

The Influence of Culture and Tradition in Designing an Adaptable Furniture for *Serambi* in a Malay House

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Abstract

Malays residential design has been influenced much by a modern design element that has demolished certain tradition cultural factors contributing to a sustainable lifestyle convenience for users. The space concept of the current modern house design should be aligned with the space function to reflect the Malay house culture. Thus, the elements of traditional design along with the specific factors studied, play an important role in establishing a local identity for global positioning of the nation - Malay Design DNA. Therefore, an extensive study on Malay origin and cultural identity is vital in identifying and highlighting the Malay traditional elements with close reference to the Malay house design philosophy. This study also will illustrate how these elements can be further enhanced by infusing them into modern homes through furniture design. Therefore, the theory of Malay House DNA will be use in designing furniture design at *Sarambi* area.

Keywords: Malay House Design, Malay House Philosophy, Design layout, Malay House DNA.

Introduction

There are no resemblances and originality in a local product unlike another Asian country such as Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines, Japan, China, Korea, etc. which have their own DNA within their product design. It is important to establish a Traditional Malay house DNA or philosophy within the furniture design to preserve the originality of local design. According to Ahmad (2015), the design identity is important to portray a nation and to embrace the cultural values derived from the local design. Malaysia, on the other hand, can be considered as a “young” designer nation and is still striving on establishing a strong design culture, which is why Malaysian furniture manufacturers have not produced forms that can be identified as carrying a distinctive national identity. Currently, Malaysian furniture manufacturers are still practicing the original equipment manufacturing (OEM) in their designs and productions, and some of them are only doing modifications towards existing design.

Literature Review

The purpose of a literature review is to gain an understanding of the existing research and debates relevant to a particular topic or area of study, and to present that knowledge in the form

of a written report. Conducting a literature review helps to build knowledge in the research field. There are several topics covered in this Literature Review, however, the paper will discuss only the main areas from the subject studied here including the Malay House Philosophy and the Malay House DNA components.

Serambi

According to Masri (2016), *Serambi* is defined as a longitudinal space, attached to *rumah ibu* (main house), in other regions, it is also called ‘*Selasar*’ or ‘*Beranda*’ (DBP, 2008 - 2016). In the state Terengganu, North-East of Malay Peninsula and Riau it is called *Selasar*. Whereas, in Melaka, in certain places it is called *Sengkuap*. In Negeri Sembilan, *Rumah ibu* is called *Rumah Tengah* (Middle House) (Idrus, 1996; Masri, 2012; 2013).

Masri (2016) also mentioned that the quality most of the home environment of the Malay Traditional house, may be summarized as the environment where the custom (*adat*) understanding and practices is nurtured through the amalgamation of the socio-cultural values within the home design that denotes the occupant’s daily life activities such as for weddings as well as for religious purposes as shown in Figure 1.

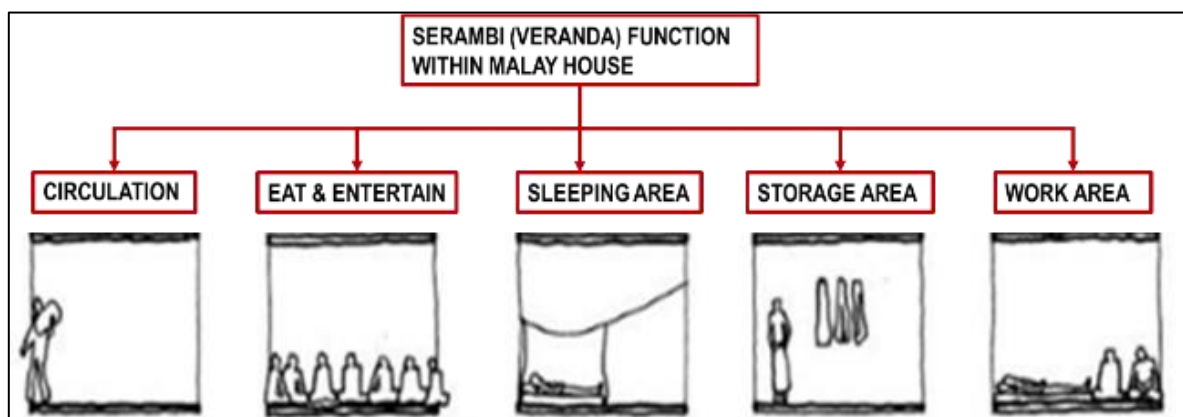


Figure 1. Activity at Serambi area

The *Serambi* being constructs as a part of the house, using the same jointing technique of *Pasak* and *Tanggam*. Mohd Sahabuddin (2015) mentioned that the *serambi* is the smallest space among the other spaces. In some cases of the twelve-column house, this space usually

accommodates a quarter of the house, and the floor level will always be lower than the *Rumah Ibu* floor level. The form of the *Serambi* is usually rectangle and in some cases is an extraordinarily long narrow space (Chen et al., 2008).



Figure 2. Serambi Rumah Bujang

He added, the importance of the *Serambi* is to serve as the first greeting space for guests after entering the house (Yuan, 1987). In a traditional Malay *kampung*, houses are built in random positions but can be seen from the distance. The *Serambi* in this case will be the place for social

interaction within the neighborhood, and for parents to monitor their children playing in the yard.

Malay house DNA

Ahmad (2015) mentioned that there are no resemblance and the originality in local product unlike other Asian country such as Thailand, Indonesia, Philippines, Japan, China, Korea etc. which have their own DNA within their product design. Therefore, it is important to establish a Traditional Malay house DNA or philosophy within the furniture design to preserve the originality of local design. As in this research work, the Malay House DNA can be categorized into 2 main components, which are *Tauhid* (*spiritual*) and *Form* (*tangible*). The DNA extracted from the Malay house layout can be

related into 3 categories which are usability, technical and aesthetic, in which has formed the main components in the designing of the traditional Malay House.

Methodology

The research design for this data collection activities is based on qualitative data collection techniques to generate data from multiple sources of evidence such as observations, literature searches, interviews, etc.

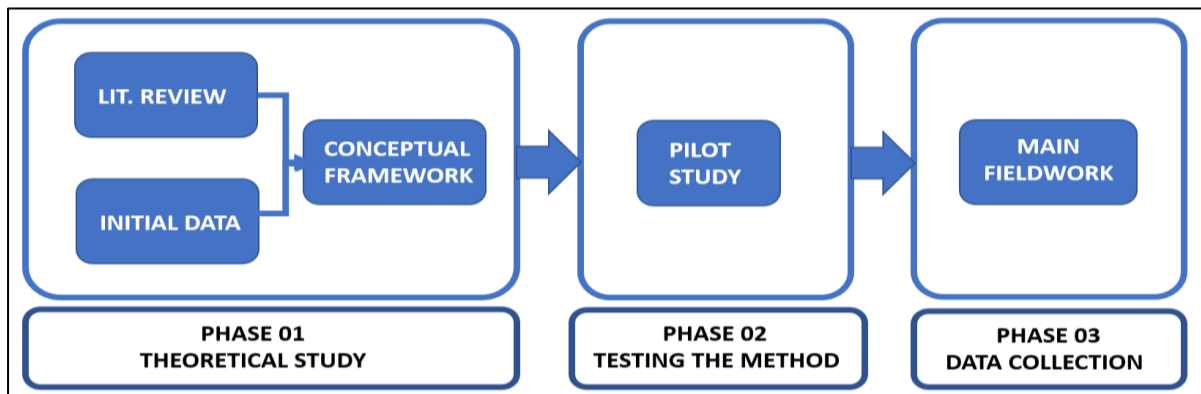


Figure 3. Research method framework

In this study, the research needs to undergo 3 phases which is building the concept framework, building the main case study. The researcher selected the '*Bujang Selasar*' Terengganu Malay House as the main case study due to its strategic study areas for Islamic Traditional.

Results and Discussion

Based on the analysis gathered from the '*Bujang Selasar*' Malay house, the researcher will then come out with the design direction before brainstorming the novel design formula of Traditional Malay House DNA which have being shown in Figure 4.

By referring to above figure, Usability, technical aspects as well as Aesthetic needed to be integrated with the understanding of the concept of *Tauhid*, together with appropriate relevant forms and functional studies to form the DNA for traditional cultured Islamic Malay house. By implementing the design DNA, it can at least help to preserve the Malay identity either through furniture design or other daily used product. By owning the philosophy, the design elements will therefore be strengthening and will be further developed to compete with other nation culture-based product. The maturity of Malay House design DNA will be at par with other top Asian countries in producing their own culture-based furniture design. It is hoped that this study as a starting point of developing cultural identity products, would motivate the young designer to produce and further develop the local DNA product to sustain local identity.

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