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The Misconceptions of Negeri Sembilan Traditional Architecture

Mawar Masri*

Faculty of Architecture, Planning and Surveying, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Shah Alam 40450, Malaysia

Abstract

Negeri Sembilan's unique identity is facing gradual disappearance endangering future generation's identity's ownership as well as cultural and built environment quality due to such misconception. This paper seeks to present the findings of a comprehensive literature reviews which then tested by a perception survey. The literature review is part of the research activities aimed in unravelling the authenticity of Negeri Sembilan traditional houses. The research methodology was qualitative. This research enables understanding of apparent misconception and an important milestone on an on-going research towards preserving the Negeri Sembilan socio-cultural identity for our future communities in facing environmental challenges.

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Keywords: Negeri Sembilan traditional architecture; misconception; identity ownership; future communities

1. Introduction

This paper seeks to present the findings of a comprehensive literature reviews as part of the research activities in a two years research project aimed at determining the authenticity of the Negeri Sembilan traditional architecture. The research was proposed when the seriousness of misconceptions regarding the Negeri Sembilan architectural identity was realized at the Shanghai World Expo 2010. The Malaysia's identity for booth design at the expo was represented by Minangkabau identity, a community from the West Sumatra in Indonesia. A misconception emerged from misapprehension of the history of Southeast Asia. This paper is aimed at presenting those misconceptions based on the literature reviewed, clarified

* Corresponding author. Tel.: + 6-019-5648553; fax: +603-55444353.
E-mail address: mawar_masri@yahoo.com.

the facts and re-oriented the architectural meanings and symbols within the society in the local context, not meant to deny the Minangkabau influence that have evolved together within the local communities.

The Nara Document of Authenticity 1994, stated, heritage of all cultures and societies are rooted in the particular forms and means of tangible and intangible expression. Subsequently, our future communities' identity is undeniably reflected in our heritage, especially the built heritage, measured as a reflection of the community's socio-cultural identity. In the world that is increasingly subjected to globalization and homogenization, the essential contribution made by the consideration in authenticity according to Nara Document is to clarify and illuminate the collective memory of humanity. Authenticity judgements, nonetheless also depended on the nature of the cultural heritage and its cultural context which had evolved through time. Placing the Negeri Sembilan context the prevalence of their architectural is dependent on the degree of understanding of both communities' historical relationship. Within a scope of a single paper it is not possible to describe in detail the historical relationship between Negeri Sembilan and Minangkabau communities. Contextual understanding of the history and location however is vital in order to comprehend this paper. For further understanding see Masri et. al (2012a).

Authenticity in the context of Negeri Sembilan is a complex mixture of two cultures, the Minangkabau and the Biduanda (Jakun), evolved through time and the key to it is finding cultural significance embodied in the communities' known uniqueness. Determining authenticity, in this context is a path that needed to be treaded carefully. A question of identity as Fielden pointed, is an emotional subject to any individuals and community (Fielden, 1994).

2. Brief Introduction to Negeri Sembilan

Negeri Sembilan is a state in Malaysia located on the central west coast on the Malay Peninsula popularly known for their historical associations with the Minangkabau Kingdom. Refer to Figure 1(a), 1(b) and 2. Masri et. al (2012a) discusses in detail of the origins, ancestral link, royal bloodlines link as well as the geographical link. Figure 1(a) and (b) shows Negeri Sembilan, the confederate minor states became known only in 1773 A.D. (Gullick, 2003; Adil, 1981). The traditional district (*luak*), refer to Gullick (2003). Figure 4 and 5 is an overview of the historical settings meant to assist the reader.

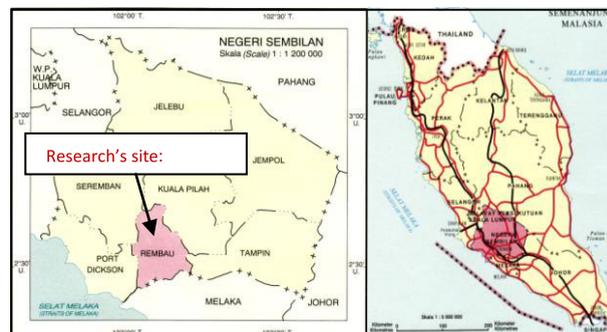


Fig. 1. (a) Location of Rembau; (b) Location of Negeri Sembilan in Malaysia
(Source: JUPEM, 2006)

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