

The Traditional Malay House

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► Introduction

Traditional Malay house is a vital part of the Malay culture. The aesthetical design of the house bears strong influence of yesteryears' Islamic architecture. Additionally, considerations of residential prerequisites, cultural conformities and climate conditions do play important roles on drawing the blueprint. Elements surrounding its neighbourhood and the occupants' assessment of privacy are also taken into account. To the Malay, a house is more than just an abode – it is a conference hall, a mosque, a wedding ballroom, a labor room and a mortuary, all packaged into one.

Short Story

► Design approach

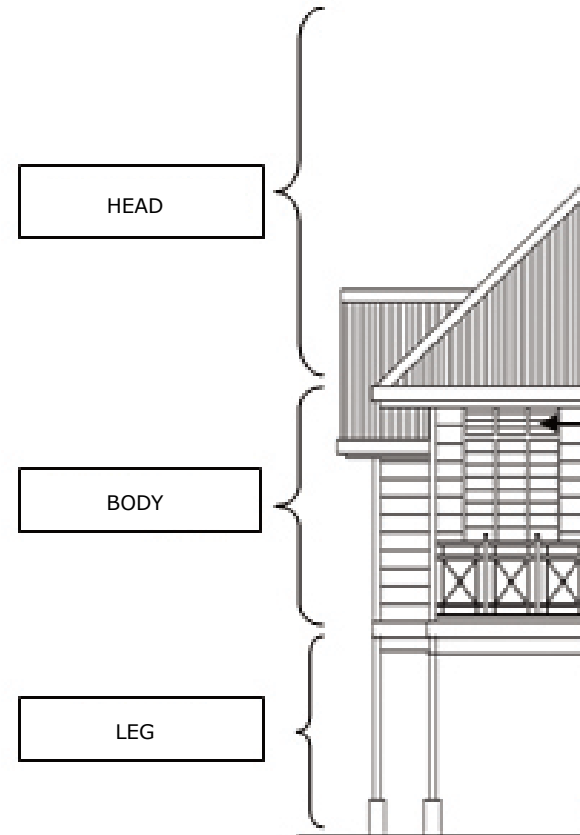
Designing a traditional Malay house calls for innovative thinking. It premises on the ingenuity of the carpenter to utilize elements within his environmental reach to be incorporated into the design. For instance, a passive system can be employed to allow sunlight to permeate the interior during the day, and wall openings for natural breeze to ventilate the entire house.

Different spatial functions may require different intensity of sunlight to permeate. Accordingly, spatial designs, too, will entail different amount of circulated natural breeze to create a comfortable interior. The layout is designed in such a way to benefit from cross-ventilation and air movement. Fresh air allows for healthy living and movement for convective and evaporative cooling for the human body.

► Building orientation

The house is segregated into three sections, namely front, middle and back. The front section is categorized as the lobby, where guests are received. The middle compartment consists of separate rooms for parents and children. It is also used to segregate the ladies from the men during a mass congregation. The back section is traditionally utilized as the kitchen, where food preparation takes place.

Meanwhile, with regards to façade, the house is normally constructed facing west, more specifically, the longitude and latitude coordinates of Mecca in Saudi Arabia. This is mainly because, for the most part, Malays are Muslims. Such a construction plan facilitates prostration direction in a prayer. And for that matter and out of religious obligation, the outhouses or washrooms are constructed facing the opposite horizon, east.



The floor layout of a traditional Malay house is mundanely rectangular, with doors and windows installed at certain heights, angles and projections in order to preserve the sanctity and privacy of its female occupants.

Meanwhile, the assessment of interior privacy includes both visual and acoustical. Visually, public and private spaces segregation includes separation for bathing. The acoustical privacy, on the converse, ensures sound transmission from the house to the outside and the private area is prevented.