Paper Presentation, "FIXED?" Conference, University of Plymouth, Devon, UK, 2011
- Invited Speaker, Badan Warisan Malaysia (Malaysian Heritage Organization), 2009
- Invited Speaker, Chai Art House PJ, Malaysia 2009
- Invited Speaker, Malaysian Prison Department, 2008 & 2009
- Paper Presentation, International Symposium of Electronic Arts (ISEA), Singapore 2008

#### **o. The Pudu Jail's Graffiti Plates**

The accompanied books, "Pudu Jail's Graffiti", Volume 1 of 2; and Volume 2 of 2, has been removed due to Copyright Restrictions. Please refer to the author for more details.

#### **p. Email Correspondence with Dr Mulyadi Mahmood**

Mulyadi Mahamood <xxxxxxxxxxx@xxxxxxxxxxx.com> [e-mail removed due to privacy]

Jan 19

to author

Assalamualaikum Sdr. Azril, semoga sihat sejahtera.

Mohon maaf sedikit lewat menulis kembali. Menarik juga lakaran yang Azril kepilkan itu. Lakaran pertama itu agak kurang jelas. Tetapi dari segi watak-watak figura dilukis, gayanya mirip kepada lakaran kartun Don yang tersiar dalam majalah Gila-Gila. Memang majalah Gila-Gila cukup popular pada tahun 1990-an, malahan sudah mula terbit pada tahun 1978. Saya percaya individu ini ada membaca Gila-Gila. Lakaran kedua pula adalah lakaran watak Old Master Q, komik Hong Kong yang popular sejak 1960-an. Komik ini memang ada dijual di Malaysia dan malahan sekarang watak Old Master Q ini digunakan sebagai bahan kempen pengurusan kewangan oleh Agensi Kaunseling dan Pengurusan Kredit (AKPK) Bank Negara Malaysia.

Saya harap jawapan ringkas ini membantu Azril. Kalau Azril boleh berikan alamat Azril di sana, nanti saya kirimkan beberapa buku yang saya tulis mengenai kartun untuk rujukan.

Sampai nanti, salam hormat.

Mulyadi.

*Translation*

Peace be upon you Azril, I hope you are in good health.

I apologize for the delayed reply. It was interesting sketches which you had attached in the last email. The first sketch was a little less clear. But in terms of figures drawn characters, its style was similar to drawing cartoon that appeared in the magazine Don Gila-Gila. Gila-Gila magazine is quite popular in the 1990s, since it's rising in 1978. I believe these people (the inmates) have read the mentioned literature. The second sketch is of the character of 'Old Master Q', a popular Hong Kong comic since the 1960s. This comic is available for sale in Malaysia, and even now the Credit Counselling and Debt Management Agency (AKPK), of Bank Negara Malaysia, uses this character, 'Old Master Q', as a part of representational character for campaign materials in financial management.

I hope this short review of the materials that you had sent helps. If you can provide an address there, I will post to you some of the publications which I had wrote about cartoons for your reference.

Salutation.

Muliyadi.

## Glossary

Adab	Local Malay's aesthetics of mannerism
Amuk	Amok; description of actions of extreme rage thus directed in killing frenzy
Analytical graphology	Jaques Derrida (1978) suggested that inscriptions could indicate the presence of the writer's spirit, through which it could throw light on the author's character.
Aniconism	Practice of or belief in the avoiding or shunning of images of any human beings or living creatures.
Anthropomorphism	Projecting characteristics onto non-human forms, particularly assigning the features of humans onto other beings, other living forms, or even non-living forms (refer to Horowitz and Bekoff 2007).
Apotropaic devices	Tools in repelling evil entities by utilising familiar shaped material objects (knives, wands, vases, etc.) that usually supported with inscribed magic.
Archi-trace	Derrida (1978) refers to the inherent parts of selfhood in the authors, or writers, revealed unconsciously within their writings.
Art brut	See Outsiders Art.
Awan boyan	A type of abstract motifs in the Malay woodcarvings which depicts the ornamental shaped of the clouds.
Balik kampung	Return to the village. A Malay phrase which signify as a desire to return to the place where the spiritual, spatial, and idealistic family values are held, which usually found in most common rural areas. Depending on the tone how this phrase would be used, this phrase could also be a sarcastic remark similar to the phrase "Go back to where you came from".
Berpuak	Tribal behaviour. Grouped together based on common interest; whether grouped of similar origin, racially, nationalities, or religiously; in order to emasculate, for protection, or re-enforce masculinity.
Biadap	Rude or inappropriate
Budai / Hotei	A monk who is a popular legendary character in China. Also known as the fat laughing monk.
Budak kampung	Village boy, which also runs in parallel meaning with 'kampung mari'.

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Bumiputera	Description of selected races of the Malaysian majority of Malays and the indigenous groups such as the Iban, Dayak, Murut, Kadhazans and so forth; which means "Sons of the Soil".
Catastroffiti	An arrived term by Hagen et. al . (1999), which describes the urban graffiti community's post-disaster in order to facilitate a community discourse as residents to express their frustrations, sadness, hopes, and survival. It may also have reaffirmed the community ethos and promoted some form of community solidarity.
Celebrity prisoners	Celebrity cases within the prison are followed by the media with the aim of raising circulation. In many instances, the media tends to concentrate on the inmates' previous criminal life outside, rather than their experiences within the prison.
Coding Categories	A part of Content Analyses which usually made Categories for structural elements, which could be quickly constructed and readily understood of the subjects or objects.
Coping mechanism	Inmates behavioural within prison which could be seen as non-institutionalised behaviours such as delinquencies, misconduct acts, criminalities, or even 're-appropriating' the space of prison issued properties in order to accommodate their actions.
Corpothetic Process	Gillian Rose' (2007) discussed in length on the qualities of visual materials does not lie in the value of the image-object, however it would greatly depended on the bestowed value onto the object itself. Thus the issue of embodiment in values onto the image, which she referred 'corpothetic' based from Christopher Pinney's (2004) publication, 'Photos of the Gods' on the visual efficacy relied on the observers' relation to the image based on their experience and familiarities.
Cucuk sanggul	Ornamented slender long stick made of brass or wood use to hold up women's hair in a bun at the back of their heads.
Cultural iconology	Process of depicting images through referring of personal and external values in shifting cultural references visually onto another medium or substrate.
Dark Tourism	Tourism involving sites which had historically associated with death and tragedies, or past violent human conditions and atrocities.
Deepavali / Dewali	Hindus annual 'festival of lights'
Deviant subculture	A part of subculture theory in discussing the values and attitudes of drug users, swingers, prostitutes and other sex workers, cults, gangsterisms; in order to understand the transition from habitual to criminality.
Dhoti	An Indian traditional garment.

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Dipinti / dipinto	An Italian word for a painted surface (as opposed to an engraved one) usually found on ceramic objects and vases.
Direct Analysis	The term referred in this research paper were based on Collier & Collier's (1986) paper on the photo-elicitation process, in which direct observation and description of photographic data which would result in qualitative values in detailing contents, and establishing contextual analyses.
Docile Bodies	Foucault's (1977) description of subjected person who goes through regiments of disciplinary acts via technologies, space and/or actions upon him/her as an agent of change, transformation and great objectivity of improvements .
Du'ā'	Invocation, an act of supplication to God.
Exculpatory	A method of combating 'evil', or the 'devil', usually done through prayers and hymns.
Fan Ti Zi	Traditional structure of Chinese writings, that typically have more strokes than the simplified versions.
forte et dure	A French phrase of "strong and hard", which usually referred to prisons and punishments.
Garba-griha / Garbhagriha	A sacred room or metaphysical space which exists beyond the present physical space.
Gedik	Predominantly a sexist remark to the images of women, in a sense of being "perky", usually of character or through "cute" poses.
Gelaran	Nicknames, monikers, handles
General Strain Theory	Robert Agnew's (1992) theory based on Durkheim's theory of anomie and Merton's strain theory, an extension from Durkheim's theory, which focused on both negative relations with others and negative experiences; it expanded on the types of strain that individuals encounter which both present negative stimuli and remove the positive stimuli that is a part of the rehabilitation process, resulting in intentional failure to achieve goals of reform.
Genting	Referring to a local casino and resort on the outskirts of the city of Kuala Lumpur, the "Genting Highland" resort.
Gila-Gila	A local Malaysian comic literature.
Graffiti	an English word that originated from an Italian verb, which means to scratch, simply describes methods of ornamenting walls or permanent surfaces.

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Graffito	Plural for "graffiti". Also commonly used in archaeological research describing mass amount of scribbling, mark-makings in the ancient urban cities, or vases and potteries.
Graphie	Graphic writings in the widest sense
Grid-Pattern	A method of excavation of spatial patterns on archaeological digging site, which was developed by Mortimer and Tessa Wheeler in the 1930s.
Hadith	Compilation of the words and practices of the Prophet Muhammad.
Hajj	Muslims Pilgrimage to Ka'aba Mecca with specific time and rituals.
Halal	Food preparation prescribed according to Muslim law, similar to how kosher meat are prepared.
Half Rations	A strategic method of punishment within isolated confinements for behavioural misconduct applied to prison inmates' daily diet to only bread and water.
Handles	Nicknames
Heteropias	A term which Foucault (1986) introduced on spaces which are interlinked with the surrounding communities around it. It wasn't established at this particular point as to what this could suggest, though it would be possible this was a borrowed term from medical term 'heterotopias'; which means strange/another/different places' which involved misplacements of organs of tissues within the human body.
Hong Shun Tang	One of the oldest and largest Chinese secret society group in Malaysia.
Iconography	Studies of identification, description, and the interpretation of the content of images.
Identity kit	Glee's (1990) (Cited by Wilson 2004) term on mechanism of prison inmates coping through adaptation and improvisation of their behaviours, spatial arrangements, social interactions and various elements for them to survive within the prison environment.
Imam	The Muslims head for praying, and also commonly a spiritual leader for the mosque and areas around it.
Importation model	Studies which examines the state of the inmates' behavioural traits which Irwin and Cressey (1962) proposed to be as a factor from the outside world brought into the prison which moulded, valued and even reinforced within the prison social structures.
Inmate code	Unwritten values which governs the social relation and conduct of prison inmates as discussed by Sykes and Messinger (1960).

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Inmates' moral career	Ervin Goffman's (1961) term of patients/inmates on the phases within the 'total institution', which they had to go through various instalments of accustomisation from their civilian self to the social arrangements within their confinement period.
In situ	Remaining in an original state; in original place.
Institutional graffiti	Eleanor Casella (2009) term referring to prison graffiti, which she arrived of it being a part of from Goffman's (1961) 'Total Institution'.
Intramuros	Inside the Walls
Islamisation	Process of imposition of an Islamist rules, social and political system on a society.
Jadual / Jadwal	Schedule
Jawi	Old Malay's writing language utilising Arabic scriptures.
Kampung	Village
Kampung mari	A person from a village, usually a derogatorily used to describe a person as backtracked person or old fashioned.
Kebaya	Traditional blouse-dress combination that originates from Indonesia and worn by women in South East Asian region.
Keramat	Natural objects, people, places and creatures referred to as 'sacred'.
Keris / Kris	A traditional dagger was widely used as a weapon by the Malays.
Kiswah	A black dyed and woven silk, which was wrapped round the cubic structure of the Ka'aba.
Kongsi	Secret society
Laddu	Local Indian sweet made from flour and sugar.
Langsuir	A Malay folkloric tale of bodiless vampire-like ghost which arrived as a result of death in childbirth or through the shock of bearing a stillborn baby.
Latrinalia	Alan Dundes (1966) coined this term for the graffiti found in the toilets.
Malam tujuh likur	An annual Malaysian Muslims 'festival of lights', which falls on the 27th night of Ramadhan
Malu	Shame; embarrassed or shy
Marah	Offended; or frustrations



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Mimbar	The pulpit of the mosque where the imam leads the prayers and also preach his sermons.
Minaret	A tall, slender tower which is a typically part of a mosque, with a balcony from which a muezzin calls Muslims to prayers.
Nasab	Common Malay Muslims Surnames which refers to their father's forename.
Neo-Brahmanical	A controversial supremacist identity and history (neo-Brahmanism) was invented for the Brahmanist community by making wild, hegemonic and fraudulent claims over the history, religions and civilizations.
Neo-Saracenic	Exotic architectural styles that were adopted by architects of Europe Americas in the wake of the fascination with all things oriental which commonly used combinations of Classical and Gothic styles. Also known as 'Neo-Moorish', 'Muhammadan' or 'Mahomaten' style.
Night-soil collectors	An odd-job profession that is long forgotten and arcane practice in clearing the outhouses, as these workers would come around in early in the morning or late hours in the night, carrying two pails on a wooden pole, balancing the contents while navigating the streets.
Om	The Hindus believe this was the sound that was made as creation began, when the divine, all-encompassing consciousness took the form of the first and original manifestation.
Onomastic	Studies of origins through culturally given names
Outsider art	Originally arrived from an observation of a psychiatric mental patient in Scotland in 1920s. This term later was revisited by Jean Dubuffet's (1945) 'art brut' (raw art), and later adapted in 1972 by Roger Cardinal being as a challenge to the aesthetic expectations in art. This was subtly mention by Melissa Shrift's (2006) account on non-traditional artworks and crafts made by prison inmates, which had its common interest to be therapeutic and had somewhat employed 'folkloric' aesthetics.
Pantun	A form of traditional Malay poetry that made up of four-line stanzas or quatrains.
Peribahasa	Stocks of Sayings
Potpourri of memories	A term by Proshansky et. al. (1983) (cited by Medlicott 2004) on prison inmates sense of narratives would be to "cherry-pick" significant parts of their memories which relate to their sense of self. Thus this accumulated their narratives in larger portion of diverse values and significance which could be read in non-linear observations.

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Prison Graffiti	Graffiti found within prison confinements. Usually referred to the areas of prison cells or the inmates' confinement areas. Though it would be possible to consider other premises within the prison blocks which would display graffiti made by wardens, prison administrations, or visitors.
Prisoner identity	Referring to Coretta Phillips' (2007) discussion of racial discourse within prison confinements had merged between 'indigenous model' by Sykes (1958) and 'importation model' by Cressey and Irwin (1962), which develops intuitive nature of inmates' code.
Prisonization	Donald Clemmer (1958) coined the term 'Prisonization', in which the inmates adapt to the social environments within the prison in learning and adapting the values, norms and beliefs of other inmates
Pseudofamily	Where the inmates started to form relationships with other inmates to compensate for their loss and fulfil a familial role or 'make-believe family'.
Puki	A taboo Malay word or slur referring to the women's private parts.
Ramadhan	Month of Fasting for the Muslims
Re-appropriating	A term used in this thesis to describe of inmates' actions in transforming their prison cells through the graffiti on the surface of the prison cells, or modifying prison issued articles to simulate ornaments, decorations, or even functional tools.
Sajjāda	The Muslim's praying mat or rug.
Semangat	Vitality
Sihir	The Malay's practise of shamanism.
Skeuomorphic	Subject or object which the use of a similar appearance or shape, to represent the tactile or graphical qualities of an object that goes beyond being a metaphor for a real object but which performs the same function because of its design.
Subversive bricolages	A term coined by Comaroff (1985) (cited by Ong 1995, 179) which refers to re-applying the norms of cultural tradition, a subtle protest through wearing different intimidating garments, which teeters on the edge of Muslim religious tolerance.
Sunni	One of the two largest branches of the Islamic Sect, also referred to ahl as-sunnah wal-jamaah.
Svastika	A Sanskrit symbol of a cross with the legs facing in an anti-clockwise direction, which is a sign of blessing and luck.
Syahadah	An Islamic creed which declares belief in the oneness of God and the acceptance of Muhammad as God's prophet.

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Syair	Narrative Poems.
Syncretic practice	A product of multiple faiths and rituals by loosely uniting and intermixing various religions, cultural, and social norms throughout centuries of related civilisation.
Tags Basic	Form of graffiti in form of authors' name, moniker, nickname or signature.
Takbīr	Expressive phrase in Arabic which literally means “God is great”
Tally mark	A simple method for keeping track or scores of etched vertical lines, with usually the fifth drawn across the previous four which could be seen as a set of five counts.
Tawaf	The ritual of walking en masse anti-clockwise around the Ka'aba.
Taxonomies	The practice and study of classification of subjects or concepts.
Thai Khon Mask	A type of demon's mask in Thailand.
Thawb	Arab's robe or garment for men.
Therianthromorphic	Combination of human and animal attributes.
Third Space	Anita Wilson's (2003; 2004) theory which prescribed the actions of inmates of adjustments, coping, and re-appropriation of their prison space through actions of 'non-institutionalised behaviours', in which the inmates applies alteration or improvisations of their literacy or knowledge through adaptation of the space and reflectivity during their incarceration.
Total institution	Ervin Goffman's (1961) published works on breakdown of the barriers of activities: sleeping, eating, and recreational time, and the space of the affected group controlled under one authority.
Transgressive behaviour	Behaviours which violates or go beyond moral or social boundaries.
Tribhanga	Tri-bent pose
Unobtrusive Methodology	Webb, Campbell, Schwartz, & Sechrest ( 1966) introduced this method as a way of elicitation process; which usually through observation and assessments, an alternate process of research investigation to direct analyses. This would then accommodate as data for either qualitative and quantitative methods.
Utopias	Non-existing ideal space (Foucault and Miskowiec, 1986), the opposite of heterotopias.
Vernacular images	Common everyday photographs usually done by both amateurs and professional photographers.
Vighnesvara	Another name for Lord Ganesha, the elephant headed God which carries the title as "The Lord and Master of Obstacles".

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Visual Ethnography	A qualitative research method which utilises media such as photography, film, or any other medium in order to record, document and access visual representation of the subjects.
Visual imprints	Traces or markings left by current or previous occupants
Visual sociology	A fused methodologies between visual ethnography and sociology introduced by Harper (1998) through photo-elicitation process.
Were-tiger	Malay's Folkloric tales of a man morphs into the form of tiger through shamanism.
Witch bottles	Commonly used "spiritual" and arcane devices in England and the United States, which were used as a protection against witchcrafts and even to conjure supernatural elements.
Yang	A part of primal bi-polar forces; the Yin-Yang
Zakat	Annual payment under Islamic laws for certain kind of properties to be used for charitable and religious purposes.



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*Thank you*