

# Proceedings Simpورا XV

## The 15th Regional Symposium of The Malay Archipelago

Resilience of  
Culture &  
Symbolism in Built  
Environment



**PROCEEDINGS OF THE 15<sup>TH</sup> REGIONAL  
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**SIMPORA XV: 2024**

**Organised by:**

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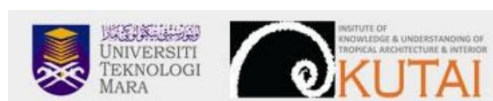
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## PRINCIPLES OF TRADITIONAL MALAY HOUSE SPATIAL PLANING AS VERTICAL MODERN DWELLING DESIGN CONCEPT

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**Abstract:** The quality of houses should be appropriate for their role, manner of life, culture, and economy. The Malays' living space reflects their personalities and is founded on the Islamic religion in accordance with Syariah. Comfort, safety, health, tranquility and aesthetic factors all contribute to the well-being of the inner space, resulting in a blessed house. Today's homes cannot respond properly to the needs of their occupants and are heavily impacted by the west. It is opposed to the needs of the local design community, particularly the Malays. In comparison to the design of traditional Malay house (TMH) architecture, this concept and architectural approach have met many factors in attaining its objectives. The findings will be the basis for addressing the main issues and to recommend the application of the conceptual Malay heritage design in the design towards the creation of quality interior design dwelling as design concept toward cultural-tradition resilient.

**Keywords:** Traditional Malay House, Spatial Planning, Green Design, Principles, Wellbeing

### INTRODUCTION

A residential home serves as a sanctuary from peril, inclement weather, and environmental factors (Talib. A, 2010). Homeownership is the aspiration of every individual. The home serves not only as a refuge but also as the cornerstone of both structure and life development. The quality of a home's interior space significantly impacts the success of an individual's life. This



attribute pertains to the interaction of architecture, interior space, and the environment. Residential spaces should be created to harmonize physical, human, and environmental elements to promote the well-being of inhabitants in accordance with the rhythms of daily life, (Mastor, 2012; Mat, 2010; Hashim & Abdul Rahim, 2010; Monir, 2007; Talib, 2005).

Environmental sustainability is increasingly a significant issue in the interior design sector due to the substantial resources required for interior applications (Ruff & Olson, 2009). Environmentally sustainable or green interior design reduces adverse impacts and enhances beneficial effects on environmental systems throughout a building's life cycle by integrating historical remedies with contemporary technology (Loftness, 2007). Pilatowicz (1995) defined sustainable interiors as those built to thoughtfully consider the effects of all their functions, components, and elements on the global environment. One of the six green approach in Maximizing the use of the space is efficiently used interior spaces can keep the size of a building and, therefore, the use of construction materials and other resources can be reduced to a minimum.

### **1.1 Traditional Malay House (TMH)**

TMH are characterized by their distinctive architectural style, rooted in centuries-old cultural and environmental influences. These iconic dwellings reflect the harmonious integration of function, aesthetics, and the natural landscape (Elham, 2012). Featuring intricately carved wooden structures, elevated platforms, and sweeping, tiered roofs, Malay houses embody a rich heritage that has inspired contemporary interpretations in modern living spaces. The traditional Malay house is an architectural marvel, featuring a distinct design that reflects the cultural heritage and environmental adaptations of the region. As urban populations grow, the need for efficient and sustainable vertical dwelling solutions has become increasingly important. This presentation will explore how the principles of traditional Malay house spatial planning can be adapted and reinterpreted for modern vertical living designs.

### **1.2 Spatial Planning**

The design of the Malay house is founded on several fundamental ideas. The climatic and environmental design of traditional Malay dwellings is a crucial element in their construction, aimed at creating an appropriate climate. The choice of site and building orientation relative to dawn has rendered the traditional Malay house a passive and energy-efficient design (Zulkifli Hanafi, 2014). The traditional Malay house employs a modular construction method including a unique joint mechanism that facilitates the addition and removal of dwelling modules (Mastor Surat, 2015). It is fundamentally a post-and-lintel framework and a prefabricated system installation. The erection of a timber house elevated on stilts to mitigate the effects of severe weather and flooding (Philips Gibbs, 1987). The construction impact is less than that of contemporary construction approaches. Incorporating extensive roof eaves and low walls to regulate direct solar radiation and provide protection from precipitation. High roof design features, characterized by extensive window openings and ventilated wall



components, aim to facilitate thorough ventilation for a cooler environment (Lim Jee Yuan, 1987).

Essentially, most traditional Malay houses are individually designed to meet local requirements. The spatially fragmented and open-plan design of the traditional Malay house facilitates external wind flow and adheres to the principles of natural ventilation, hence optimizing the cooling effect. Consequently, multifunctional spaces such as anjung, serambi, rumah ibu, and dapur are not merely socially defined; they also serve to fulfil essential functions that prioritize comfort while minimizing heat gain and energy expenditure within the central area of the house. The quality of lumber utilized in building will vary based on the homeowners' position (Zulkifli Hanafi, 2014). Sustainable standard requirements, including the reduction of carbon content, have been implemented in practice and documented (Shereen Jahn, et al, 2017). Such designs serve not only as artistic expressions in design, culture, and architecture but also fulfil sustainable design principles and diminish reliance on electricity for more cost-effectiveness.

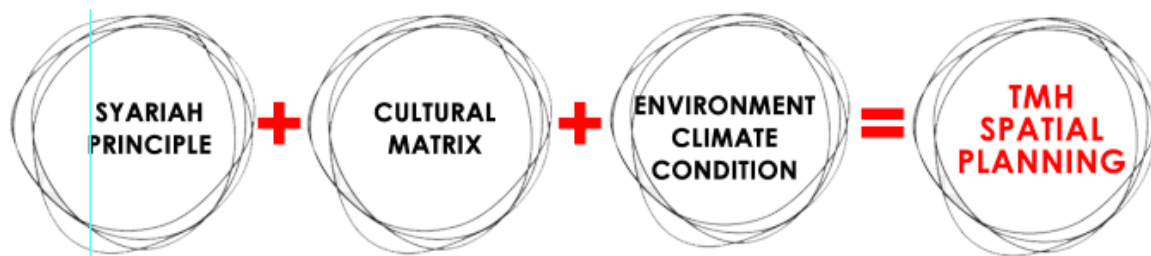


Figure 1: Factors Influencing House Form and space planning of TMH

### 1.3 Space Classification

Space and form in Malay tradition were design on a strong , utalirian basis. Normally space was divided between the public, the private and semi public. The notion of privacy of the family was reflected in form and arrangement. The previous researcher on the traditional Malay house explained that the spatial classification was according to the characteristics or nature of space in Malay houses. According to Abdul Rahim Abdullah (1981) traditional Malay houses are clasify into three types, namely formal rooms for receiving guest visits and used for official purposes such as Porch (*Anjung*), Verandah (*Serambi*) and kitchen (*Dapur*). Secondly is active space, it is used to carry out family day tasks such as kitchen space and washing area or *pelantar* and thirdly is passive space, involving core house (*rumah ibu*) and bedroom for family member main activity. According to Lim Jee Yuan (1987) traditional Malay house can be divided into the front and back portion which are centered around the core house (*rumah ibu*) and the kitchen (*Dapur*) . Furthermore, the arrangement of space within Malay houses is based on the priority of space functions and space adjacency. This space is divided into three areas namely Verandah (*Serambi*), Core House (*Rumah Ibu*) and kitchen (*Kitchen House*), Abidin (1981). Furthermore, the house's spatial organization has been created based on the occupant's needs and related with the environment surrounding, cultural activities and religion. In that sense thus, this study benefits the younger generation



in order to appreciate this relics house. Therefore the objective in this study achieved by analysing the spatial organization design and architecture of a TMH with functional diversity and to research the role of space during performance of the activities in that space. Therefore the optimal and efficient use of space with the needs and space function will be achieved. Table 1 below shows space clasification by other authors in the study of traditional Malay houses:

Table 1: Space Classification of Traditional Malay House

Space Classification	Spatial Organization	Space Classification by	Character/Key Concept
Based on Gender Types	Male Areas; Female Areas; Common Areas	Phillip Gibbs	
Based on Genders Type and position of space	Male areas (in front of the house); Female areas (Main House/centre of house); Space for common areas	Abdul Halim Nasir	
Based on genders type and privacy space	Dual compartmentalization concept; Front Area Zone; Back area zone; Central Zone; Public-private Zone	Mokhtar Ismail	Haji Open Plan, Linear Plan, Multifunction Space, Flexible, Clear Hierarchy, Minimalist Plan, environmentally friendly
Based on Construction technique	Standard/ basic areas; added space	Abdul Abdullah	Rahim
Based on frame/structure	Main structure; Secondary structure	Phillips Gibbs	
Based on functions	Public areas; Special area	Zulkifli Hanafi	
Based on religion; social- culture; custom	Ruang Serambi/veranda & Kitchen areas; centre areas-main house/ room	Mokhtar Ismail	Haji

Source: Mazlan (2016), Elham (2018)

#### 1.4 Spatial Organization

The traditional Malay house comprises of several primary areas: the Anjung (porch space), Veranda (Serambi), Core House (rumah ibu), Bedroom, Loft (loteng), Kitchen, and Platform (Pelantar), Abd. Halim Nasir (1994) asserts that the configuration of the Malay traditional house is determined by the requirements and daily routines of its inhabitants. Zulkifli Hanafi (2012) asserts that the traditional Malay house addresses numerous demands, including functionality, comfort, and safety, while also fulfilling spiritual aspirations, as a good life commences at home. For the Malay community's architectural designs, it is essential to meet



the socio-cultural criteria dictated by Islamic law. Ezrin Arbi (1997) contends that building or habitation reflects civilization. Where it encompasses spiritual values, physicality, emotionality, gastronomy, philosophy, and religion. The Malay society adeptly integrates people, nature, and spiritual beliefs into the construction of their dwellings. Table 2 below illustrates the spatial configuration of a traditional Malay dwelling.

## **ISSUE AND SCENARIO**

The current home design failed to meet the culture and the liveable of its occupants. As a result, the design has affected the occupants. Overcrowded, poor planning, and design of the house affects the occupants vertical modern dwelling. The impact of these environmental constraints and modernity has led to social problems, unhealthy and pressure to the occupants.

Today's modern housing problems from a family point of view include involving the expansion and reduction of families and the increase of family members. The modern residence is unable to accommodate large family members as well as newly married families.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study examines Malay traditional house design with ideals and aspirations. The design research is based on drawing document survey on several variables and traits that give spatial planning Malay house architectural styles and their principles. Next objective says these values relate to vertical modern contemporary design residences. The study process includes observation, literature, interviews, and pertinent photography to reach the goal. This paper will primarily examine TMH spatial planning design's essential features, especially spatial organization to recommend the TMH principles as design concept for vertical home designs.

## **FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

From an observational study of modern vertical housing focusing on PRIMA housing around Ipoh Perak, it was found that there is a difference in the use of space according to function compared to TMH houses. TMH clearly shows that the division of space according to the requirements of the Characteristic of Islamic Housing Privacy has been met. The observation found that the TMH Layout Plan meets Segregation between male and female, Segregation between public and private space, Public, Semi-Public, Private, Providing specific room for bathing, House orientation, Moderation in expenses and Cleanliness. Compared to the layout of modern house planning, it is seen to have a layout that creates privacy problems, especially when visited by guests, whether outside guests or relatives from far and near. Diagram 1 below shows the comparison that is the function and activity of the space between TMH and Modern house:



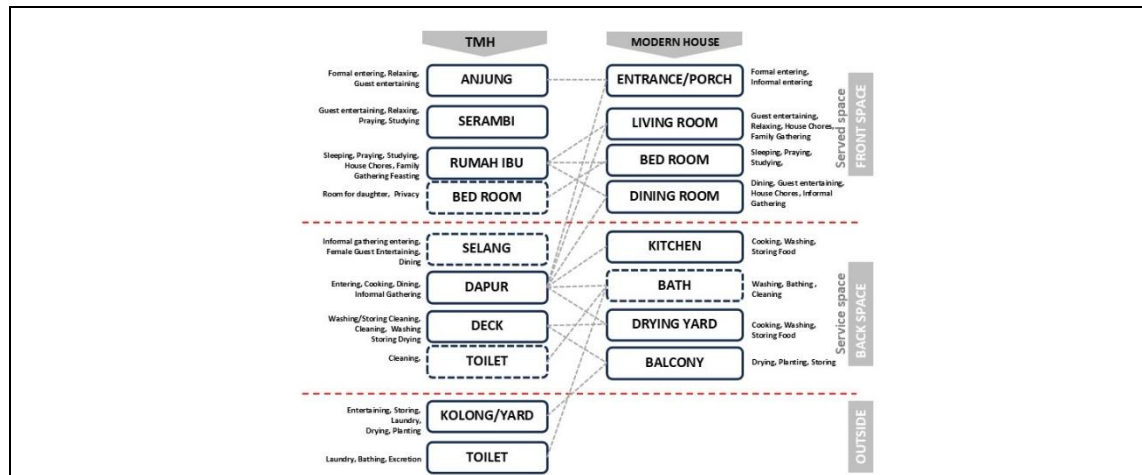


Diagram 1: Space – Activity: TMH vs Modern house

Source: writer

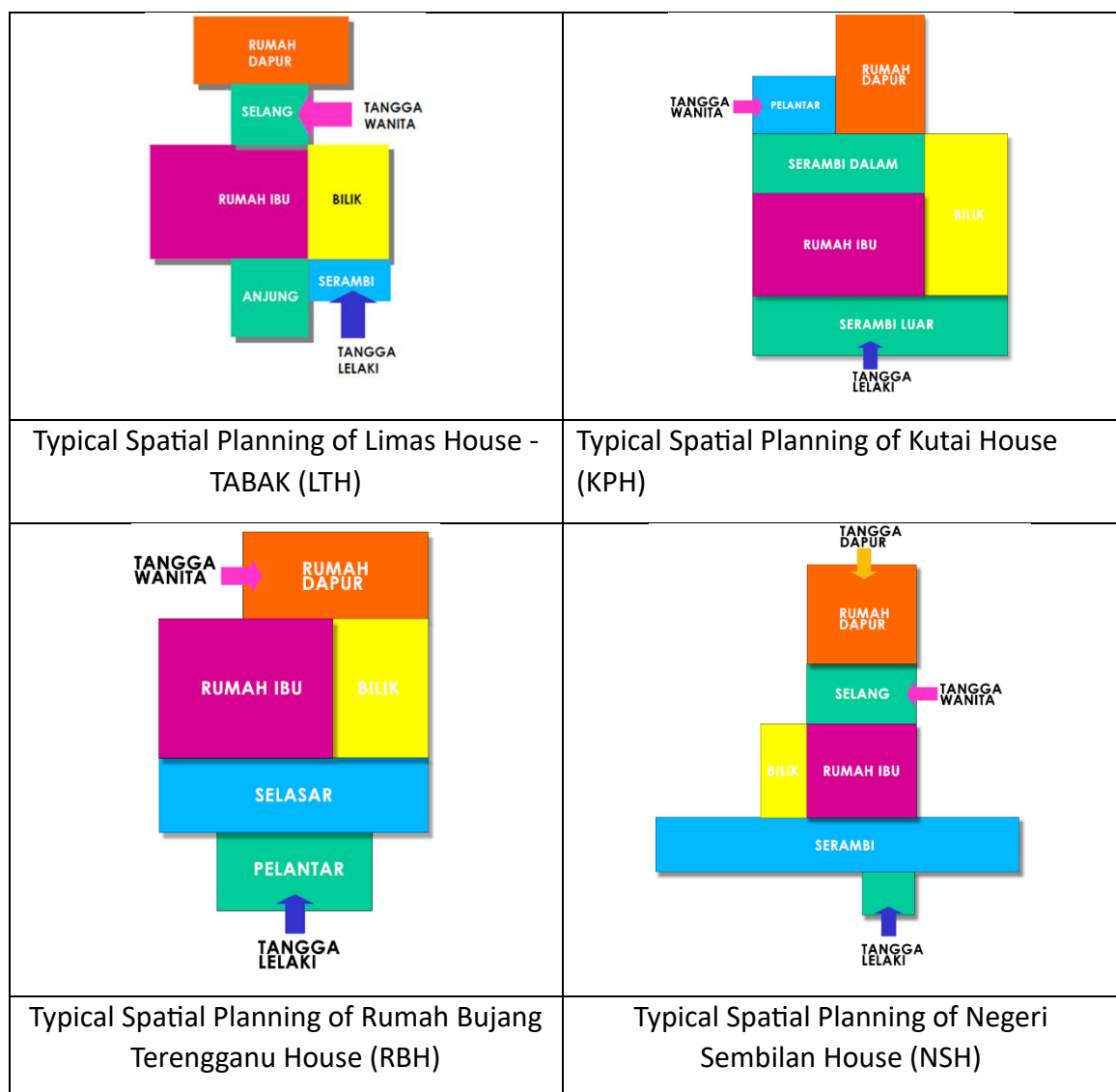


Figure 2: TMH space planning according to traditional house types in Peninsular Malaysia

Source: writer

Figure 2 illustrates standard TMH spatial organization categorized by zones, including Rumah Limas, Rumah Kutai Perak, Rumah Bujang Terengganu, and Rumah Negeri Sembilan, as



derived from measured drawings from *Pusat Kajian Alam Bina Dunia Melayu* (KALAM UTM), TMH research publications, and PhD dissertations. Case studies and field observations were conducted on several residences, including Rumah Tok Abu Bakar Alang Ketak (TABAK House) and Rumah Tok Sedara Bongsu in Kampung Pisang, Bota, Perak, to enhance the planning of TMH houses. Colour coding is employed to examine the similarities and distinctions among various housing styles. Initial findings indicate that the characteristics and components of TMH space planning align with past research, however discrepancies may arise from specific causes. Table 2 below presents a summary of the conducted space planning study:

Table 2: Summary of TMH spatial planning analysis study

Space	Space Classification	LTH	KPH	RBH	NSH	Function
<i>Anjung/Porch</i>	Public Space	✓	@	✓	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Only the RBH house has a small porch to cover the main entrance stairs due to environmental and wartime pressure factors</li> </ul>
<i>Serambi</i>	Semi Public	✓	@	✓	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The RBH and NSH houses have a Long <i>Serambi</i> room, lower space and adjacent to the main room/ mother's house for welcoming and entertaining guests, children's sleep areas as well as guests and recite al-Quran.</li> <li>The KPH house has a porch internally house due to the constraints and pressure of the surrounding atmosphere</li> </ul>
<i>Rumah Ibu/Core Area</i>	Private	✓	✓	✓	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Almost all category has this space with minimal furniture use, partitions and interior walls are good to allow proper ventilation and natural lighting into space. Make it a flexible and open space to carry out activities.</li> </ul>
<i>Bilik tidur/bedroom</i>	Private	✓	✓	✓	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All house type has a room for parents' use as well as a dressing room for virgins for privacy.</li> <li>There is also a loft space for some Malay houses that serve as space for virgin and store items.</li> </ul>
<i>Selang/</i>	Public	✓	@	@	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Space is used for welcoming, chatting and entertaining activities for women. Apart from that, it is also used as a place to weave mats, sewing, for generate economic.</li> </ul>
<i>Dapur/Kitchen</i>	Semi Public	✓	✓	✓	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All house type has <i>rumah dapur</i> that used for food preparation, cooking and family meal processing.</li> </ul>
<i>Pelantar</i>	Public	✓	✓	@	@	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not all type of the house has this Space that adjacent to the kitchen to wash groceries and equipment in the process of food preparation.</li> <li>Under certain circumstances, it is also used to bath the infants and mothers who are in abstinence.</li> </ul>

Note: ✓ - Complete @ - Partly

Source: Writer



## RECOMMENDATION

Based on the results of this study, the writer would like to suggest to certain parties involved in the industry to take several steps in order to emphasize the design and the planning of space in a housing project that will be carried out in the future. Spaces like the following will add a big impact to users if applied in their space planning:

- *Kolong and Outside Compound* – Important area for daily life activity, social and for festive season should adapt in modern house space.
- *Serambi* - Modern homes have been replaced to living rooms instead of foyers to welcome and entertain guests. Do not prohibit privacy between male and female guests and host family.
- *Linear Planning* –Modern space that does not follow the hierarchy and occupants needs creates discomfort to the occupants especially when welcoming condition does not promote privacy inside this space especially during the guest's presence - Compared to the Malay house kitchens that are mostly at the back of the house.
- *Selang* – As the joining space between core house-kitchen and second entrance place is a space for women which has not been in the planning at modern house.
- *Open plan & minimalist design* – uncomplicated geometry, simple plan, inconspicuous details and honesty of materials rather than complicated and unnecessary thing.

## CONCLUSIONS

Integrating TMH planning principles into modern dwellings promotes sustainability, cultural preservation and enhanced well-being. Further research is needed to explore the potential of these principles in diverse contexts, fostering a dialogue between tradition and innovation through:

- i. Adapting Traditional Principles to Modern Vertical Living
  - Reinterpreting the Hierarchy of Spaces
  - Translate the traditional multi-level layout into a vertical arrangement of private, semi-private, and public zones within a compact footprint.
- ii. Incorporating Privacy Zoning
  - Utilize thoughtful placement of rooms, transitional spaces, and visual barriers to maintain privacy within the vertical dwelling.
- iii. Optimizing Orientation and Placement
  - Position the vertical dwelling to maximize natural light, airflow, and views while considering local climate and site conditions.

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	<p>Associate Professor Sr Dr Haryati bt Mohd Isa holds a PhD in The Specialisms of Built Environment from Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM). Dr. Haryati is a Full-Time Associate Professor with UiTM and a Professional Quantity Surveyor registered with the Board of Quantity Surveyor Malaysia (BQSM). She is also member of Royal Institution of Surveyors, Malaysia (RISM). She is an active researcher, securing grants for projects focusing on defect liability management and cultural architecture documentation. As a recognized expert, she has been invited as a guest speaker at various institutions and conferences, sharing her knowledge on research writing, defects management and public-private partnerships. Dr. Haryati has also held several administrative positions within UiTM Perak, including Head of Centre for Postgraduate Studies and coordinator roles for various academic programs</p>
	<p>Nordin Misnat is a senior lecturer of Interior Design Technology Programme in UiTM Perak Branch. PhD student in Architecture Department of Built Environment and Engineering Faculty, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) after obtained his MSc in Facility Management in 2006 from University Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Shah Alam, Malaysia. He has experienced working with interior design firm with interior design professional qualification in commercial design, corporate office, residential and hospital design before started lecturing in UiTM Perak Branch for almost 17 years. He has had a distinguished career in teaching and learning, participating multi-disciplinary research and community projects.</p>




	<p>Zamil has been a lecturer for over 15 years at the Universiti Teknologi MARA Perak Branch. He is a qualified Professional Landscape Architect registered with the Institute of Landscape Architects of Malaysia (ILAM). Zamil is also a researcher at the Center of Knowledge and Understanding of Tropical Architecture and Interior (KUTAI) at UiTM Perak Branch. His research interests include cultural landscapes, Malay gardens, Malaysian gardens, and tourism development. He has received funding for his studies from various government bodies, including MOSTI (eScience fund) and MOHE (FRGS). Additionally, he has contributed to over 50 scientific articles in his field of specialization. His recent study is titled "Malaysian Garden Concept" design guidelines and criteria. Furthermore, he serves as the Deputy Chairman of the ILAM Northern Chapter for the 2024-2026 session</p>
	<p>Nurrajwani Binti Abdul Halim brings over 21 years of experience as a senior academic in the Department of Interior Design Technology at the College of Built Environment, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Perak Branch, located in Seri Iskandar, Perak, Malaysia. Her expertise spans Interior Finishes and Materials, Building Construction, Consumer Behaviour, Interior Landscaping, among other areas. Through her research, she aims to contribute meaningfully to the academic body of knowledge and provide valuable insights for the researchers, students, professional bodies, professional construction members including manufacturers, interior designers, architects, suppliers, and other industry professionals in assisting them in to promote sustainable living environments</p>
	<p>Marisa Hajrina, S.T., M.T., a lecturer with an architectural and urban background, currently teaches at the Architecture Study Program, Faculty of Engineering, Almuslim University. He obtained his Bachelor of Engineering degree in Architectural Engineering at Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University Malang in 2011 and continued his Masters studies at the University of North Sumatra, obtaining a Master of Engineering degree in the Architectural Engineering study program with a specialization in Urban Development Management in 2018.</p>
	<p>Moh Sutrisno received a Doctorate 2020 in Architectural Engineering and Planning at Gadjah Mada University. Previously he also earned a master's degree at the same campus in 2014 with cum laude predicate. He has taught architectural theory and criticism at UIN Alauddin Makassar since 2019 and has been the main subject in his functional position since being an expert assistant. The courses included the scientific fields of history and architectural theory. His research includes the theory of iconic architecture since 2012. He studied iconic buildings in various parts of the world, heritage architecture as an icon of its time in the old city space of Palopo (2015-2020), Icons of Islamic architecture in South Sulawesi (2020-2022), Currently, he is interested in Heritage building preservation methods using HBIM (2022-2023).</p>

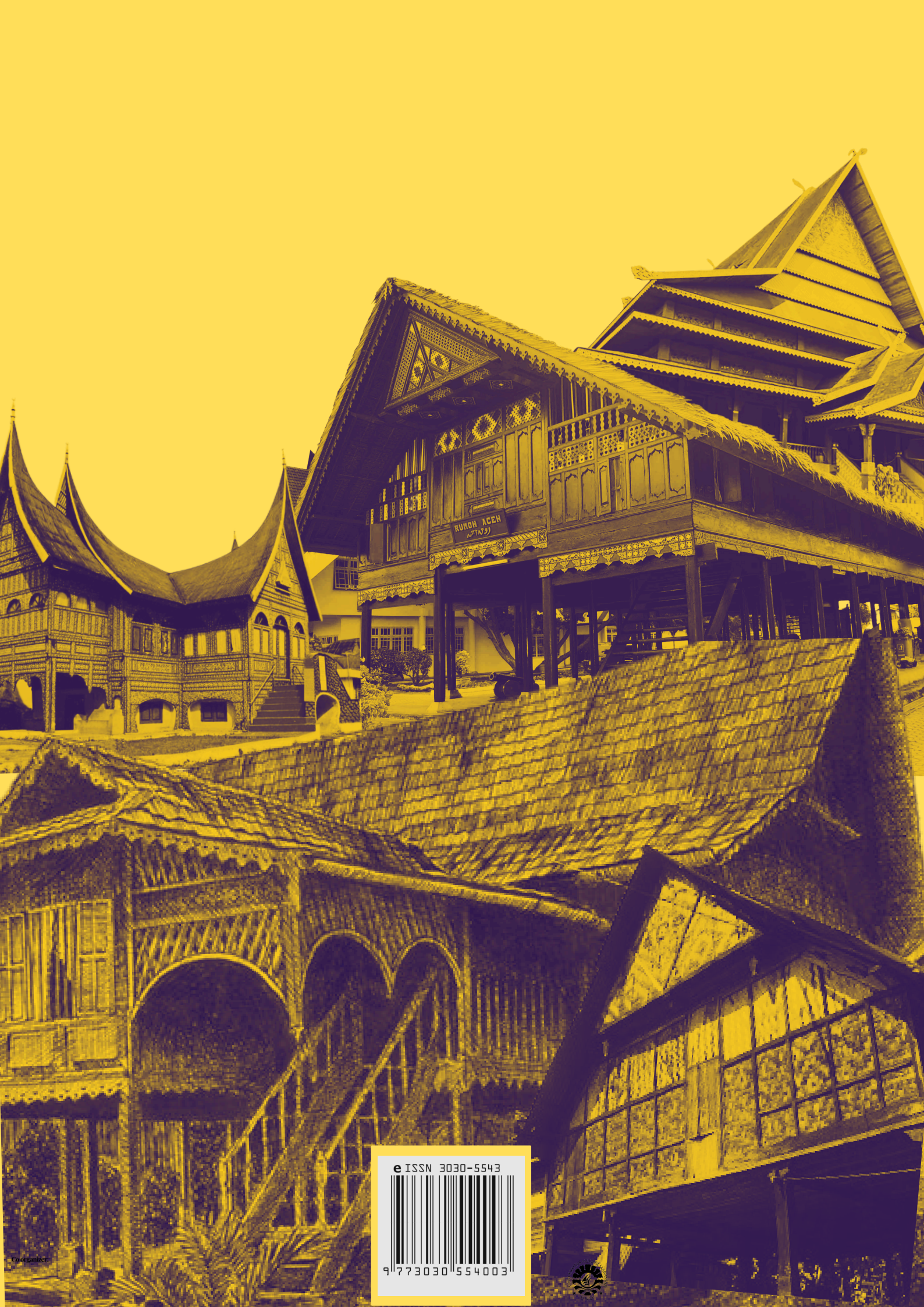


	<p>Muhamad Ferdhaus is a senior lecturer in the Urban and Regional Planning Department at the UiTM Perak Branch. He graduated with a Ph.D. in Urban Geography in 2018 from the Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), after obtaining his MSc in Sustainable City and Community in 2013 from the Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM). He received a bachelor's degree in urban and regional planning from the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) in 2011. His field(s) of interest focus on sustainable cities and communities, Islamic planning and development, urban geography and metropolitan areas, tourism planning and development, and heritage and conservation</p>
	<p>Othman Bin Mohd Nor is a senior lecturer in the Interior Architecture Department at the UiTM Perak Branch. He graduated with a Ph.D. in Architecture in 2018 from the Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM), after obtaining his MSc in Design in 2013 from the Institut Teknologi Bandung (ITB). He received a bachelor's degree in Interior Architecture from the Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) in 2000 and a Diploma in Interior Design (ITM) in 2006. His field(s) of interest focus on Interior Design, Interior Architecture, Identity Architecture, Traditional, heritage, and conservation</p>
	<p>Ir. Zuraihan, S.T., M.T., a lecturer with a background in architecture and environment, is currently teaching in the Architecture Study Program, Faculty of Engineering, Almuslim University. He obtained his Bachelor's degree in Architecture from Syiah Kuala University in 2006 and continued his Master's studies at the same university, earning a Master's Degree in Engineering with a specialization in Environmental Technology and Management in 2012</p>
	<p>Afzanizam bin Muhammad received his Diploma in Interior Design in 1999 from Institut Teknologi MARA, followed by a BSc (Hons) in Furniture Technology in 2001 and an MSc in Heritage and Conservation Management in 2009, both from Universiti Teknologi MARA, Shah Alam Branch. Over the past 15 years, he has served as a lecturer at Universiti Teknologi MARA, Perak Branch. In 2017, he was appointed Assistant Conservator for heritage building conservation projects in Kuala Kangsar, Perak, an opportunity he used as the basis for his PhD research. He earned his PhD in Design and Built Environment in 2022 from the Faculty of Architecture, Planning, and Surveying, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Perak Branch. Since 2009, Afzanizam has been dedicated to academia, specializing in heritage conservation, particularly in timber buildings. His contributions to research are significant, and in 2018, he received the 'Best Research Paper Award' at the Third International Conference on Rebuilding Place (ICRP). Starting in 2024, he is officially accredited as a Conservator by the Malaysia Heritage Department</p>



	<p>Nur Huzeima Mohd Hussain is a senior lecturer in the Landscape Architecture Department at UiTM Perak Branch. She earned her PhD in Architecture from The University of Auckland, New Zealand, in 2015, following her MSc in Landscape Architecture from Universiti Sains Malaysia in 2004. Before joining academia, she gained professional experience in a landscape architecture firm and has since dedicated her 20<sup>th</sup> years of teaching in UiTM Perak. Her career spans teaching, multidisciplinary research, and community projects, with several secured FRGS research grants, university academic awards (AAU2019), published books, and postgraduate supervision. She has successfully graduated seven postgraduate students and is currently supervising five local and international students. Her research interests include Landscape Sociology, Sustainable Cultural Landscapes &amp; Architecture, and Green Initiatives.</p>
	<p>Dr. Wan Faida Wan Mohd Azmi is a senior lecturer in the Quantity Surveying Department at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Perak Branch, Seri Iskandar Campus. She earned her PhD in Quantity Surveying from Universiti Teknologi Malaysia in 2021. Her academic career spans teaching, research, and postgraduate supervision, with a focus on construction safety, design safety, and safety education. She has been actively involved in research projects, securing grants, and contributing to knowledge in her field. She is also involved in postgraduate supervision, guiding students in areas related to her research interests.</p>





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