

THE THREE LAYERINGS OF MALAY ARISTOCRATIC ORNAMENTATIONS: SURVIVAL OF SEMANTIC CATEGORIES AMIDST STYLISTIC CHANGES

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ABSTRACT

Public architecture in the Malay world refer to the relationships between the palaces and mosques and the changes highlight the evolution and 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 aristocratic 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 maps the influence of external forces such as Colonisation on regional architecture and that time and suggests three substreams of stylistic development in Classical Malay architecture.

Keywords: Classical Malay vernacular, stylistic changes, ornamentation

INTRODUCTION

The Malay Nusantara is a place of great culture and history. Historically this area is famous for its entrepot that become the focal point for the world trades at that time. The success of this entrepot is so successful that the Malay language is known to be 'lingua Franca' (Watson & Andaya, 2017). The Malay peninsula is an area which is very strategic especially in its position as the center of trading for the whole world. This led to the early assimilation of the Malays and its trading partner. The trader is from China, India, and Arabs (Hooker, V. M et al, 2004). Yet early 15th century is the moment in which external cultural force come to this land. They earlier came as a trader but stayed as a coloniser. In the land of Malay to be specific the onslaught of this coloniser can be chronologically seen into 4 stages of 4 different colonial rules.

Figure 1 Colonial timeline in Malay peninsular



Figure above showed the main power that had colonised the Malay Land which start from Portugese, Dutch, British and Japanese. The Japanese had the least time in their period of colonizing the Malay peninsular region. Thus not much influence had been implemented into the Malay region. Portugese being the first colonizer to invade the Malay peninsular, specifically the Kingdom of Malacca. The downfall of Malacca marks the first era of colonizer in Malay peninsular. During 1641 the Dutch took over Malacca which was controlled by portugese at that time. In a different situation during 1786 the British first came in contact with Malay peninsular through the state of Penang Island or at that time was under the rule of Kedah Kingdom. The British successfully enter the Penang Island through an angreement with the Sultan (ruler) of Kedah. The aggreement state that the British would help or protect the Kingdom of Kedah from the Siamese Kingdom at that time. Unfortunately, the British break the treaty and Kedah fall to the attack of Siamese. British would later on rule over the penang state island and open their first city called Georgetown.

Gullick (1987) observes the changes brought on by colonization in a South East Asian society, particularly Malaysia, under the onset and trajectory of Colonization: *‘The 19th century appears to have been the last age of unchanging stability and the 20th century marks the beginning of accelerating processes of social change which continue down to modern times. So, 1900-1920 may be regarded as a watershed. This is perhaps the period when the modern Malaya (and later Malaysia) began to take shape...’*

After the agreement between british and dutch on land swap between melaka land with british Indonesia land. This event mark the total controlled of british towards the malay peninsular.

Initially, the Colonialists practiced a policy of self-rule in which the Colonialist preserved and supported the existing social structure and political economy of the locals. Colonial powers practiced variations of protectorate treaties, which necessitated the cooperation of the ruling elite and in which both Colonialist and the Malay ruling class acting as partners. To legitimize their presence and activities, agreements and negotiations were signed. However, by the late 1800s, active modernizing agents amongst the Colonialists wanted to create an efficient system in order to expedite profitability and optimize their economic potential. The aim is to further extend and legitimize their control through the local institutions that would play a role in their growth of power. From key outposts, the Colonialists had extended their foothold on the Far East, their expansionist agenda were matched by the rate of protectorate and concession agreements with the local elite and ruling class.

THE MALAY ORNAMENTATION

The use of ornamentation or decoration in Malay traditional buildings had been a very important component for Malay architecture. Ornamentation or some literature would have called it ‘embelishment’ are a very fine and intricate object carved by the craftsmen artist who is also the carpenter. The embelishment design are usually non-figurative as the teaching of islam forbids the use of human and other living figures

These ornaments vary in form and apply in various part of a Malay buildings (Yuan, 1997). The common design motif for these ornament is usually floral and geometric design taken from elements of nature of the surroundings. Other motif such as calligraphy are also popular which is influence from the adoption of Islamic belief by the Malay community. The creation of ornament is synonym with the arts of woodcarving. Thus the main material used to create an ornaments is usually wood.

THE MALAY PALACE ORNAMENTATION

The Malay palace uses ornament as a symbols of wealth, status and power for the peoples to see. During those time it is common for a sultan to showcase their power through ornamentation (Nangkula Utaberta, 2014).The Malay palace design is the same as the common malay house but in a larger scale. Farish and Eddin (2003) explained quality and beauty of carving found on walls, patition panels, windows, grilles, air vents, doors, railings, bargeboards, fascia boards and gates were meant to serve as visual indicators of social rank and status of the dwelling owners. This also applied towards the application of ornaments. Ornaments in Malay palaces applied in the same ways as Malay house in term of its placement size. The different will be on the design complexity and the amount of ornaments uses to decorate the palaces.

The sultans would usually become the patron of these artisans or craftmen, which sees them residing in the palace ground for the sole purpose of serving the Sultan with the most beautiful carving for the palaces and for other object such as weapon and craft. This clearly showed the influence that the Sultans had on the ornaments of a palace, it could be seen that the design of an ornamentation is like the manifestation of the Sultan thought of what is beautiful in his perspective. Thus the involvement of colonising power

especially the British colonial towards the Malay peninsular kingdoms would see the changes in ornamentation design which evolve according to the likes of the Sultans.

The protruding Balai Penghadapan or open-air ceremonial hall is a distinctive feature of the Malay traditional palace. This area is usually located at the frontal elevation of a palaces. It is an expression of a culture that evolved from the nature of Malay hospitality and its adherence to a sense of decorum. Forms reflects a culture through centuries of harmony with the prevailing climate and the culture and lifestyle of Malay hospitality. This area tends to be highly decorated with ornamentation as sign of status and welcoming the palace would potrays towards its visitor.

Malay palace are the local form of public architecture of the Malay world. The physical design of a malay palaces is an external expression of the early polities of the tropical South east Asian world, who were exposed to global colonising forces. These colonising forces does affect and force the evolution on some of changes in the palaces architecture of the 'Sultan', which is an institution that had a direct confrontation with external colonising influence (Gullick, 1987). It is clear that some Malay palaces does adapt and hybridise some of the influence of its coloniser i.e British colonial. This paper tends to look into the British colonial influence and will try to focus on the front elevation or the façade of the palace as the focus of study. This is due to the fact that façade of a palace is usually tend to be more decorated with ornament.

THE RESILIENCE OF ORNAMENTATION ROLES IN MALAY ARISTOCRAT BUILDING

Previous literature had shown the role of ornamentation can be categories into 3 roles. Ornamentation as structure, ornamentation as decoration and ornamentation as a functional component. Ornamentation as a structure can be classified into two part. First is ornamentation that is directly carved to the structure and second is ornamentation that is a separate component from the structure but would support the structure structurally or decoratively. The first part can be seen in ornamentation in Negeri Sembilan architectural style. For instance, the column ornamentation on Seri Menanti palace had its carving directly carved to the column. This means that the role of the column of Seri Meanti palace act as both structural element and ornamentation. Second, as stated before is an external component of Malay ornamentation that is applied to the structural component of Malay buildings. Ornamentation like tetupai or sesiku is usually applied at the top area of the column and below the beam. It is seen to be a secondary structure that would reduce the load of the structure from the beam to the column.

Figure 2 Seri Menanti Palace column (source author)



Ornamentation as decoration would show the role of the ornamentation as solely to decorate the building. The role of ornamentation in these categories is to beautify or stylized the Malay building to be more different and beautiful from other Malay buildings.

Ornaments like papan cantik and sisik naga would play its role as a decorative element to a building, as a building without these ornamentations would seem incomplete as a Malay building.

Figure 3 Roof ornamentation (source author)



Ornamentation as a function is one of the most significant roles ornamentation could have on Malay buildings. The function is related to the regional and contextual area of a building. The 2 major function that ornamentation plays its part is on natural daylighting and ventilation. Both lighting and ventilation are important for the thermal comfort of a residence in a building. Ventilation panel is an important component for ventilation purposes in allowing the exchange of airflow in and out of the building, (Nursuriani Binti Shaffee Ismail Bin Said, 2011). windows and doors are designed to allow air movement through the buildings and become an important element and parts of the decorative carving (Tajul et al, 2006). The wisdom of past Malay craftsmen is on their consideration of applying the ornamentation as not only as decoration but also as a natural lighting and ventilation panel. The technique of *tebuk tembus* carving (full incision) would allow natural light and ventilation to pass through this ornamentation into the building.

Figure 4 carved panel for natural ventilation and light (Othman, Hanita, & Majid, 2017)



METHODOLOGY

A case study of Malay Palace from Malaysia are studied on its application of ornamentation. The case study is focusing on the timeline of late 18th to early 19th century. The application of ornamentation on each building case study is recorded using visual documentation; e.g. photograph that were digitized into sketches. Ornamentation application is look into the 3 roles it had;

1. Ornamentation as structure
2. Ornamentation as decoration
3. Ornamentation as functional device

The recorded data would also look into ornamentation that had influence of British colonial style in its design. The research will look into different ornament that are applied to a Malay palace in different component of the palaces. The ornaments recorded will be categorised into the 3 roles it has on a Malay palace. The style of the ornament is also being considered in term of it influence. The study would look into the ornaments that are visible at the frontage of each building.

Table 1: Malay palaces as case studies

Year	Name of palace	Location
1735 - 1896	Balai Besar	Alor Setar, Kedah
1887	Istana Jahar	Kota Bahru, Kelantan
1898	Baitul Rahmah	Kuala Kangsar, Perak
1903	Baitun Anwar	Kuala Kangsar, Perak
1905	Istana Bandar	Kelang, Selangor

ISTANA BALAI BESAR, ALOR SETAR, KEDAH DARUL AMAN

The Balai Besar (Great Hall or Main Hall) represented the public portion of a palace built in 1735 during the reign of Sultan Muhammad Jiwa Zainal Adilin Shah (1710-1760), built using the skilled craftsmen under the supervision of the Sultan. The present version of the Balai Besar built was built in 1898. Previous versions had been destroyed by Bugis and Siamese invaders. In 1767, Siam invaded Kedah and the ensuing conflict resulted in the partial destruction of the Balai Besar. Again in 1770, the Balai Besar was seriously damaged by fire during an attack by the Bugis. Functions which were originally been held in the building had to be relocated in the hall of the Kuala Kedah Fort.

Figure 5 Balai Besar kedah (Cabigas, E. 2014)



ISTANA JAHAR, KOTA BHARU, KELANTAN

Istana Raja Bendahara or Istana 'Jahar' was named after a specific tree that grew at the site. The name Istana Jahar was given when a Jahar tree was planted in the palace the compound under the order of Sultan Muhammad IV and till present day, the Kota Bharu City Centre had established around it. Construction of this palace was started at the end of the reign of Sultan Muhammad II (1837-1886) and was completed in 1887 during the reign of Sultan Ahmad (1886-1889). The palace was built as a wedding gift for Sultan Ahmad's prince, Long Kundur, who later succeeded him as Sultan Muhammad III (1889-1890) (Saleh 1987).

Figure 6 Jahar Palace (source author)



BAITUL RAHMAH, KUALA KANGSAR, PERAK

Raja Harun Al – Rashid was the designer of the house which was built with other 2 houses. The houses are Bytul 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. During 1915 the Perak rulers had been familiarized with British colonial architecture style.

Figure 7 Baitul Rahmah (Rumah Tradisional Perak di Bukit Chandan 2010, August 04)



BYTUL ANWAR, KUALA KANGSAR, PERAK

Bytul Anwar was designed by the crown prince of that time. The designer of Bytul Anwar was Raja Harun Al-Rasyid which also designed Baitul Rahmah. Bytul Anwar has distinctive architectural features and characteristics that were outstanding at that time. It is one of the many houses in Bukit Chandan's compound in Kuala Kangsar, consisting of palaces and noble houses for the Perak royal family. (R. N. Shah, 2006). The building's built in spaces consist of an audience hall common to Malay palaces but designed on a small scale. Bytul Anwar's overall design is a mixture of Malay and colonial architecture with the essence of a Royal Palace. The spaces incorporated in the building consist of an audience hall common to Malay palaces but designed on a small scale (Noor Hanita Abdul Majid, 2014).

Figure 8 Bytul Anwar (source author)



THE ISTANA BANDAR, KELANG, SELANGOR

The Istana Bandar, Selangor, built in 1905, is an almost totally masonry building built by Sultan Alauddin Riayat Shah, and it is known that idea and designs for the palace came from the Sultan himself. Once the palace was completed, Sultan Alauddin moved his throne there. He lived in the palace for 35 years, until his death in 1938. The palace itself has two levels, with 15 stately rooms. The Sultan was known as extremely involved in the decoration of the palace, giving the palace his personal touches. It was known that the Sultan insisted on the Malay forms in the palace design, with sharp roof lines, curved windows, and ornately decorated stone staircases. Yet overall, the palace frontage has evolved from influences of Classical Georgian design, with its punch windows and frontal symmetry staircases. There is an iconic external staircase reminiscent of Georgian houses, while columns and balustrade now appear like pilaster, fused with the unique attribute linked to Malay identity, consisting of pilasters that fuse into the wall which seem to reflect nuances of the *serambi* balustrade as half-height pilasters into the façade itself.

Figure 9 Istana Bandar picture is taken from "<http://medielicious.blogspot.com/2011/02/on-istana-jugra.html>" 16/9/2018



From the case study it is clear that the Malay palaces had a big influence from British colonial rule. The influence was clearly presence in its architectural language which would include its design, construction and material. From the case study, ornament of each component is select and classify into the 3 layers of its roles towards the palaces.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Modernity can be best described by Colquhoun (2001): "A time when a society or community becomes aware and undergo the threshold of massive change". Clearly all 5 building had been influence by British colonial rule due to the timeline of its construction is the time when the british had been the only colonizer in Malay peninsular after an agreement of land swap between the British and the Dutch. Thus there will be an influence of British towards the design of these palaces. Jahn Kassim et.al (2018) highlights how the palaces are the field of such evolvments and mutations of local styles as they absorbed technology and pressures and had signified how's changes occurred due to Modern forces. These changes can be described and characterized as follows:

1. Timber to masonry transformation in elements of form. The form that still preserved past Malay tropical forms of architecture.
2. Frontage insertion on buildings such as fixed cladding. This would be signal a conscious and deliberate attempt towards a stylistic change with foreign influence.
3. The formal change in base or plinth with masonry stylized approach, while the rest of the building remain in the timber stylization.
4. The transmutation and stylization of the entire ground floor and first floors into masonry stylization.
5. The infusion of Neo-classical and Georgian English architectural style of british colonial architecture origin into a form instead of the Malay dressing or grammar.

Table below would show the stylistic evolution and changes of the Malay style in under such colonial-based era of influences. The 5 influence is represent in the top horizontal row of the table. The area in which changes by influence of new technology diffused by colonial forces and influences during this era.

Table 2: Adoption of British colonial influence on the façade built of Malay Palace








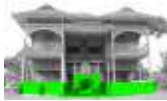












Name of palace	1	2	3	4	5
Balai Besar					
Istana Jahar					
Baitul Rahmah					
Baitun Anwar					
Istana Bandar					

Table above clearly show how each buildings had an influence of new technology of masonry; which was introduced mainly by the coloniser during this era/. The most common theme that would signify this influence are the use of masonry element in the building. There are certain studies that suggest that Malay architecture had impliment the use of masonry since the era of Malacca, under British era, the influence of masonry into the stylistic changes of Malay architecture was accompanied by infusion of stylistic elements prevalent in Neo Classical designs during the era.

In comparison, Istana Jahar depicted the least influence. The Istana Jahar Kota Bahru, in its final renovations in 1905, saw the frontage columns changed to masonry cylindrical types. Yet its slenderer proportions show a degree of localization - through a royal intention of sustaining the Malay identity through persisting on the slender proportions of columns. What seems like Classical Doric columns are made slender and inserted in the porte coche of the palace (Shireen & Kassim, 2018).




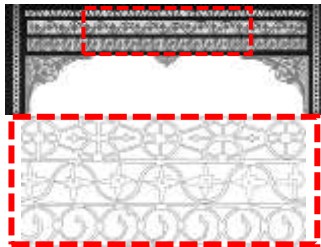

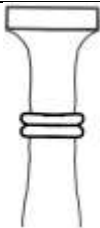
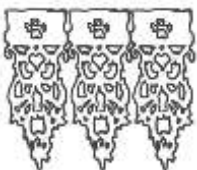
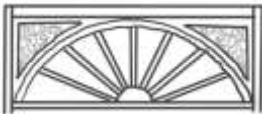
The Istana Bandar on the other hand had completely influenced by the british colonial style. To be specific the façade overall form is influence of British neo classical and Mughal style. Mughal architecture is no dout not a direct British colonial architecture style but undoubtedly British is the one who brings in Mughal style into Malay region. They somehow manage to persuade the Sultan (ruler) to use Mughal architecture for the ornaments of the building as a subtitue from the original Malay traditional ornaments. This is possible due to the fact that Mughal architecture was a branch of Islamic architecture which originated from india under the rules of Mughal emperor likes Shah Jahan.



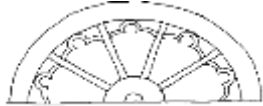
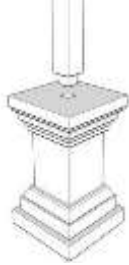
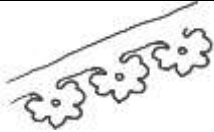
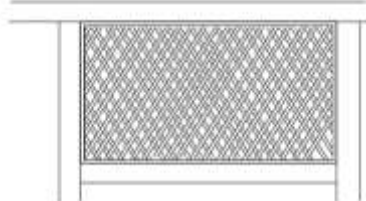
These 5 changes could be seen on the 5 case study. The modernity does change some part of Malay Palace but the change was not clearly in chronological manner. There is an evolvment in the stylistic hybrid form of the Malay endemic style. While it has

its roots in its ancient timber past, its forms and style gradually undergo a change in modernity, while throughout, still retaining in essence, its form which eventually modernized formally into masonry variants.

Although the adoption of British colonial influence is clearly presence in all buildings, this paper tends to look into its direct affect on the 3 layers or roles of ornamentation application in the buildings. Same as before the roles of ornamentation is studied only on the façade area. Table below would indicate the selected recorded data of ornament from 3 areas of the case study which are the column, wall and roof area. The ornament is classifying into 3 categories of 3 roles of ornament which had been discussed in the previous literature. The categories are ornaments as structure, decoration and functional device.

Table 3: 3 layers or roles of ornamentation in Malay palace case study

Buildings	Ornamentation		
	Decorating Structural	Decorating on Architectural elements	Decorating building with function
<p>Balai Besar 1735 – 1896</p>  <p>Annotation for position of ornament</p>	<p>Tiang Column</p>  <p>Sesiku bermotif Sultur Paku <i>Bracket with fern motif</i></p>	<p>Bumbung Roof</p>  <p>Silang Gunting berkerawang awan larat <i>Cross Scissor with Fretwork and meandering cloud motif</i></p>	<p>Bumbung Roof</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>
<p>Istana Jahar 1887</p> 	<p>Tiang Column</p>  <p>Alas tiang gaya</p>	<p>Bumbung Roof</p>  <p>Papan cantik bermotif Pucuk rebung Fascia board with bamboo shoots motifs</p>	<p>Pintu Door</p>  <p>Ambang pintu bermotif geometri (tengah) Fanlight with geometry motif</p>

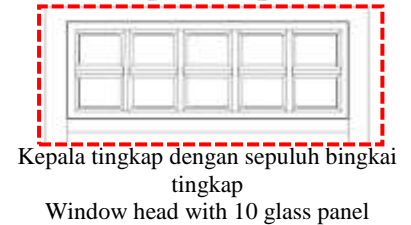
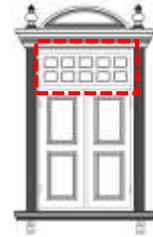
	Melayu klasik Pedestal with Malay classical style		Function : Tebuk tembus carving allows for natural daylight to enter building
Baitul Rahmah 1898	Tiang Column  Alas tiang gaya Melayu klasik Pedestal with Malay classical style	Bumbung Roof  Papan Pator bermotif kelawar gantung dan tumbuhan Fascia board with hanging bat and floral motif	Pintu Door  Ambang pintu bermotif geometri Fanlight with geometri motif Function : Tebuk tembus carving allows natural ventilation to enter a building
Baitul Anwar 1903	Tiang Column  Alas tiang gaya Melayu klasik Pedestal with Malay classical style	Roof Bumbung  Papan cantik bermotif lebah gantung Fascia board with hanging bee motifs	Dinding Wall  Papan Kisi-kisi kayu bersilang Wood lattice panel Function : Tebuk tembus carving allows natural ventilation and lighting to enter building
Istana Bandar 1905	Tiang Column	Roof Bumbung	Tingkap window



Alas tiang gaya
British neo klasikal
Pedestal with
British neo classical
style



Tiang akhir bergaya Mughal
Roof finial with Mughal style



Kepala tingkap dengan sepuluh bingkai
tingkap
Window head with 10 glass panel

Function :
10 glass panel that allow natural
lighting to enter the building

All of the image of sketch are drawn by author from case study

From the table above it can be said that the initial role of ornamentation in these building still can be seen applied. The role can be categories into 3 roles. Ornamentation as structure, ornamentation as decoration and ornamentation as a functional component.

Ornamentation as a structure can be classified into two part. First is ornamentation that is directly carved to the structure and second is ornamentation that is a separate component from the structure but would support the structure structurally or decoratively. From case study much of the ornaments are on the second type, which are a separate component that decorate a structure. ornamentation on Balai besar decorate its structure as a separate component. While the other building had its structure decorated moulded into its structure. The decorated part is on the pedestal area of column which had a concrete as material. The use of concrete showed the influence of British influence in term of their construction method.

Ornamentation as decoration would show the role of the ornamentation as solely to decorate the building. The role of ornamentation in these categories is to beautify or stylized the Malay building to be more different and beautiful from other Malay buildings. From case study the role of ornamentation as a decoration can clearly be seen from all palaces. All of the case study look into the Papan cantik (fascia board) component of the Palaces. The papan cantik ornaments still retain its original material of wood. Its design also still retains the identity of Malay motif.

Ornamentation as a function is one of the most significant roles ornamentation could have on Malay buildings. The function is related to the regional and contextual area of a building. The 2 major function that ornamentation plays its part is on natural daylighting and ventilation. The ornaments in the case study still had its function. But the material used varies from concrete, timber and glass. This showed how there are still little influence the british had on the ornaments.

These three roles in ornamentation from the case study can clearly be seen being utilized. The influence of British emerging power during the period of the building case study does not significantly affect the role and degree of ornamentation on these buildings.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper summarise the essentially three streams or layerings of changes that beset the Malay vernacular style from its traditional branch includes the Classical vernacular, and the "Classical" (Jahn Kassim, et al, 2019), the modern 'branch' can be associated with cases and styles in a time of rapid change i.e. from the mid 1800s onwards. The final branch of late modern regionalism is discussed by Jahn Kassim, et.al (2017). A midst all of these colonial influence the role of ornamentation seen in the Palace case study still remain unchanged. Ornamentation is an important part of Malay building it defines the identity of a building. Identification would also include traces of a building history with the style or ways of design that ornamentation had. The paper found out that there are 3 basic roles of Ornamentation. The roles are ornamentation as a structure, ornamentation as decoration and ornamentation as functional panel. This finding could at least gives some clue as to how to apply ornamentation for current public building. The paper studies limit only on the significant of Malay ornamentation usage of the past. Much less had been discussed on its role for future building. Is there any relevance of ornamentation application towards current building construction? To answer this question a

future paper is needed to be done. As said before Malay ornamentation as a whole is like the face or identity of a Malay buildings during its time, without it the building identity is loss. The need to find the relevancy and ways of applying Malay ornamentation is very important for the future identity of current Malaysia building.

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