

SPATIAL USAGE IN THE ROYAL AND COMMONER RESIDENCES IN KUALA KANGSAR: A COMPATIBILITY ANALYSIS TO THE ISLAMIC GUIDELINES AND CUSTOM MANIFESTATIONS

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ABSTRACT

The relationship between Islamic guidelines and Malay culture to traditional Malay architecture has been an accepted fact. Nevertheless, the factors that influence culture such as customs have been testified to have inconsistencies with Islamic guidelines. It is hypothesized that the Malays Muslims in Malaysia practices the Malay custom or *Adat* that in turn has affected the spatial usage in the traditional dwelling architecture; may it be the royal or commoners residences. This paper identifies the Islamic guidelines and customs related to wedding ceremonies and analyzes the spatial usage and activities conducted. The comparison between royal and commoners residences indicates that the residential layout differs in terms of the complexity of customs practiced at the selected case studies. The case studies chosen for the spatial studies are the Bytul Anwar and Baitul Rahmah representing the royal residences and Rumah Meor representing the commoner's residences. Generally, there are similarities in terms of layout and hierarchy of the spaces involved in conducting the ceremonies. There are also evidences that Islamic guidelines has been absorbed in the customs practiced during wedding ceremonies with additions and modifications in the royal and commoners practice. The results suggested there are strong custom manifestations in the spatial usage at both royal and commoners' residences.

Keywords: Spatial Usage; Royal and Commoner Residence; Islamic Guidelines and Custom Manifestations

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between culture and architecture has been an accepted fact. The Malays in Malaysia practices the Malay

custom or *Adat* that has affected the spatial usage in the traditional dwelling architecture; may it be the royal or commoners residences. This paper identifies the Islamic guidelines and customs related to wedding ceremonies and analyzes the spatial usage and activities conducted in the traditional dwellings. The objective is to compare between royal and commoners residences and identify the similarities or differences in the spatial layout. The study specifically focuses on the spatial usage in the residences that relates to the wedding customs practiced by the Malays. The spaces are appraised in terms of their function in relationship to the wedding customs that is common to Perak.

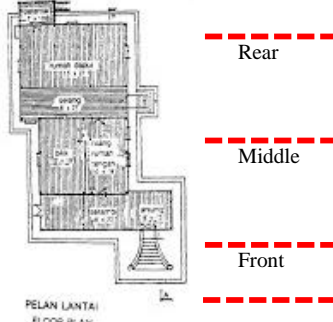
The case studies chosen for the spatial studies are the *Bytul Anwar* and *BaitulRahmah* representing the royal residences; and *RumahMeor* representing the commoner's residences. All case study subjects are located on *Jalan Istana, Bukit Chandan, Kuala Kangsar, Perak*. Kuala Kangsar has been Perak's royal seat since the 18th century. Hence, the area chosen is originally populated by the royal family, their descendants and the officers or subjects serving the Sultan.

The paper presents the spatial relationship to the customs practiced for the wedding of royalties and commoners in the state of Perak. It will also discuss the Islamic guidelines related to the customs practiced. The association between the mentioned factors is asserted by Mohd. Shuhaimi and Osman (2012) that confirm that the Malays had fully adopted a life based on Islamic principles and can be witnessed in social and religious gatherings such as wedding ceremony. The factors that influence culture such as religion and customs have been testified to have inconsistencies with Islamic guidelines.

Spatial design of Malay Traditional Dwellings

The traditional Malay dwellings are often known as the Malay Traditional House (MTH) or *Rumah Melayu*, is known to have distinct zoning besides the multifunctional nature in the usage. Three distinct zonings are reported by Lim (1987) and Hayroman (2011) as the front house consisting the verandah (*anjung or serambi*), middle house (*rumah ibu*) and rear house with kitchen (*dapur*), *kelek anak* and deck (*pelantar*) (Table 1). Figure 1 shows a typical layout for a Malay house

Table 1: Zoning and Spaces in a Malay Traditional House (MTH)

Zoning	Space	Usage	Plan
Front	Verandah (anjung or seram)	The front house is an area to entertain guests especially male guests. It is used for ceremonies and events involving guests and also male children for sleeping. The area is regarded as a male domain.	 <p>Figure 1: The Malay house Showing the Spaces and Three Different Parts (source: KALAM UTM)</p>
Middle	Rumah ibu (the main house) with or without bedrooms	The main house is generally used by the family members to conduct variety of activities, i.e. sleeping, sewing, etc. This is a semi private family area and also a female domain of the house.	
Rear	Kitchen (dapur), keleak anak and deck (pelantar)	The rear house is the service support for a Malay house. This is a female domain and can normally be accessed from a second entrance.	

Definitions of Malay Custom or Adat

Culture has been defined as the way of life. It includes the elements of civilization, development of thoughts, thinking and behaviour of the people or society. In the context of this paper, culture includes religion and custom of the Malays that are prominently Muslims. According to Article 160 of the Constitution of Malaysia (clause 2: 1957), Malays are Malaysian citizen who professes to be a Muslim, habitually speaks the Malay language and adheres to Malay customs.

On the other hand, custom can be defined as a practice followed by people of a particular group or region (Free Online Dictionary) or a way of behaving or a belief which has been established for a long time (Procter, 1995). In short, adat or customs are ways that has been practiced in a society that has been accepted and adopted as a rule. Customs are created by human beings and are subjected to changes and transformations due to geographical, social, time or age factors. The Malay customs or adat Melayu is related to the way of life at all stages of life; from birth to marriage to death. It is difficult to determine the precise nature or range of practice, but it has specific associations in the ceremonial and religious domains (Nagata, 1974).

Farok (2011) forwarded the close relationship of the

Malay rituals and Islamic culture in the daily practices of the Malays. The values are deeply infused that it is difficult to ascertain the origins of the Malay customs and values and how it differs or imitate the Islamic guidelines or values. Wan Abdul Kadir (1998) emphasized that the concept of Malays in Malaysia is inseparable from Islam. The Malays usually assume that adat or customs practiced in their daily life are influenced by Islam. Based on assumptions from a Hadith by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) —Allah is beautiful and He loves beauty.‖ (Sahīh Muslim (911)), the Malays has adopted arts and culture in form of architecture and art forms. Ishak (1997) noted that at the time of the Fuqaha that customs or *urf* is a governance *power* that is practiced in line with Islamic law. The Islamic influence on the customs or adat of the Malays that begins in the 14th century however has been diluted by colonization in the 18th century (Hayroman, 2011).

CUSTOMS RELATED TO MALAY WEDDING

The Malay wedding Ceremony includes three (3) stages; the proposal/enquiry for marriage and engagement, the solemnization and sitting on the dais. The royal customs (Buku Cenderamata Negeri Perak, 1983) of Negeri Perak however noted that the royal family practices two (2) additional rituals that are the purification (berlimau) and royal bath (bersiramsampat). Table 2 illustrates the similarities and differences in the phases of the Malay wedding customs for the royals and commoners. Figure 2 to 5 depicts spaces and customs involved in Royal wedding of Perak.

Table 2: The Malay Wedding Customs

Adat/ Customs	Commoners	Royal	The Space in the Royal Palace
Proposal/ enquiry for marriage Engagement	Anjung/ Serambi	Palace Hall (<i>Balai Istana</i>)	

Figure 2: Balairong Seri Istana Iskandariah – 1939.

Source:

<http://sembangkuala.wordpress.com/2009/07/15/balairong-seri-istana-iskandariah-1939/>

posted July 15, 2009.


Solemnization	<i>Anjung/ Serambi and Bride's Bedroom or Main House (Rumah Ibu)</i>	Ceremonial Hall (<i>Balai Adat</i>) and Royal Bridal Chamber (Princess)	
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Figure 3: Solemnization/ Akad Nikah Ceremony for Raja Nazrin Shah
 source: Fayz (2007)


Berlimau	-	Outdoors	
Bersanding	<i>Anjung/ Serambi</i>	Hall (<i>Balairong Seri-petarakna</i>) and bedroom	

Figure 4: The Royal Wedding of Raja Zarith Sofiah and Tunku Mahkota Johor Tunku Ibrahim Ismail, Istana Iskandariah, Kuala Kangsar, Perak on 9th-12th Sept 1983 source: *Payong Mahkota Digahayu Raja Melayu*.
http://ku-alam.blogspot.com/2011_06_01_archive.html

<i>Bersiram Sampat</i> (Royal Bath)	-	Outdoors Outdoor Pavilion/ <i>Petarakna Seri Panca Pesada</i>	
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Figure 5: *Istiadat Bersiram Sampat* that is Practiced by the Royal

Family.

source:

http://anakmelayuperak.blogspot.com/2012_08_01_archive.html

The First Stage: Proposal And Engagement

The proposal and engagement phase is the enquiry for marriage by the representative from the potential groom's family. If there is agreement from the future bride's family, the representative will offer the future bride a ring and subsequently send a group for official engagement ceremony. This phase include the sending of gifts from both parties. In a royal engagement, the presents include golden trays of betel leave set and eight golden compendiums including wedding attire/outfit of different materials (Rasheffa, 2007). The number of royal gifts and such is different from the commoners that always based on odd numbers; for instance the future groom will send seven presents and will be reciprocated by nine presents from the future bridegroom. This ceremony took place in the public or guest area at the palace (palace hall) and the MTH (anjung/serambi).

The Second Stage: Solemnization/ Akad Nikah

The solemnization is performed by the Mufti (religious leader of the State) with the groom seated on a large golden pillow/ coir. After the solemnization, the groom will be escorted to greet the bride by touching her forehead (adatmembatalkan air sembahyang literally translated as the cancellation of ablution) to symbolized the legitimate relationship between the couple. The solemnization is an essential stage in Islam and is practiced by both commoners and royalties. Similar to the first stage, the second stage of the wedding ceremony is also conducted at the public or guest area at the palace (Balairong Istana) and the MTH (anjung/serambi). The solemnization is usually followed by adatmembatalkan air sembahyang at the same place or the bedchamber. For the royalties, this custom will be followed by a process called istiadatmemutuskerajat (exorcism from bad spirit for the newlyweds). This process is performed in the Royal Bridal chamber.

Berlimau

This customs is specifically practiced only by the royalties. This phase is divided into two parts;The Royal Bath(IstiadatBerlimauBesar /istiadatbersiramkhubah) and The Royal Bath before the application of henna (IstiadatBerlimauKeranaHendakMenampalInai) (Roshidi, 2007). Both phases are conducted on a raised platform (BalaiPancaPesada) in

the palace compound. This phase include processes of bathing the newlywed couple and performed by the royal shaman.

The Third Stage: Sitting on the dais/ Sitting in state of a throne or *Adat Bersanding dan Pelamin*

Adat bersanding or Sitting in state of a throne is adopted by both royalties and commoners. For the royalties, the phase started by a procession of the bride and groom to the hall in the royal palace. For the commoners, the bride and groom will meet in the house compound and will be guided inside the house towards the *anjung/ serambi*. Inside, the bride and groom will be seated on a dais to be viewed by all guests. The basic principle for this custom is to introduce the married couple to the guests. This is encouraged by Islam provided that the couple is attired according to the prescription of Islam (covering the aurah). Newly-wed couple is often dubbed as ‘the king and queen of the day’, hence the couple are seated on the dais as would the King and Queen in audience with the subjects/ people.

The culture of preparation and sitting on a dais is not prescribed by Islam. Nevertheless the Malays have adopted this customs which was adopted from the Hindu culture (Nagata, 1974; Winstedt, 1947 and Dila Delilla, 2007). Nur Eliana et. al. (retrieved 2013) asserted that many customs associated to Malay weddings such as compatibility (*Adat merasi*), parade (*berarak*), application of henna (*berinai*), formal dining (*makan suap*) and purification (*adat menepung tawar*), grinding the teeth (*mengasah gigi*), incantation (*membaca jampi mentera*) are influences from Hinduism and Buddhism. According to Syaikh Abdullah bin ‘Abdurrahman al-Jibrin hafizahullah, the presentation of the bride and groom to public is not allowed because it is a gesture that does not reflect modesty and imitating the non-Muslims (Abdir Razzaq, 2006).

Bersiram Sampat

This custom is conducted outdoors three days after *Adat Bersanding* (Roshidi, 2007). The royal couple will be flaunted with royal instruments and songs to the Balai Panca Persada. This structure has a square plan elevated on seven, nine or eleven risers, marked by balustrades on the sides and roofed with golden fabric. This structure can be built on the river or a field. This phase will be ended with another chapter of sitting on the dais at the palace with a royal feast. Following this custom, the newlyweds will be presented to the parents where the will be offered with gifts

ISLAMIC GUIDELINES

Islamic guidelines in the daily practices of the Malays are retrieved from of Al-Quran and Al-Hadith. In Islam the essential (wajib) phases of a wedding is solemnization. According to al Hadith, informing about the wedding and reception is highly recommended.

According to al Bukhari as narrated by Anas radhiyallahu ‘anhu:

خَرَجُوا نَتْمَ الطَّعَامِ مِنْ فَأَصَابُوا الْقَوْمَ فَدَعَا عَرُوسًا بِهَا وَسَلَّمَ عَلَيْهِ اللَّهُ صَلَّى النَّبِيُّ أَصْبَحَ

This Hadith says that the Prophet (pbuh) had invited the public and give a wedding reception after his marriage to Zainab bint Jahsy. This Hadith indicated that informing about wedding to public and giving a reception is highly recommended as it was practiced by the Prophet (pbuh).

The spatial layout should support Islamic prescription of *aurah*. It is not permissible for the bride to show her *Aurah* (Arabic: عورة). *Aurah* denotes the parts of the body, for both men and women, which must be covered with clothing. Exposing the *aurah* is unlawful in Islam and is regarded as sin. The Quran has stated:

O Prophet, tell your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers to bring down over themselves [part] of their outer garments. That is more suitable that they will be known and not be abused. And ever is Allah Forgiving and Merciful.

-Al-Ahzab[33:59]

In observing the Islamic recommendations, the bride should cover herself properly in front of the public. Hence the space should support the privacy of the bride. For instance, the couple should be introduced to the public and maybe limited to family members only inside the house. Some wedding rituals are also confined to the bedroom area inside the house for privacy purposes (*adat membatalkan air sembahyang*).

METHODOLOGY

This paper identifies the customs and Islamic guidelines related to wedding ceremonies and analyze the spatial usage and activities conducted. The comparison between royal and commoners residences indicates that the residential layout differs in terms of the complexity of customs practiced at the selected case studies. The case studies chosen for the spatial studies are the Bytul Anwar and Baitul Rahmah

representing the royal residences, and Rumah Meor representing the commoner's residences. The paper presents the plans of the three residences and proceeds to indicate the spaces utilized in wedding ceremonies.

Table 3: The Case Studies

		
 <p style="text-align: center;">Ground Floor Plan</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">First Floor Plan</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">Ground Floor Plan</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">First Floor Plan</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">Ground Floor Plan</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">First Floor Plan</p>

Fig 6: Baitul Rahmah, Jalan Istana built in 1915

Fig 7: Bytul Anwar, Lot 1961, Jalan Istana built in 1912

Fig 8: Rumah Meor, No 174, Jalan Istana built in 1936


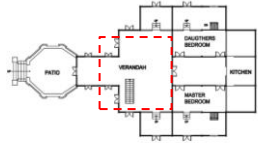
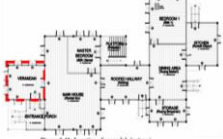



DATA ANALYSIS






Table 3 describes the case studies on the selected samples. Figure 6, 7 and 8 show the photos of the house with the plans. Bytul Anwar and BaitulRahmah are designed and belonged to Raja Harun al-Rashid ibni al-Marhum Sultan IdrisMursyidul _Adzam Shah also known as Raja KechilSulung (1918-1938). These houses are resided by Raja Harun al-

Rasyid and his families. On the other hand, Rumah Meor is originally owned by Mr Tun Ismail Bin Ahmad, a Chief Clerk at the Iskandariah Palace during the reign of Sultan Iskandar and Sultan Abdul Aziz (1918-1948). Rumah Meor is one of the well preserved traditional Perak house in Bukit Chandan.

The plans for the three case studies selected indicated that the wedding ceremony is mainly conducted at the front zones where guests are normally entertained. The public areas are located on the first floor. Table 4 indicates the spatial usage in relation to adat/ customs in the royal and commoner's residences (figures 9-15).

Table 4: Photos Depicting The Spatial Usage in Relation to Adat/Customs

Adat/ Customs	The Space		
	Royal Residence	Commoner/ traditional house	Perak
	Baitul Rahmah	Bytul Anwar	Rumah Meor
Proposal/ enquiry for marriage Engagement			
	Figure 9: The Plans of the First Floor Where Marriage related Customs are Conducted		
Solemnization			
	Figure 10: The Anjung or Living Area of Baitul Rahmah where Marriage related Customs are Conducted	Figure 11: Discussion Marriage related Customs at The First Floor of Bytul Anwar Source: Raja Rashidah	Figure 12: The Anjung or Living Area of Rumah Meor where Marriage related Customs are Conducted

Bersanding		 	 
	<p>Fig 13: The wedding dais in Baitul Rahmah is permanently installed in the living area on the first floor. It is a three layers timber structure with carvings.</p>	<p>Fig 14: The wedding dais in Bytul Anwar for the wedding of Raja Rashidah</p>	<p>Fig 15: A Typical Wedding Dais at a Commoner Wedding</p>
Bersiram Sambat	Outdoors	Outdoors	-

The proposal and enquiry for marriage are usually conducted in absence of the future bride where she is consulted about the marriage in the privacy of the bedroom or rumahibu. In the solemnization stage, the bride is usually attired according to the prescription of Islam (attire that covers the aurah). The crucial stage is whether hijab and privacy are observed during Istiadat Bersanding. The areas used are the main living area (rumahibu) in BaitulRahmah, and the verandah or anjung in BytulRahmah and RumahMeor. These areas shares similarities in terms of location and zoning. These areas are semi-public areas that are accessible by invited guests of both genders. Although labeled as rumahibu that is female dominated and semi-private, BaitulRahmah differs from commoner's residence because it has additional area attached to the main living area that is meant for the family members and a female domain.

The living areas on both royal and commoners houses are limited and seemed to fit the dimension of the dias; 3-6 meters wide. The width of the walls are sufficient for the dais (figure 9) and to accommodate guests from the groom's family and relatives. The layout size and the height of the space were proportionate and suitable enough for the decoration and structure of the dais. The layout of the houses supports privacy where some segregation can be practiced where only mahram can witness the bride and groom seated on the dais. Nevertheless; in some instance such as found in Bytul Anwar and RumahMeor, the long windows around the living areas are

opportunities for people from outside to peep into the living areas from the ground floor.

In practicing humility as basic Islamic values in everydaylife, the spaces allocated for the special event such as wedding and other rituals were in accordance to the values. Compared to the contemporary wedding ceremony that are usually setup in larger area either at an outside tent or a large hall, the culture and values of the Malay wedding are now influenced by social and financial status. The changes in spatial usage and values shows changes in practiced of Islam of the Malays. In Islam, informing the public and giving a reception are advisable as recommended by the stated Hadith; nevertheless the money spent for this occasion should be free of wastage and showing-off (*riak*).

The results proved that the dwellings of the royalty and commoners originally take into consideration the Malay culture manifestation and in accordance to the practice of Islamicvalues. This showed the strong relationship between the culture and religious integration in the Malay customs.

LIMITATIONS

This research has taken into account the three main customs or *adat* of the Malay wedding and ones that has a strong linkage to the spatial usage in the residences. The paper did not cover other adat practices; i.e. compatibility (*Adat merasi*), parade (*berarak*), application of henna (*berinai*), formal dining (*makan suap*) and purification (*adat menepung tawar*).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research conducted denoted that Islamic values do exist in the spatial design of the royal and commoner's residences. The spatial usage in the residences is a reflection of the Malay culture that is bounded by religion and culture. The results suggested there are strong custom manifestations in the spatial usage at both royal and commoner's residences. The residences of the royal families are found to accommodate the different phases of the wedding ceremony. Whereas, the commoners' residences are also complying to the Malay customs that is humbler. There are similarities in terms of layout and hierarchy of the spaces involved in conducting the ceremonies. It is interesting to note that the spatial use have uphold the requirements of Islamic guidelines in term of privacy but yet allow for the culture to be practiced in the residences. The residences have different sizes and

proportions for the commoners and royal families due to their social status. The wedding rituals of the royals are also found to be more elaborate, and therefore the spaces are designed to accommodate the rituals are conducted at both indoors and outdoors.

The implementation of the religious and cultural values can be considered in the design of contemporary architecture. The zoning of spaces is the key to design houses that will accommodate the cultural and Islamic guidelines. In addition, the size of the spaces and the location for the wedding ceremonies can also be considered in the contemporary houses. Generally, the research found that Islamic guidelines have been absorbed in the customs of the Malays with additions and modifications and the residences have been designed to accommodate them during wedding ceremonies.

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