

The Traditional Malay Houses in the District of Muallim, Perak: A Lost Legacy

Yazid Saleh, Mohmadisa Hashim, Hanifah Mahat & Nasir Nayan

To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v8-i2/3978>

DOI:10.6007/IJARBSS/v8-i2/3978

Received: 07 Jan 2018, Revised: 18 Feb 2018, Accepted: 22 Feb 2018

Published Online: 26 Feb 2018

In-Text Citation: (Saleh, Hashim, Mahat, & Nayan, 2018)

To Cite this Article: Saleh, Y., Hashim, M., Mahat, H., & Nayan, N. (2018). The Traditional Malay Houses in the District of Muallim, Perak: A Lost Legacy. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 8(2), 684–697.

Copyright: © 2018 The Author(s)

Published by Human Resource Management Academic Research Society (www.hrmars.com)

This article is published under the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) license. Anyone may reproduce, distribute, translate and create derivative works of this article (for both commercial and non-commercial purposes), subject to full attribution to the original publication and authors. The full terms of this license may be seen at: <http://creativecommons.org/licences/by/4.0/legalcode>

Vol. 8, No.2, February 2018, Pg. 684 - 697

<http://hrmars.com/index.php/pages/detail/IJARBSS>

JOURNAL HOMEPAGE

Full Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at
<http://hrmars.com/index.php/pages/detail/publication-ethics>

The Traditional Malay Houses in the District of Muallim, Perak: A Lost Legacy

Yazid Saleh, Mohmadisa Hashim, Hanifah Mahat & Nasir Nayan

Department of Geography & Environment, Faculty of Human Sciences, Sultan Idris Education University, 35900 Tanjong Malim, Perak, Malaysia.

Email: yazid@fsk.upsi.edu.my

Abstract

This study aims to describe traditional Malay houses that still exist in Muallim district, Perak. The research methodologies used were field observation methods and structured interviews with the owners/residents of the houses. The findings showed that there were 29 traditional Malay houses. Among these, seven are more than 80 years old. Meanwhile, 12 houses were uninhabited, neglected, or abandoned. In terms of physical condition, 17 houses were not preserved. The findings show that the district of Muallim has a legacy of Perak traditional Malay houses. The poor physical condition of the houses, however, may result in the loss of valuable assets whereas those traditional Malay houses have the potential to be turned into a culture-based tourism attraction in Muallim district.

Keywords: Malay, Heritage, Muallim, Heritage Tourism

Introduction

Traditional Malay houses are one of the relics of previous generations for today's population to appreciate because of the uniqueness of their art form that is not present in today's modern houses. Traditional Malay houses, however, are decreasing in number due to the rapid progress and modernisation development process. The high cost of conserving, absence of skilled craftsmen, and higher interests in modern architectural styles are amongst the main reasons for the impending extinction of these traditional Malay houses. The district of Muallim is undergoing a transformation process as it is targeted to achieve the Sub Regional Centre level for Perak in the year 2020.

The district's landuse has started to change, with housing estates becoming the main form of settlement in this area. At the same time, the increase in the economy of the population has resulted in traditional houses being replaced with more modern homes. There is concern that if there is no effort to document (inventory) traditional Malay houses in the Muallim district, these houses may disappear due to modernisation.

Perak Traditional Malay Houses: A Highlight

In Perak, traditional Malay houses have similar architectural features like the rest of the traditional Malay houses in the west of peninsular Malaysia, but they differ slightly in the architecture of the roof. Perak's traditional Malay houses often are decorated with a long roof architecture known as '*bumbung Perak*'. Additionally, the attractive Perak Malay houses feature a porch that is carved with various motifs. Most of these houses were built on high poles to avoid being drowned during floods.

The Malay community that is synonymous with customs and arts has manifested its talents and skills in traditional house architecture. The process of building a house is done very carefully and is given emphasis from the site selection to the home furnishing (Zulkifli, 1996). Most of these Malay houses focus on the functions and needs of each space based on spatial suitability. Additionally, the Malay community also decorates the house with suitable ornaments and fragrant plants as a decoration to add aesthetic value to the home environment. Each decoration has a purpose and requirement of certain beliefs or as a symbol that gives creative ideas on something new (Zulkifli, 2000).

This study identified several types of traditional Malay houses in Perak. According to Abdul Halim (1988), two types of traditional Malay houses still exist in the state of Perak and can be seen and used: the Kutai House (*Rumah Kutai*) and Perak Roofed Limas House (*Rumah Limas Bumbung Perak*). In general, traditional Malay houses are divided into two main categories: the Long Roofed House (*Rumah Bumbung Panjang*) and Limas Roofed House (*Rumah Bumbung Limas*) (Abdul Halim, 1988). From these two categories, various other styles of Malay house architecture emerged such as Johor Malay House, Kelantan Malay House, Kutai House, *Rumah Gajah Menyusu*, and so on.

Kutai House

The Kutai House is a traditional house that was built around the 1890s. Kutai is a local term that means aged or old. According to Abdul Halim & Wan Hashim (1994), in his study conducted in 1977, found there were only 37 Kutai houses along the banks of Perak River. Because there were few houses of this type and the settlements were located in certain areas, the Kutai House is no longer well known and its numbers are declining (Abdul Halim, 1988). Most of the existing Kutai Houses are quite old, between 100 or 200 years of age. Records show that after the end of the First World War (1918), the Kutai House was no longer built in Perak.

Among other reasons why the architecture of the Kutai House was unable to expand throughout the state of Perak was due to its relation with the monarchy system at that time in which the Kutai House architecture was used only for the residence of members of the royal family and important people who had connections and close relationships with the palace. Thus, the settlement was located only near the centre of the kingdom situated on the banks of Perak River, especially in the districts of Hilir Perak, Perak Tengah, and Kuala Kangsar.

Apart from that, the 99 Laws enforced by the monarchy system at that time also required that all Kutai Houses be built so that their front view layout faced the riverbank, which was the main connection for the local community then. In addition, the rules of the traditional age of caste and rank were reasons why the Kutai House did not develop well; in fact, even if it is viewed in terms of the settlement, it is obviously related to this matter and hence there was only one around the centre of the kingdom (Abdul Halim, 1988).

The original features of the Kutai House were use the sago (*rumbia*) roof, bamboo walls, door that slides, and many piles. The house fully utilised natural materials that could be found around the village such as wood and bamboo. One of the uniqueness of a Kutai House is its long roof and the space for storage on the roof known as the *peran* or attic (Halim & Hashim, 1994). A Kutai House has decorations such as *tunjuk langit*, tracery (*kerawang*), grille (*jerejak*), octagonal pillars, and woven walls. This types of house is said to have the influence of Aceh and Bugis architecture and can be attributed to the history of the Sultanate of Perak which had links with the Aceh and Bugis kingdoms.

A Kutai House contains 12 or 16 pillars in its mother house, which consists of a porch, a living room, and others rooms. On the back is a kitchen house separated by a roofless hose space (Photos 1 and 2). At the end of the kitchen house, there is a platform for food preparation or placeholders for the garden and river produce. The house has several elements of art structure that are quite attractive, simple, and have their own function.



Photo 1. The Kutai House in Perak.

Source: <http://muhammadqawi.blogspot.my/2016/08/latar-belakang-rumah-kutai.html>



Photo 1. The Kutai House (veranda at the side).

Source: Wan Hashim & Abdul Halim (2011)

The mother house has the highest roof. It also houses or functions as a foyer on the front and a room. On the left side of the room there is a room similar to the main foyer on the right, perhaps for female family members. The mother house has windows facing the kitchen house. An open house floor separating the mother house and the kitchen house has a slightly lower height, about 15cm to 30cm from the level of mother house and the kitchen house. The kitchen house includes all the cooking utensils and dining room.

By the beginning of the 20th century, the Kutai House architecture no longer attracted the attention of the local people of Perak. This is due to the influence of the Limas House (*Rumah Limas*) architecture being introduced in the state of Perak. The design of the Limas House seemed to provide comfort and certain facilities because of its larger size. The unstoppable building development of the Limas House architecture resulted in a lack of demand for the Kutai House architecture, which was further cut off by the local people in Perak.

Rumah Limas Bumbung Perak (Perak Roofed Limas House)

Rumah Limas Bumbung Perak is still widely used by the Malay community in Perak, especially in areas near the river. The architecture is said to have a Dutch influence and was built around the early 19th century (Mohd Sabrizaa & Norhasandi, 2007). This house can be identified by its roof style known as the *bumbung* Perak (Perak roof). The roof is easier to build compared to the Kutai House, which has an elongated roof (Abdul Halim & Wan Hashim, 1994). The roof structure of the Limas House also is convenient for when the owner wishes to add additional space to the house.

In terms of the construction system, it is easier to build this type of house than than the Kutai House. It is not surprising that within a short time, the influence of Limas House architecture - such as *Rumah Bumbung Limas Perak*, *Rumah Limas Moden* and *Rumah Limas Bungkus* - had attracted the hearts of the locals at that time (Photo 3). One of the features of the Perak Limas House is the use of a roof with a *Tebar Layar* (Gable End) equipped with *papan tumpu kasau* (fascia board) carved with traditional motifs.

The building materials that had been used for generations were woods and boards of *chengal* and *meranti* types. The ornaments of these houses like *tunjuk langit*, *papan layang*, *papan meleleh*, *kepala cicak*, *tebar layar*, *kerawang*, grilles, *gerbang* and carved staircases. Each Limas House around the river has a gate on the porch with attractive patterns and colours. This gate is decorated around the front and side of the house porch. Another decoration at the front of the house is the stairs. The staircase and pillar heads were carved with various shapes and attractive motifs. The railings of the stairs and the grilles also are smoothed and carved with attractive patterns.

One of the uniqueness of the Limas House is that each house looks to be the same size if viewed from the front, but is different if viewed from the side. The owner of Limas House will add extra space extending towards the back rather than the sides. This is because the Malay community in the past was rich in being moderate and shy, and sticking to the philosophy and not showing off. These cultural values are applied by the Malays in their daily lives.



Photo 3. The Limas House, Perak.

Source: <http://www.panoramio.com/photo/8665438>

Study Area and Methodology

The district of Muallim is the 11th district of the state of Perak (Figure 1). The area of the district, 94,434.65 hectares, was part of the Batang Padang district with a population density of 69,639 people comprising a combination of three *mukim* (subdivision): Slim, Hulu Bernam Barat, and Hulu Bernam Timur. These three *mukim* covering the towns of Tanjong Malim, Slim and Proton City (Table 1). Muallim district has 17 villages, while Mukim Hulu Bernam Timur has 14 villages (Muallim District and Land Office, 2016).

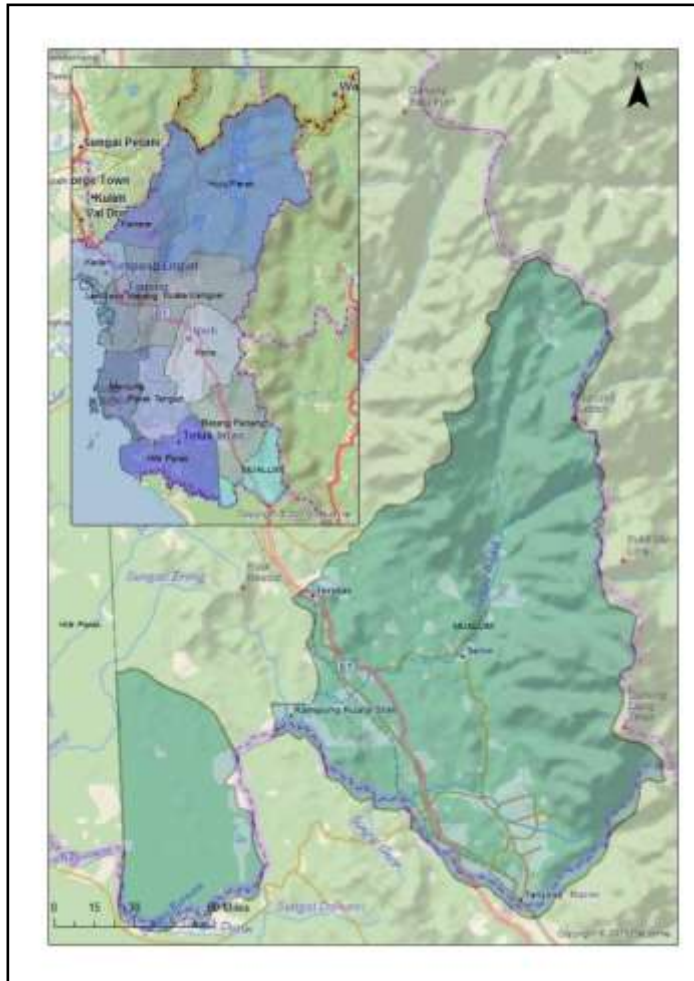


Figure 1. The location of Muallim district in the context of Perak state.

Table 1

List of Villages According to the Subdivisions of Muallim District

No	Mukim (Subdivision)	Village
A	Mukim Slim (17 Villages)	Kampung Naran
		Kampung Rasau
		Kampung Sungai Jorong
		Kampung Kuala Slim
		Kampung Kelan
		Kampung Balun
		Kampung Pasir
		Kampung Sungai Muda
		Kampung Sawa
		Kampung Penderas
		Kampung Lintah
		Kampung Piong
		Kampung Trolak Pekan
		Kampung Kurnia
		Kampung Bantang
		Kampung Manggis
		Kampung Batu 4 Trolak
B	Mukim Hulu Bernam Timur (14 Villages)	Kampung Kelawar
		Kampung Sungai Behrang
		Kampung Sungai Dara
		Kampung Pauh
		Kampung Padang
		Kampung Sungai Sekiah
		Kampung Sungai Bil
		Kampung Ketoyong
		Kampung Berop
		Kampung Lubuk Salak
		Kampung Lambak
Kampung Chabang Lima		
Kampung Batu 8 Behrang Ulu		
Kampung Simpang Empat		
C	Mukim Hulu Bernam Barat	

Source: Muallim District & Land Office (2016)

The main aim of this study was to identify the Perak traditional Malay houses in the Muallim district which still retain the design structure of traditional Malay building. The traditional Malay houses that have been identified were to be recorded and an inventory of

traditional Malay houses within the Muallim district was to be produced. The study involved qualitative and observational studies. The qualitative part of the study mostly used interaction methods, face to face with the participants of the study, and inductive approaches to generate theory. Data collection also was done continuously in the form of interview observation and document analysis. While carrying out observations, researchers recorded details using a checklist and videotape recorder, audiotape recorder, and camera with the functions of capturing images, video and audio. Photographs were the main media used to demonstrate the situation and physical condition of each house being studied. The physical analysis of the houses through the checklist was more accurately described through interpretation of the photographs taken during fieldwork.

Findings and Discussion

The researchers discovered 29 traditional Malay houses in this study (Table 2 and Photo 4). There were eight (27.6%) traditional Malay houses in the Slim area, while the remaining 22 (72.4%) were located in the Hulu Bernam Timur area which is believed to be the focal centre in the aspect of education around the 19th century.

Table 2

Number of Perak Traditional Malay Houses by Mukim

Mukim	Total	Percentage (%)
Slim	8	27.6
Hulu Bernam Timur	21	72.4
Hulu Bernam Barat	0	0
Total	29	100.0





Photo 4. The Perak traditional Malay houses discovered during fieldwork.

The age of most of the houses surveyed was greater than 50 years. This was more obvious when seven of the 29 houses were nearly 90 years old, built in 1930. There also were houses built in the 1940s, but the number of houses was slightly lower than in 1950, each recording four and seven houses, respectively. In addition, six (20.7%) and five (17.3%) of the houses were only approximately 30 to 40 years old.

The origins of the traditional houses found in this study were consisted of quarters and family houses. Nine of the houses were quarters provided for government employees working at the Tanjong Malim Health Clinic, Keretapi Tanah Melayu Berhad (KTMB), Tanjong Malim District Council (MDTM) and Pos Malaysia Berhad (Photo 5). The rest (55.2%) were houses inherited from family or were abandoned and left to decay homes (four houses). The motives of abandonment are unidentified but are believed due to families moving to the urban areas with no heirs to inherit the house.

Table 3

Origin of the Houses

Origin	Total	Percentage (%)
Quarters/Clinic	5	17.2
Quarters KTMB	1	3.4
Quarters MDTM	2	6.9
Quarters POS	1	3.4
Abandoned Residential House	4	13.8
Family House	16	55.2
Total	29	100.0



Photo 5. Quarters with the style of Perak traditional Malay house architecture in the study area.

Not all of the houses found in this study were unpopular, however, as during the field survey the researchers examined the houses from all aspects and discovered that 12 (41.4%) were uninhabited, including some quarters reserved for government employees, while the rest were inhabited (Table 4). The traditional Malay house symbolises the way of life of the past communities near the river which was a very important source of sustenance and transport during that time. Now, however, traditional Malay houses no longer attract as much attention and are not preserved. More than half (58.6%) of the houses were not taken care of despite being inhabited, and only 41.4% were partially preserved, and in fact, were turned into a homestay to generate income and preserve Malay heritage architecture (Photos 6 and 7). The traditional Malay house is a valuable asset for its architecture to be preserved for future generations, and have many specialties that today's modern house may not have.

Table 4

The Status of the Houses

Status of House	Total	Percentage (%)
Inhabited	17	58.6
Uninhabited	12	41.4
Total	29	100.0



Photo 6. The traditional houses that are still preserved.



Photo 7. The traditional houses that are not well-preserved.

According to the findings of the study, although the houses were not well preserved, they were in firm physical condition and only four seemed unstable because they had been abandoned, eaten by termites, full of bushes, and almost destroyed (Table 5). This is because, today's generation or homeowners prefer to build modern brick houses or have migrated elsewhere.

Table 5

The Physical Condition of the Houses

Condition of the house	Total	Percentage (%)
Firm	25	86.2
Unstable	4	13.8
Total	29	100.0

Malaysia has a population of various tribes whether indigenous or native from outside of the Malay Archipelago. Due to the diversity, Malaysia now has an infinite richness of heritage in natural and cultural forms (Mohd Yuszaidi & Muammar Ghaddafi, 2015). In this regard, the

precautionary measures need considered so that traditions continue to be inherited and become part of their ethnic pride.

The provisions of Section 25 of the National Heritage Act 2005 (Act 645) clarify the provisions under which a site can be granted approval as a natural heritage or valuable cultural heritage site. The site, or the near the site to be appointed as a heritage site, then can be gazetted for the right of protection and its improvements. Act 645 clearly states that the Heritage Commission has the power in his/her jurisdiction to determine if a site is a natural or cultural heritage with high value and historic importance as stated in the provision of Section 24.

Cultural heritage has been a major attraction in tourism for a long time, but tourism also sometimes has direct or indirect impacts on existing heritage sites. While recognising the positive contributions of the tourism sector to cultural heritage, tourism also can have a negative impact on the area, society, and remaining cultural heritage.

Cultural tourism has become a developing and increasingly important sector (Richards, 1996). Apart from the ability to generate revenue and locations of public focus on tourism products (Johan Afendi & Mohamad Zaki, 2012), developments that are carried out within control can contribute and generate funds for the country. In fact, regulated control can create a heritage-based tourism industry (Yuszaidy, Hanapi & Ab Samad, 2013). Hanapi (2001) added that all countries pay close attention to developing their own local culture to further enhance the tourism industry.

The areas in which the traditional houses (Kutai House) are located, especially in the Central Perak district which is famous for its historical remains such as in Pasir Salak, should be developed as a tourist centre. The traditional Kutai House is one of the attractions that is considered appropriate for becoming a tourist centre (Kamal, Ab Wahab, & Majid, 2005). Hanapi (2001) further explained that tourists seek for originality and meaning through travel experiences as well as gain experience about the culture of the destination. At the same time, tourists also consume the local culture, and what they consume is a product (Richards, 1996). In this regard, the inventory of traditional Malay houses in the Muallim district is an early attempt to continue the preservation of Malay architectural heritage in Perak. Through the traditional Malay house inventory that was conducted, relevant parties can perform conservation to make these houses a tourism assets for the local or foreign tourists.

Conclusion

This study has discovered 29 Perak traditional Malay houses, especially in the Muallim district. Most of the houses found have been around for more than 50 years, and some have reached 90 years. It was discovered that 25 houses were still sturdy and preserved. Preservation and conservation efforts need to be done immediately to the traditional Malay houses which can be maintained so that this cultural heritage can be appreciated by future generations. Efforts from the local authorities, especially Tanjong Malim District Council and agencies related to heritage tourism, can take appropriate action to preserve this cultural heritage.

Acknowledgement

This research was funded by the University Research Grant with the code 2016-0158-108-01 titled Inventory of Perak Traditional Malay Houses in Muallim District.

Corresponding Author

Associate Professor Dr. Yazid Saleh, PhD
Department of Geography & Environment,
Faculty of Human Sciences,
Sultan Idris Education University,
35900 Tanjong Malim, Perak, Malaysia.
Email: yazid@fsk.upsi.edu.my

References

- Abdul Halim, N., & Hashim, W. T. (1994). *Rumah Melayu tradisi*. Kuala Lumpur: Penerbit Fajar Bakti. (In Malay)
- Abdul Halim, N. (1988). *Rumah kutai: Satu warisan senibina tertua di Perak*. Kuala Lumpur: Persatuan Muzium Malaysia. (In Malay)
- Hanapi, D. (2001). *Kebudayaan Pahang dalam alaf baru*. In Seminar Persuratan Pahang: Menjejak Warisan Pahang, 27-28 Oct.
- Johan, A. I. & Mohamad Zaki, A. (2012). *Perancangan dan pembangunan pelancongan*. Sintok: Penerbit Universiti Utara Malaysia. (In Malay)
- Kamal, K. S., Wahab, A. L. & Majid, M. F. (2005). *Projek dokumentasi Rumah Kutai: Rumah angkat UiTM cawangan Perak*. Penyelidikan IRDC Jangka Pendek, Universiti Teknologi Mara, Shah Alam, Selangor. Retrieved from <http://buildingconservationindex.blogspot.my/2007/06/401-projek-dokumentasi-rumah-kutai.html> (In Malay)
- Sabrizaa, M. A. R., & Norhasandi, M. (2007). *Sungai Perak: Warisan Melayu terbilang yang menghilang*. In Seminar Kebangsaan Rupa Bandar Malaysia: Mengekal Warisan Membina Identiti, 28- 29 November, Orient Star Hotel, Lumut Perak. (In Malay)
- Yuszaidi, M. Y., & Ghaddafi, M. H. (2015). Akta Warisan Kebangsaan 2005 Akta 645): Penilaian dari aspek perundangan dan penguatkuasa. *Jurnal Melayu*, 14(2), 202-223. (In Malay)
- Muallim District and Land Office. (2016). *Info Muallim district*. Retrieved from <http://pdtmuallim.perak.gov.my/profil/profile-jabatan/info-daerah-2>
- Richards, G. (1996). Production and consumption of European cultural tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 23(2), 261-283.
- Hashim, W. T., & Abdul Halim, N. (2011). *The traditional Malay house*. Kuala Lumpur: Institut Terjemahan Negara Malaysia.
- Yuszaidy, M. Y., Hanapi, D. & Ab Samad, K. (2013). Perlindungan harta warisan: Keberkesanan usaha pemuliharaan dan pemeliharaan dalam pembangunan negara. *Geografia: Malaysian Journal of Society and Space*, 9(2), 64-77. (In Malay)
- Zulkifli, H. (1996). *Pembinaan bangunan tradisional Melayu*. Kulim: Amber-Solara Publication. (in Malay)
- Zulkifli, H. (2000). *Pola-pola hiasan di dalam bangunan tradisional Melayu*. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka. (In Malay)