
The Influence of British Colonial Architecture Towards Malay Palace and Aristocrate House Ornamentation

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Abstract

Public architecture in the Malay world refer to the relationship that palaces and mosques had, these spaces refer to the semi-public zones are used for public purposes. This paper highlights that due to the complexity of life brought about by Colonial-led modern changes starting from 18th centuries, spaces in these Malay palaces and Aristocrats homes or the public realm, had become more complex and thus their semantic identification and naming of elements have not been adequately addressed. The research will focus on the Malay Palace and aristocrate house and highlights on its ornamentation influence towards their colonial ruler. The ornamentation includes extended variations of the "larik", "papan ukir", "jerejak" and "kekisi". The paper suggests that there are an influence colonial brings upon its colonising area. Their influence can usually be seen on ornament element. The paper highlight on the influence that British colonial architecture plays in their colonising area regional architecture.

Keywords: *British colonial style, Malay palace, aristocrate house, malay world, ornamentation*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Malay world could not be look into the perspective of current as the word "malay" is used in the name given to this country Malaysia. Even if we go back to the times of british it was called Malay peninsular. The word malay has always been referring to the current peninsular Malaysia. Even before Malaysia it is known as Malay peninsular. This claim has been overshadow by the fact that other nations in the region are also populated by the Malays which practice the way of the Malay or adat resam Melayu (Mohd Sabrizaa B Abd Rashid, 2011). The real truth can be observing in place like Sumatera, the West Borneo and the surrounding island. According to (Wan Salleh, 2005:17), he stated that the Malay world could be categorized as follows:

1. Wilayah Melayu Teras or the main Malay region that include Malaysia, Singapore, southern Thailand, southern Philipine and most of present-day Indonesia.

2. Wilayah Melayu Diaspora or the Malay community of Sri Lanka, Madagascar, South Afrika and the Christmas Island (Australia).

3. Wilayah Malayo-Polynesia that includes the many islands of Melanesia, Micronesia, Fiji, Hawaii, Tonga, Samoa and New Zealand.

Historically there exist a far an earlier form of Malay civilization. This kingdom include kingdom of Funan, Champa, Pan-Pan and Langkasuka. This kingdom exist since 1st century. As times goes by a prominence kingdom emerge, the kingdom of Malacca empire had flourish through out the era of 14th to 15th century. The fall of Malacca on 1511 marks the starting era of colonizer for the region of Malay peninsular. After portugese comes dutch and lastly British colonial era. The focus of this study is to see the affect of British colonial rule towards the Architecture of Malay people on the 18th to late 19th century. Malay architecture space generally can be divided into 3 area which are the front, middle and rear.

The front area is the most prominent part of Malay Building as it is the area whereby guest enter a Malay house. In the case of Malay Palace or aristocrate house there is a need to decorated this part of the house more than the other space. A ruler or leader of a building needs to potrays his dominance through the beautification of their building as a sign of status for their subordinate to fell towards their home.

Thus, the scope of this research will look into the change in ornamentation specifically at the front area of Malay palace and aristocrate house with the influence of British colonial involvement. The research will look into building involvement with British influence based on the timeline of the year it is built on.

Malay Architecture

Among unique cultural architecture available worldwide is the Malay architecture. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, Malay is a member of a people of the Malay Peninsula, eastern Sumatra, parts of Borneo, and some adjacent islands. The characters of Malay architecture are unique because its characters are believed to be inherited from their legacy of an irreplaceable source of Malay lifestyle, history, and inspiration. The authors such as Said (2007) complemented that Malay has invented one of the most sophisticated and amazing houses, kened as traditional Malay houses (Said, 2007). There are also researches mentioning that Malay has high skills in woodcarving and their beautiful artworks are represented in their houses and buildings(Ismail & Said, 2015).

Malay Ornamentation and Wood carving

The Malay ornament are usually related to woodcarving. Woodcarving has long been part of traditional Malay society (Rasdi & Kid, 2015). This form of carving is similar to those found on stone of the Megalithic period. The only difference is the technique applied. Wood is considered the perfect for carving and building because it is abundantly available within the local environment. This material is not restricting to use in building house but also palaces, mosque, pavilions, gateways, musical instrument, weapons, household equipment, costume and much more.

Difference lie in the type of wood used and degree of elaborate detail on the carving. For example, a household object would use lower quality material with less ornate carving as opposed to the musical instrument that needs better quality wood and more elaborate carving (Rasdi & Kid, 2015).

The art of Malay Woodcarving is a long art and craft tradition for the Malay community (Nasir, 1986). The art of carving does not only limit to wood material, other material like stone, clay and steel are also part of the art. The most prominent art is without doubt the wood carving which had its own specific technique. The abundance of wood material in the Malay region, made the carving art popular amongst the craftsmen.

Although it is very prominent, the use of wood for carving is bad in term of its longevity (Said, 2005). Constant rain and heat would eventually deteriorate the material along its lifespan. Yet there are still some that could extend its life span up to hundreds of years, this woodcarving is usually made from the best type of wood like cengal, kempas, merbau, penak and belian which can be found from all over forest in Malaysia. The application of Malay woodcarving is diverse in its usage ranging from building, musical instrument, cooking instrument, furniture and other wood material components.

Malay Ornament Motif

There is a variation of Malay ornaments motif (MOM) with different style and typology. The typology can differ to many attributes include placement, material, incision, function and composition. But the most prominent attributes would be the use of Motif. MOM creation is strongly related to the influence and tradition inherited from one generation to another (Nasir, 1986). The characterization impact of a motif can

distinguish and differentiate the art type from the district, context and state other than becoming the trademark (Hafiza et al., 2014). Motif as an inspiration in MOM creation can elevate Malay craftsmanship to a higher level as well as getting acknowledgement for its creation of a sophisticated carving workmanship. The motif used in Malay buildings can be generally categorized into 4 types:

1) Floral motif

The floral motif is the most common motif being used on MOM. The floral motif is usually taken from surrounding nature as the name of trees commonly used in the Malay's daily lives or for food like the Mangosteen. Mangosteen motif is an example often being used by craftsmen. The use of floral became a normative motif since the coming of Islam. Much of the Fauna motif is being transformed to floral motif because of prohibition the use of fauna or living motif by Islamic understanding (Daud et al., 2012).

2) Fauna motif

Fauna motif is a popular motif before the coming of Islam at the time of Hindu-Buddhist understanding. Thus, much of this motif had gone through detail and intricate evolution from fauna motif to floral motif. The genius and creativity of these craftsmen had changed the looks of animal form to abstraction. Fauna motif includes the use of animal such as from Birds, Makara, Dragon and another motif.

3) Calligraphy motif

Calligraphy motif is a motif that is a direct influence of Islam. The motif is mostly writing on text form of advice, religion, law, teaching and more. Some examples of calligraphy motif is applied at the entrance of a building written as 'Bismillah' or 'Assalamualakum'. The arrangement and composition of this type of motif depend on the appropriate function and places following the produced carved text. The produced carved text is sometimes composed of flora or geometric motif to add more detail to the craftsmanship.

4) Geometric motif

Geometric motif is a motif that is often associated with abstract, casual or hard motifs. It is more related to mathematical formulas due to its form and is rarely done in a form (Hafiza et al., 2014). According to (Hanafi, 2000) geometric motif are related to an

arrangement like organic and geometric form according to the arrangement types it produces. The creation of geometric motif follows the interpretation from a pattern that uses a high level of imagination to the point that it is difficult to recognize its origin. The form of the geometric motif is usually arranged in a row, and the form is rarely combined with another form (Nasir, 1986). The geometric motif can be identified by looking at the designs that use basic element used in design through the straight, oblique and transverse line. The line will produce carving in the form of boxed arrangement, and straight that can be seen at the space filled with carving on a particular object.

Malay architecture relation to British colonial architecture

The development of Malay architecture had been to a progressive change through times. According to (Mohidin & Ismail, 2012) development of Malay architecture has gone through a total of 6 eras, starting from Traditional era, early colonial era, early British era, late British era, post independence era and lastly present era. Each of this era had its own specific style of architecture. The paper will have focused on the era of early British colonial period. The era chosen is late British colonial era due to the complexity of life brought about by Colonial-led modern changes starting from 18th centuries, spaces in these Malay palaces and Aristocrats homes or the public realm, had become more complex and thus their semantic identification and naming of elements have not been adequately addressed. This paper will try to look into the public architecture in the Malay world, these spaces refer to the semi-public zones are used for public purposes. This space is located at the entrance of any Palaces.

Methods

For this research observation and visual analyses are made via site visits of the selected 3 case studies as earlier mentioned. Literature research and content analysis are obtained through related topics especially on Traditional Malay Palaces. Some data are collected from other researches. References were made with various analysis to the recorded measured drawings of IIUM heritage lab. In this paper 3 case studies are presented.

The focus of this article will look into Malay palaces and aristocrat house ornamentation, Thus the research will highlight the influence of British colonial style on ornamentation of these palaces in three area of Malay peninsular and neighbouring area at that time. Balai Besar Kedah, Baitul rahmah will represent Malay peninsular

and Istana Malige (Rumah Banua Tada) will represent the nusantara neighbouring country.

Discussion

This research will include 3 case study of Malay palace and aristocrate buildings. The palace chosen is Balai Besar, Istana Malige and for aristocrate house Baitul Rahmah. The building is chosen as it fits the time frame of its involvement with british colonial period. There are two type of building in the case study first is building that had a very strong influence from British colonial architecture style. Second is building that had no external influence

Balai Besar Kedah



Figure 1 Balai Besar the picture is taken from “<http://tenzerofour.com/balai-besar>” 16/9/2018

Historical background

Kedah is one of the oldest kingdoms in Malay peninsula. With its rich history there many building that has a very great design with a one-of-a-kind value. One of them is Istana Balai Besar, located in Alor Setar, Kedah Darul Iman. The building is built on 1735 during the reign of Sultan Muhammad Jiwa Zainal Adilin Shah (1710-1760). On 1767, Siam invaded Kedah and as an effect of the conflict resulted in the partial destruction of the Balai Besar. In 1770, the Balai Besar again got seriously damaged

during fire by the attack from the Bugis. With both event the Balai Besar was bound to be rebuild and on 1896 the current Balai Besar was built for the last time. The building was finished on 1904. The construction work was led by Muhammad bin Lebai Tambi, an architect from the Kedah Public Works Department (from Penang) with Malay intricacy skills. Muhammad bin Lebai Tambi had been familiarized with british colonial architecture style as he had work in Penang which is the earliest part of Malay peninsular that receive british colonial architecture style influence.

Baitul rahmah



Figure 2 Baitul Rahmah front view (Rumah Tradisional Perak di Bukit Chandan 2010, August 04)

Historical background

Raja Harun Al – Rashid was the designer of the house which was built with other 2 houses. The houses are Baitul Anwar, Baitul Aman, and Baitul Rahmah. These houses are Raja Harun Al-Rashid’s architectural legacy in Bukit Chandan – majestic Malay mansions, built for his wives by the skilled Tukang Sofian. Almarhum was also described as having an eye for architecture and he was skilled with his hands, especially in the art of Malay woodcarving, and he was frequently consulted for advice by other members of the Perak Royal Family.

The date of construction of Baitul Rahmah is debated. Currently, in front of the house a handmade plaque which says that Baitul Rahmah was built in 1911 carved into

it. From deductive reasoning and comparative studies, it can be concluding that Baitul Rahmah was indeed built in 1915. Based on information collected from various interviews, Baitul Rahmah was the last house completed. During 1915 the Perak rulers had been familiarized with British colonial architecture style.

Istana Malige (Rumah Banua Tada)



Figure 3 front view of Istana Malige (Anathasia, G 2013, October 02)

Historical background



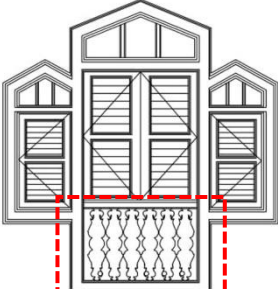
Malige palace is one of the typology of Rumah Banua Tada (elbow house). Banua tada can be defined by each words, banua which means ‘the house’ and tada means ‘Elbow’ so if combined it is literally called elbowed house. The elbow is referring to the diagonal structure of the house. Banua tada is a house that is specifically for the dwelling of the Wolio tribe (Farisa & Prihatmaji, 2017). Istana Malige which the word Malige means ‘Mahligai’ (palace) or pillars is a residential specifically for the Sultan (king) (Franciska & Wardani, 2014). The significance of Malige palace is that it has not been influence by any foreign colonial power like british or dutch (Istana Malige 2010, November 25).


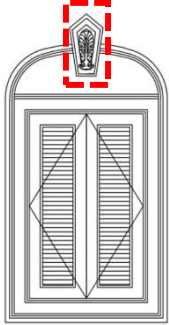
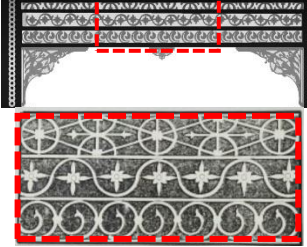



Below are a comparative table on the function of ornamentation on each case study building. There are 3 categories for the function of each table :

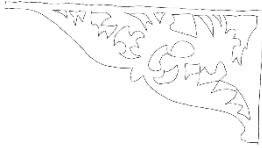

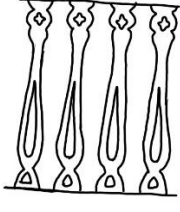
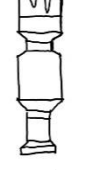

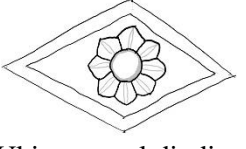
- 1) Decorating structural – referring to ornament that decorate structural component of buildings
- 2) Decorating architectural element – ornaments that decorate element such as door, window and etc
- 3) Decorating with function - referring to the ornaments that had a physical function

This classification of all ornamentation on all case study is done on the table below.

Table 1: Comparative table on the ornamentation typology

Building	Ornamentation		
	Decorating Structural	Decorating on Architectural elements	Decorating building with function
Balai Besar 1904	Tiang Column	Bumbung Roof	Tingkap Window
	 Sesiku bermotif Sulur Paku <i>Bracket with fern motif</i>	 Silang Gunting berkerawang bermotif awan larat <i>Cross Scissor with Fretwork and meandering cloud motif</i>	 Jerajak bermotif tumbuhan Balustrade with floral motif Function : Tebuk tembus carving allows for natural wind ventilation to go through the ornament
	Tiang Column	Tingkap Windows	Gerbang Archway

	 <p>Kepala tiang bermotif sulur paku tinjau meninjau <i>Capital with observing fern motif</i></p>	 <p>Tingkap berbingkai 2 bermotif sulur paku di kunci batu 2 frames Windows with fern motif keystone</p>	 <p>Ukiran awan larat 3 lapisan dengan cermin cina 3 Layer Awan larat carving with Chinese mirror</p> <p>Function : Tebuk tembus carving allows for natural lighting to go through the ornament</p>
Baitul Rahmah 1911	Tiang Column	Bumbung Roof	Pintu Door
	 <p>Alas tiang gaya Malay klasik Pedestal with Malay classical style</p>	 <p>Papan Pator bermotif kelawar gantung dan tumbuhan Fascia board with hanging bat and floral motif</p>	 <p>Ambang pintu bermotif geometri Fanlight with geometri motif</p> <p>Function : Tebuk tembus carving allows for natural daylight to enter building</p>
	Tiang Column	Bumbung Roof	Anjung Verandah

	 <p>Tetupai bermotif tumbuhan Bracket with floral motif</p>	 <p>Tunjuk Langit with Salu Bayang bermotif awan larat Roof finial with Salu shadow (direct translation) with awan larat motif</p>	 <p>Kisi kisi bermotif geometri Balustrade with geometry motif</p> <p>Function : Tebuk tembus carving allows natural ventilation to enter building</p>
Istana Malige	Tiang Column	Roof Bumbung	Dinding Wall
	 <p>Bosu bosu bermotif buah butong Hanging column with Butong fruit motif</p>	 <p>Tunjuk langit bermotif nanas Roof finial with pineapple motif</p>	 <p>Ukiran panel dinding bermotif bunga Wall panel carving with flower motif</p>

Based on the table it could be seen that both Balai Besar and Baitul Rahmah both had an influence from british colonial. For the column of the three buildings, Balai Besar and Baitul Rahmah had a design form that looks physically like a classical colonial column. The balustrade (bottom part of column) of Baitul Rahmah looks similar to the classical colonial column but differ in its shape which are squarish instead of circular. One the other hand the Balai Besar column had a capital (top part of column) which are similar to the classical colonial, to be exact the Corinthian typology. Yet for Istana Malige the influence of colonial architecture is unclear, and it could be the original form that it always had.

The obvious reason as to why Balai Besar and Baitul Rahmah had a strong influence to colonial architecture is because historically both building was built in the era of British colonial, while Malige palace had no influence from any colonising

power. It could be said that the although Balai Besar and Baitul Rahmah had been built during the reign of british both building still retain some of its ornamentation origin of Malay style. This showed that although some character of the ornamentation

Conclusion

Ornamentation is an important part of Malay building it define the identity of a building. Identification would also include traces of a building history with the style or ways of design that an ornamentation had. An ornamentation with british colonial style would give an impression on the power of a coloniser influence towards the country or kingdom that had been colonised. This could also be said to a country that had never been colonised like Malige palace, which of course still retain its original style and philosophy on their ornamentation. With this it is conclusize to say that one of the key components in enhancing a building identity is by looking at its ornamentation design.

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