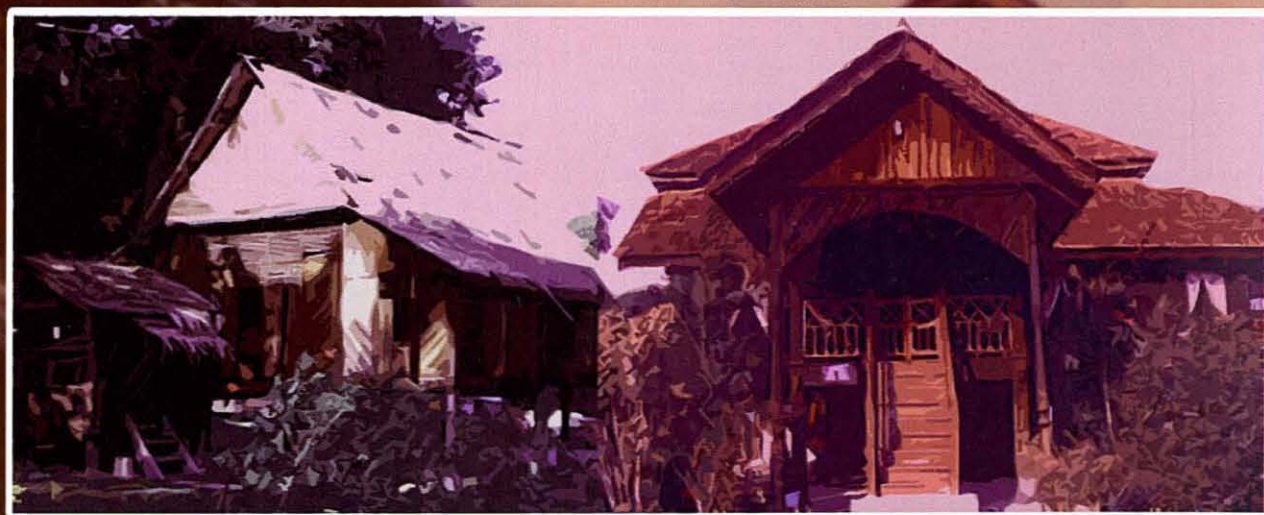


Malay Vernacular Architecture

Traditional and Contemporary Expressions

Norwina Mohd Nawawi

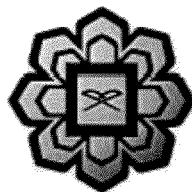


IIUM PRESS
INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA



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IIUM Press

Published by:
IIUM Press
International Islamic University Malaysia

First Edition, 2011
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Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

Norwina Mohd Nawawi
Malay Vernacular Architecture: Traditional and contemporary expressions
Norwina Mohd Nawawi

ISBN: 978-967-418-057-7

Member of Majlis Penerbitan Ilmiah Malaysia – MAPIM
(Malaysian Scholarly Publishing Council)

Printed by :
IIUM PRINTING SDN. BHD.
No. 1, Jalan Industri Batu Caves 1/3
Taman Perindustrian Batu Caves
Batu Caves Centre Point
68100 Batu Caves
Selangor Darul Ehsan

CHAPTER 3

CULTURAL FACTORS IN TRADITIONAL MALAY HOUSE

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ABSTRACT

The Malays and their culture are entwined in every aspect of their lives from birth till death. From the pre-Islamic days to gradual Islamic intervention through trading and missionary quests, the culture assimilated left marks in their built environment implicitly and explicitly. Through literature review and observations, this article thence described briefly the salient cultures of the Malays that affects the design of the traditional Malay houses we had inherited today. Perhaps through understanding of the features, younger generations may be able to reflect their roots and have pride in their rich and considerate cultural heritage.

Keywords: malay, traditional house, culture

INTRODUCTION

The Malay culture was influenced by different beliefs as they were animists and Hindus before the introduction of Islam by Muslim traders and missionaries. Islamic teaching unifies the cultures of the different groups of people or societies embracing the religion while giving freedom to the people in maintaining the aspects of culture that do not deviate from Islamic teachings. The spread of Islam from mainland Arabia to other parts of the world had brought articles of faith or *aqidah* that did not undo the local culture (Muhammad Zainiy, 2000). From the findings, Islam was not accepted in totality into the Malay culture. This can be observed from certain aspects of the Malay culture that are not consistent with the teachings of Islam such as those associated with animism and Hinduism which were adopted before the coming of Islam. Example of practice and belief system is the belief in “*semangat*” or the “vital force” which believed to exist in human and things such as on trees, stone, rivers, caves and others. The belief system was transformed into practice of appeasing the spirit of the house and its site before construction to safeguard the wellbeing of the house occupants (Lim, 1987). However, gradually in times, the influence of Islam on the Malay culture was much more subtle and penetrative. Islam as a way of life affects much more than the method of worship of the Malays. It has influenced the traditional Malay culture which was translated into the living pattern, behaviour, and practices and eventually the traditional Malay house to