

Malay Vernacular Architecture

Traditional and Contemporary Expressions

Norwina Mohd Nawawi

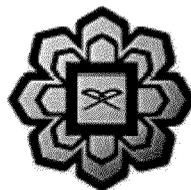


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CHAPTER 2

NATURE AS SYMBOLISM OF AESTHETICS IN THE TRADITIONAL MALAY LIVING ENVIRONMENT

Aida Kesuma Azmin (PhD)
Assistant Professor, Department of Architecture
adia37@yahoo.com

Kulliyyah of Architecture and Environmental Design
International Islamic University Malaysia

ABSTRACT

This section identifies peoples' aspirations towards aesthetical symbolism of nature in their contemporary living environments. It also discovers the level of people's knowledge about their dwelling architecture. According to survey findings, people's perceptions relating to aspects of aesthetics are always associated with nature, and the natural appreciation towards it.

Colour, water and carving traditions are attributes of nature that have been transformed into symbolic cultural meanings and cosmological understandings by indigenous societies. They add value and quality to the living environment and manifest the relationship between Man and nature, Man and God, as well as Man and Man. They also act as the catalyst intellectual development and creativity in relation to design, gardens and crafts in the built environment.

Keywords: Nature, Symbolism, Aesthetics, "Traditional Malay", Living Environment.

INTRODUCTION

The Notions of Aesthetics

Abdalla (1998) believes that people perceive and appreciate the world in terms of its symbolic sense, meaning and value, but it is quite difficult to separate form from the symbolic aspect which reflect cultural attitude and satisfy the human need for aesthetics, simply because aesthetic experience is a result of interaction between man and his environment (ibid). In general, many scholars define aesthetics as "theory of beauty". More descriptively, the term "aesthetic" was derived from the Greek *aisthanesthai*, which means, "to perceive" and *aestheta* "things perceivable" (Porteous, 1996). Cold (2000) relates that according to Gyldendal's encyclopaedia, aesthetics is defined and explained as "the knowledge which derives through the senses; scientifically it is about beauty in art theory". Oliver (1997) describes the aesthetic as the affective aspect of communication, the dimension that enlivens feeling, exciting the pleasure of the senses.