

Applied Art and Design

Application and Appreciation
of Islamic Heritage in
Contemporary Context

Mandana Barkeshli



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CHAPTER TWO

CARVED COMPONENTS AS IDENTITY OF MALAY TIMBER ARCHITECTURE

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents analytical findings based on 145 carved components and its physical attributes and significant application in the houses of Kelantan and Terengganu which were built within the periods of 1850s to 1940s. Carvings of fourteen houses in Kelantan and eleven houses in Terengganu were analyzed by interpreting 25 sets of measured and detailed drawings of the houses. The drawings were obtained from the Centre for the Study of Built Environment in the Malay World at the Department of Architecture in the Universiti Teknologi Malaysia. Description and interpretation of the carved components was primarily based on the drawings and substantiated by the narrations from the five prominent woodcarvers and meanings described in the literatures of Malay woodcarving. The study found that the distributions of the carved components were apparently in the three sections of the houses and bounded by three perimeters: pillars, walls and roof ridge borders. Carvings at wall, door and window ventilation panels and railings were dominantly found at the walls border thus enriching the wall section. Consistency in the patterns of distribution of the components, particularly the perforated carvings for fenestration, safety screens and boundary marker results to the establishment of architectural identity to the vernacular houses of this particular region. The distinct characteristics and features of the components which were coupled with the architectural forms suggest the sustainability in the preservation of the regional identity within a specific language and reflect its functionality and visual beauty. It signifies the level of creative and technical skills of the traditional craftsmen in projecting local identity on the built form through the passage of time. Recognizing the language that could serve as frameworks is vital to sustain the regional identity through the continuous application of the enormous potential of the carved embellishment.

[Keywords: Woodcarving, traditional house, vernacular architecture, sustainable identity]