



PLANNING MALAYSIA:

Journal of the Malaysian Institute of Planners

VOLUME 23 ISSUE 5 (2025), Page 601 – 620

**SUSTAINING THE PAST FOR THE FUTURE: ADAPTATION OF
ISTANA LAMA SERI MENANTI NEGERI SEMBILAN TRADITIONAL
ARCHITECTURE IN SEREMBAN DISTRICT OFFICE**

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Abstract

Every region in the world has distinctive architecture that serves as an iconic representation of its architectural identity. In Malaysia, Negeri Sembilan is renowned for the identity of Bumbung Panjang with the modest curve of the roof ridge. This identity is found in most of the Negeri Sembilan traditional houses and old palace designs. To sustain this traditional architectural uniqueness, there is a dire need to investigate how this design can be adapted into modern buildings. This research aims to investigate how the Negeri Sembilan traditional architectural elements are being adapted into modern buildings, referring to its two iconic buildings, namely Istana Lama Seri Menanti and Seremban District Office. The research methodology includes archival analysis of ILMS and SDO drawings and field observations. This research demonstrates that traditional architecture can be adapted into modern buildings by integrating seven key traditional architectural elements, which are site plan typologies, layout plan, space function, façade design, roof shape, interior design, and material/technology used. It also provides practical guidelines for the architect and local authority in sustaining the past for future design.

Keywords: Negeri Sembilan, Adaptation, Traditional Architecture, Modern Design, Sustainability

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INTRODUCTION

The adaptation of modern and traditional architectural elements had long been considered by many scholars (Zhang, 2024; Xeumei & Manteghi, 2024; Othman, 2018; Nurdiyana et al., 2017; Mamun & Dilshad, 2015; Sabrizaa, 2015; Canizaro, 2007; Othman, 2004). They are believed to be historically relevant combinations, preserving cultural identities in the face of global urbanization and uniformity towards a more sustainable design. Although there is a transition towards modern architecture after the industrialization era (Gurupiah, 2008, and Raizman, 2003), traditional architecture is still being inspired by most of the modernist architects (Hasnizam, 2022; Salwana et al, 2020; Zhang, 2024). This is in line with Abel (1996), emphasizing the need to return to our local heritage. Thus, the clashes of these two architectural concepts create gaps in understanding architectural identity.

This research aims to investigate how the Negeri Sembilan traditional architectural elements were adapted into modern buildings by referring to its two iconic buildings, i.e, Istana Lama Seri Menanti (ILSM) and Seremban District Office (SDO). Two research objectives had been developed: (i) to identify key traditional architectural elements to be adapted in modern buildings and (ii) to examine the adaptation of key traditional architectural elements in modern buildings. The outcome of this paper will provide practical guidelines for the architect and local authority in sustaining the past for future design. The uniqueness of this study lies in its focused comparison between a royal heritage building and a contemporary administrative structure, offering new insights into how regional identity can be sustained through architectural adaptation in Malaysian public design.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The present study employed a **qualitative research approach** through **archival analysis** and **on-site observation** of the *Istana Lama Seri Menanti* (ILSM) and *Seremban District Office* (SDO). These two buildings were purposefully selected as they represent **iconic architectural landmarks and administrative symbols** of Negeri Sembilan. The ILSM serves as a historically significant **wooden heritage structure** and a **tourist landmark** that embodies traditional Minangkabau and Negeri Sembilan architectural values. Meanwhile, the SDO reflects a **modern interpretation** of these traditional elements within a contemporary government building.

Due to the **limited availability of original ILSM architectural drawings**, the study referred to **measured drawings** produced by *Pusat Penyelidikan Kajian Alam Melayu (KALAM)*, *Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM)*. For the SDO, architectural drawings were obtained from *Nazri Architect*, appointed by the

Seremban Public Works Department. These materials were analysed to examine the **floor plans, elevations, and sectional compositions** of both buildings.

In addition to archival analysis, **on-site observations** were conducted at both case study locations to investigate **the physical adaptation of traditional architectural elements** from ILSM to SDO. This approach allowed the researcher to identify direct correlations between traditional forms and their modern reinterpretations in administrative design. While this **qualitative, archival, and observational approach is valid and contextually appropriate**, the authors acknowledge certain **limitations** in this study. These include **restricted access to original primary drawings** and the **absence of triangulated data sources**, such as **interviews with architects, heritage officers, or local stakeholders**. As a result, the findings are primarily limited to **physical and visual interpretations** rather than insights into **socio-political or institutional motivations** behind the design adaptation. Recognizing these limitations enhances the **transparency and credibility** of the research, while also identifying opportunities for **future studies** to incorporate **multi-source validation approaches** for broader interpretive depth. All archival references and field observations used in this research were conducted in accordance with **institutional and professional ethical guidelines**. No human subjects or personal data were involved, and the authors declare **no conflicts of interest** concerning the data sources, interpretation, or reporting of this study.

Gurupiah (2008) stated that the approach of reviving traditional architecture through replication faced challenges in adapting to modern design due to complete differences in scale, functional frameworks, and materials used. Amongst architectural design adaptations are as follows:

- a) The “balloon method” that replicates traditional external facades to acclimate modern building needs was adopted in Bank Bumiputra Podium Hall, the Losong Museum, and the Negeri Sembilan State Assembly Building
- b) The “tower and hut method” incorporates traditional forms into simpler parts, such as podiums and verandahs was adopted in Bank Bumiputra Headquarters Complex, Hilton Hotel, and Permodalan Nasional Berhad Building
- c) The eclectic method combines architectural images from various ethnic identities in Malaysia. This is adopted in Putra World Trade Centre Complex and Dewan Suarah, Sarawak.

Revivalist architecture in Malaysia often results in superficial imitation, using the traditional elements only decoratively. This shows a limited understanding of regionalism and leads to culturally unsuitable and unorganised designs.

The Evolution of Negeri Sembilan Architecture

The transition system from the colonial world to the era of independence made various impacts on the evolution of Negeri Sembilan architecture. Since the early pre-colonial period until now, it shows a sudden development in terms of rapid urbanization, economic achievement, and socio-cultural development of local communities (Othman, 2018). Table 1 outlined the evolution of Negeri Sembilan architecture. The evolution of Negeri Sembilan architecture is divided into three eras, namely the traditional era, the colonial era, and the modern era.

Table 1: Era Evolution of Negeri Sembilan Architecture

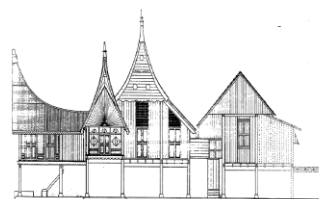
	Traditional Era (1400-1773)	Colonial Era (1774-1956)	Modern Era (1957 onwards)
Architect/ Contractor	Malay craftman	British architect Chinese contractor	Local architect and foreign-educated
Material	Nature – timber Roof – <i>rumbia</i> , <i>nipah</i> , bamboo and zinc	Timber and stone Imported roof tiles, cement	Timber, cement, steel, and glass
Architectural style	Vernacular, traditional	British India, English	Modern, high technology, contemporary

Source: Othman (2018)

During the traditional era, the residential space consisted of vernacular and traditional house designs. The house is built by Malay craftsmen using timber and either bamboo, *rumbia*, *nipah*, or zinc for the roof. The layout of the house is divided into three main areas, i.e, a formal space (*anjung*), front porch, and back porch, which are usually used for discussion. *Ketua Adat* was an individual elected in the Adat Perpatih system of government. During the traditional Era, the country's administrative system was under monarchical rule, where the Sultan held the highest ruling position in the Malay kingdom (Hazrina, 2012). In this era, there was no office space because all residents' issues were discussed in the house of the *Penghulu* or *Ketua Kampung*.



Istana Lama Ampang Tinggi



Rumah Dato Muda Haji Omar Lajim

Figure 1: Negeri Sembilan Architecture in the Traditional Era – Palace and Office

After the arrival of the colonialists, they introduced a system of government at the district level by centralizing in a building, and they provided furnished office space. The dwellings were designed in a hybrid Anglo Indian style, combining local architectural principles with the influence of European architecture brought in by the British from India. The materials used in this era include imported cement, timber, steel, and glass.



Istana Lama Seri Menanti



Bangunan Persekutuan Seremban

Figure 2: Negeri Sembilan Architecture in the Colonial Era – Palace and Office

Similarly, the house's designs evolved from traditional aspects towards colonial elements. This adaptation may be seen in the roof design, front elevation, and usage of concrete materials. The flat roof design is being blended with hipped roof features, creating apparent modern architectural features. This combination clearly demonstrated that colonists continued to adopt local architectural features. The only difference is the usage of materials such as brick pillars in varying sizes and heights, whereas the original Malay traditional house used timber pillars obtained from the neighbourhood. The traditional use of timber steps was replaced by wider staircase designs, such as a concrete staircase with ceramic finishing. Meanwhile, in the modern era, residential houses in Negeri Sembilan have evolved into distinct shapes and styles, emphasizing style rather than function. Most of the architects are from local and foreign education.

They invented modern and contemporary architectural styles using various technological systems. The buildings used more concrete, timber, steel, and glass. It is recommended that there should be research done in highlighting the postmodern era's strength, with ILSM as a recommended architectural model.



Istana Negeri Sembilan Bukit
Persekutuan



Bangunan Dewan Undangan Seremban

Figure 3: Negeri Sembilan Architecture in Modern Era – Palace and Office

As a historical administrative centre and district icon, ILSM represents local identity and aligns with Public Work Department design guidelines for buildings like the SDO. Thus, the present study will focus on the transition from colonial to modern era, looking into the adaptation of ILSM in SDO.

Background of *Istana Lama Seri Menanti* and Seremban District Office

Istana lama Seri Menanti
ILSM in Kuala Pilah, Negeri Sembilan, is a palace built during the colonial era. It served as the official residence of the Yang di-Pertuan Besar of Negeri Sembilan around the year 1900. ILSM is a unique structure made of timber. It was constructed in 1902 and completed in 1908. His Royal Highness, the Yang di-Pertuan Besar Tuanku Muhammad Ibni Almarhum Yamtuan Antah, resided in this palace until 1931, before moving to a new palace built near the old palace. This palace is a four-storey building. The original plan was designed by two Malay craftsmen, namely Tukang Kahar and Tukang Taib. The palace plan was further detailed and approved in November 1902 by the State Engineer and the British Resident. This palace has 102 pillars, including four main pillars, 67 feet long.



Figure 3: ILSM – Front and Rear View
Source: Syed Iskandar (2014)

The uniqueness of this palace is that it does not use any iron nails; instead, the nails are made of wood. Hard wooden pegs were used to join the boards together. The structure of the palace consists of timber floor beams to roof beams, and the floorboards are fastened with wooden nails. The outer walls can be adjusted to allow light and free airflow. ILSM serves as a residence, and the lounge area functions as a public space for receiving the community and state dignitaries.

Seremban District Office (SDO)

SDO serves as an administrative center and a resource for the community. Originally, it was in the center of Seremban town in an old colonial building before moving to its new building in Seremban Dua.



Figure 4: SDO – Front View
Source: Syed Iskandar (2014)

The new building was designed to meet the guidelines provided by the Public Works Department. The design was inspired by the Old Seri Menanti Palace. SDO is led by the District Officer, who manages several departments. It also acts as a community service centre for tax payments, local bill inquiries, and administrative services for *Ketua Kampung* (R. Ismail, 2022) and (A. Zainuddin, 2018).

Adaptation of Negeri Sembilan Traditional Architectural Elements to Modern Design

There are five Negeri Sembilan traditional architectures to be adapted in modern design, such as site location, layout plan, space function, façade design – front and side elevations, and roof design (Othman, 2018). This is further illustrated in Table 2. The adaptation of each of these elements will be explained in the findings section.

Table 2: Adaptation Elements of Negeri Sembilan Traditional Architecture to Modern Design

Adaptation Element	Main/Compulsory Sub-Element	Additional Sub-Element
A) Site location	a) Facing/connected to a main road or important route b) Close to the main state/district building, local community centre, and residential area, suitable as a meeting place for residents c) Building design that shows its greatness as a main institution of district administration d) Facing a field or open area e) The location of the building is in the middle of the city and/or is the largest building in the area f) There is a parking area g) There is an area for landscaping h) Building orientation according to the qibla position i) Symmetrical building site position	a) Positioned quite high so that it is more clearly visible b) According to the client's wishes c) Multi-level roof shape
B) Layout plan	a) The main staircase is in the middle of the building that connecting to each floor above b) Safety features of the building and its users, such as facilities for emergency routes (means of escape), emergency doors, and others c) The entrance should face the main staircase and directly lead to the open lobby in the middle of the building d) The void part is in the middle of the building e) The exit is located on the side or back of the building	a) The exit stairs are located on the side of the building lobby b) The floor design extends from the building on the left wing to the right wing c) The entrance is located under the porch d) Low ceiling construction e) There is an arch construction f) There is a glass wall construction to make it look more spacious

	f) There is a high ceiling in the lobby area g) There is a corridor on each floor h) The position of the floor plan should be symmetrical i) Same size and shape for the upper floors a) The ground floor functions as a public space b) The upper floor functions as the main administrative space c) Space hierarchy according to the position and size of the workspace		a) Divided into three main rooms, namely: i. front room - porch and porch. The porch room is the main administrative office/important area. The porch room is the district administration room ii. middle room - 'void' room and 'featured wall' The middle room is the government office room and a place to wait/welcome guests/inquiries iii. back room - office room b) Has a porch that is parallel to the main staircase c) The porch is connected to the back room, which connects to all existing rooms
C) Space function			a) Square and symmetrical building shape b) Prominent porch shape and a gondola roof c) There is a ventilation space in the building d) The facade of the building is divided into three blocks i. left and right blocks – prominent facade design and the same size ii. middle block – prominent facade design and larger in size than the left and right blocks e) Vertical and flat walls without any decorative elements f) The wall surface is white
D) Façade design	a) Multi-storey building b) There is an observation tower with a raised void space in the middle that acts as a focal point c) Repetition of window construction and concrete columns d) Corridors are on each level of the building		
E) Roof design	a) Symmetrical roof shapes of Malay houses, such as pyramidal roofs, multi-level roofs b) Mixed roofs between flat and hipped roofs, overlapping roofs, spread-out roofs, comb-like bananas, and intersecting skylights at the top of the building c) Roof construction adapted to the equatorial climate		a) The roof is tilted at the entrance porch b) The skylight roof is built for lighting purposes

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study used a qualitative research technique with archival analysis of ILMS and SDO drawings. These two buildings were selected since they are the iconic administrative buildings/symbols in Negeri Sembilan. In addition, ILMS stands as a landmark and a wooden structure of great historical value and serves as a tourist attraction. Limitation in the availability of ILMS drawings is also another factor to be considered. Therefore, the researcher refers to measured drawings prepared by the *Pusat Penyelidikan Kajian Alam Melayu (KALAM)*, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia. Meanwhile, drawings for SDO were obtained from Nazri Architect, who was appointed by the Seremban Public Works Department to design the building. These drawings were used to study the building floor plans, elevations, and sections. Aside from data archiving, site observations of both case studies were conducted to investigate the elements of adoption from ILMS to SDO. The research was also limited by the absence of triangulated data sources, such as interviews and design decision insights. This restriction limits the scope to physical interpretation rather than socio-political or institutional reasons behind the design adoption, as future research may explore through multiple validation approaches.

All archival drawing references and site observations used in this research were obtained and analysed in accordance with institutional and professional research guidelines. No human subjects or personal data were involved, and the researchers declare that there are no conflicts of interest related to the data sources, interpretation, or reporting of this research.

FINDINGS

From the observation, it was found that several elements from the ILMS have been applied in the design of the SDO building. These elements include several aspects as follows:

Site location

The typology of the site plan of ILMS clearly indicates its significance as a royal institution, with its location in an open area making it more visible than the buildings in its surroundings. The main road is the most essential route for transportation. In ancient times, the building location was identified by the current of the river's water both upstream and downstream. If it faces the river, the end of the *porch* should be upstream because the upstream is a sacred place; normally, the end of the *porch* is the place for divinity-related events such as praying, marriage, and funeral prayer.

The residence's main room is positioned at the downstream of the river. The downstream river marks the *edge of the porch* of the palace. It serves as an area for family members to discuss family matters and traditions. This is

because, according to Negeri Sembilan's family agreement system, *orang pangkal* represents *Orang Adat* or significant decision-making family members. As a result, the ILMS site is likely to orient this concept toward the river. It's merely that its location is close to the river on the craftsmen's side. In ancient times, rivers were an important mode of communication. The characters of the road as an interface to all places. The spacious area in front of the palace also plays an integral part in gathering locals for celebrations and to honor the king.

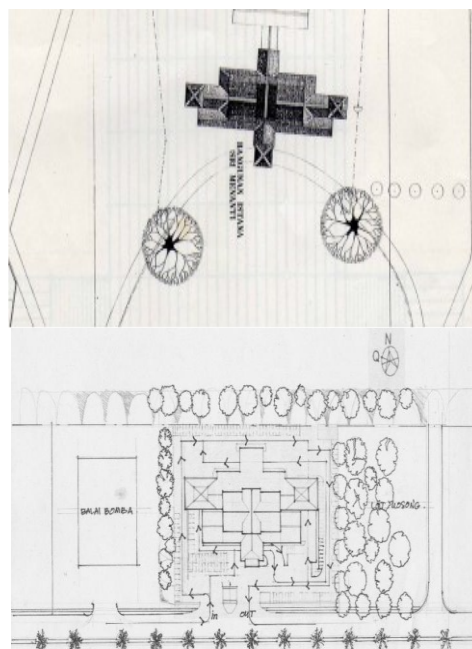


Figure 4: Site plan of ILMS and SDO

Like ILSM, SDO also faces the main road. The site was gazetted for an SDO building in the Urban Planning Plan, not due to the river contour. The current site plan maintains the elements of an administrative centre and stands two stories tall. The design bears resemblance to ILSM, with the open space in front of the building primarily designated for parking. The current location is adjacent to the fire station, courthouse, and police headquarters, while ILSM stands alone, dominant in its role as the heart of the royal governance system. The similarities in form and location highlight the accurate application of these elements in the current site plan. In addition, it is located near other administrative institutions such as the court, fire department headquarters, and police headquarters. The similarities drawn from the site location of ILSM and SDO are:

- a) facing the main road, with an open area in front of the building

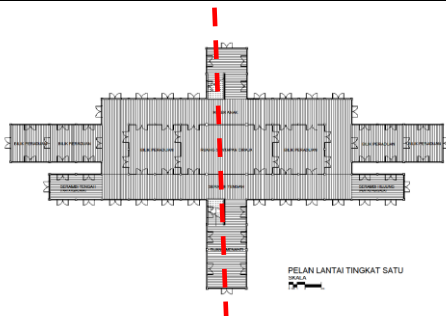
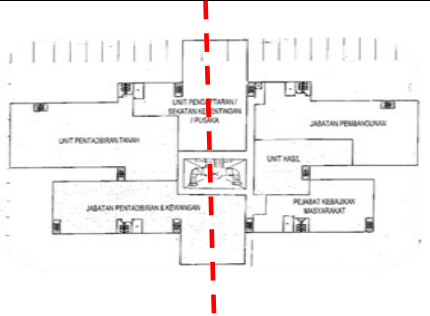
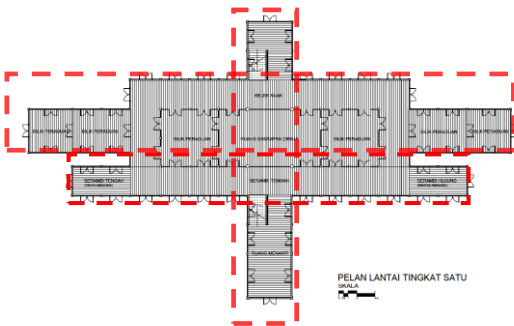
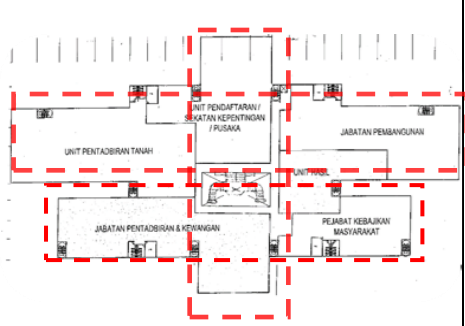
- b) being the largest building in the area, acting as an icon of district governance
- c) the multi-tiered roof design and symmetrical positioning

Layout plan

a) Symmetry

The proportions of the plan and the position of the floor plan of ILSM are symmetric. The lengthy *anjung* locates the main staircase at the center and the rear staircase. This symmetrical location is in line with the center of the main column, flanked by a *tiang seri* extended to the back through a pathway to *kelek anak* and the kitchen. The proportion of the plan makes it architecturally attractive and suitable for its function as a center for administration and royal palace. Meanwhile, the floor plan of SDO is also symmetrical, like the shape of the ILSM *porch*, except the *porch* of SDO is smaller and wider, as it is only the main office for the district officer and district engineer. The symmetrical arrangement of the foyer is aligned with the main staircase and connects to other administration offices.

Table 3: Adaptation Elements of Symmetric and Floor Design in ILSM and SDO

ILSM	SDO
	
	

b) Floor Design

ILSM floor design can be divided into three main areas: front, middle, and rear. There are 2 kinds of porches, namely the *anjung* and *serambi* in front of the palace. There are three *porches*: the *serambi pangkal*, *serambi tengah*, and *serambi hujung*. A central area is in the middle of the palace, while *kelek anak*, *selang*, and kitchen are at the rear of the palace. The *Anjung* area and *Serambi* are differentiated by the floors with vary in height.

There are no hierarchical floors with varying heights in this building. On the contrary, the hierarchical aspect is translated into the separation of administrative spaces based on positions and employee room sizes. There are also sayap kiri and sayap kanan. In addition, there is a lengthy *anjung* that extends to the back, serving as an intersection between all areas. The SDO building's floor layout is typical for the first and second floors.

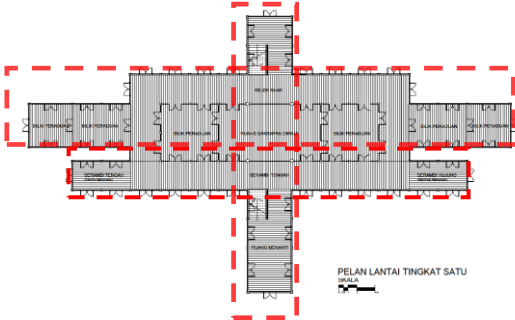
Space function

Each room in ILSM serves a specific purpose. The ground floor has the main stairway leading up to the palace. *Anjung Istana* is on the first floor, serving as a waiting area for royal guests and ordinary citizens to meet the *Yang Di Pertuan*. *Anjung* in front of the palace reflects its function as a semi-public place. After the *anjung*, there is a *pangkal serambi* to meet the *Yang Dipertuan*. The *Serambi hujung* is for the *Raja Muda* to receive his guests and citizens. Besides being a gateway to the center of the palace, *serambi tengah* serves as the royal children's dining area and rooms. The royal visitors' rooms are located on the left and right sides of the royal room. *Kelek anak* and *Selang* connect the palace and the kitchen.



Figure 5: ILSM – *Anjung* and *Pangkal Serambi* area

Table 4: Adaptation Elements of Space Function in ILSM and DSO

ILSM	SDO
 PELAN LANTAI TINGKAT SATU	 UNIT PENDAPATAN / SEKATAN KEPENTINGAN / PUSAKA JABATAN PEMBANGUNAN UNIT PENTADBIRAN TANAH JABATAN PENTADBIRAN & KEWANGAN PEMBAT KEBANGKUN MASYARAKAT

The SDO space serves the same function as ILSM. The *Anjung* serves as the main administrative area meant for the district officers and the district engineer's office. Meanwhile, the functions of the serambi area are as the district's administrative spaces. Other administration offices are located at the centre and back of SDO.



Figure 6: SDO lobby area

There is a main staircase and an inquiry counter to welcome employees as well as guests. There is a waiting area for the public, similar to ILSM. Overall, the ground floor area operates as a public space. There is also a parking area, canteen, surau, and shops on the ground floor. The first and second floors are mainly for government offices.

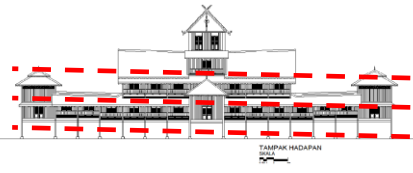
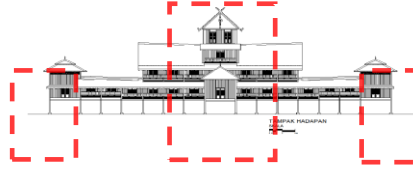
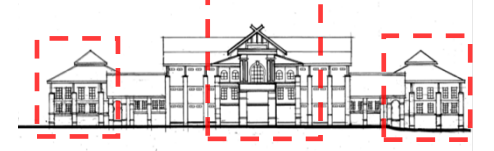
Façade design

a) Front View and Façade Design

The palace building's horizontal elements are its floor lines. ILSM has four floors. The corridor line is the most apparent element in the front. On the first floor, there is a long corridor; on the second floor, there is a half-sized corridor. On the third and fourth floors, the horizontal corridor lines are thin.

The roof's slope is in the form of a flat roof that runs across the buildings on the first and second floors. The roofs of the palace building's left and right sides overlap. The tower building, as well as the two buildings on the left and right sides of the palace, have the most apparent vertical building block orientations.

Table 5: Adaptation Elements of Front View and Façade Design in ILSM and DSO

ILSM	SDO
	
	



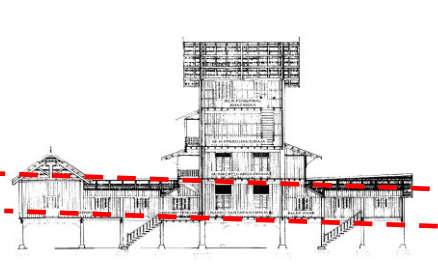
Due to their symmetrical character, the carved wooden pillars on the palace's ground level will be repetitive. Other constructions that use repetition are the shape of the palace roof, windows, lintels, and wall panels. The arrangement of the window frames and pillars appears harmonious and balanced. The layout is separated by the wall panels. Repetitions also occurred at the angle of the pyramid roof. This created a cohesive design across the entire roof. Likewise, the palace's windows were also repeated on each floor. The front view of ILSM is symmetrical, dividing the palace into two parts that appear proportioned.

The front view of the SDO is typical of the ILSM, particularly the shape of the facade. The ILSM has a similar image regarding its multi-story building. The facade that stands out in front and behind the building are all the same size. *Anjung* and the tower at the centre of the office are the tallest and most visible front facade.

The front view position of the SDO is also symmetrical, dividing it into three tall building facades. Like the ILSM, the SDO featured a recurring aluminium-framed window system intersected with concrete wall panels. There is also a semi-circular window structure on top of the fixed-frame window.

The SDO building was also designed by elevating its central area, creating a hollow space where the main staircase functions as a meeting point. The high walls with a spread-roof structure and intersecting skylights give the same appearance as the palace concept. The design of the overlapping roof remains intact and proportioned at the left and right of the building, identical to the palace building but larger in size. There is a flat roof on top and *tanda tunjuk langit* at the *anjung*. The front façade of this building uses concrete pillars. The white wall symbolised honesty in leadership. Its façade is divided into three vertical towers, each located on the left, middle and right of the building. These towers are relatively large and apparent. The central position of SDO provides a significant identity of the ILSM front façade.

Table 6: Adaptation Elements of Side View in ILSM and DSO

ILSM	SDO
	

The DOS building adapted architectural details from the ILSM. The side view of SDO is similarly in style to the standard district office design, particularly the side roof area. The roof is built at different heights, similar to the ILSM roof, which looks like a row of *tebar layar* and an overlapping roof. There is also a repetitive use of aluminum frame windows, concrete columns, and concrete walls on the upper floor of the building.

Roof design

The roof construction at ILSM uses long roofs, hipped roofs, and overlapping roofs. The slope of this type of roof is suitable for the tropical climate, which has high rainfall throughout the year. The roof design of the main building uses *tebar layar* and an overlapped roof at *anjung*.

Table 7: Adaptation Elements of Roof Design in ILSM and DSO

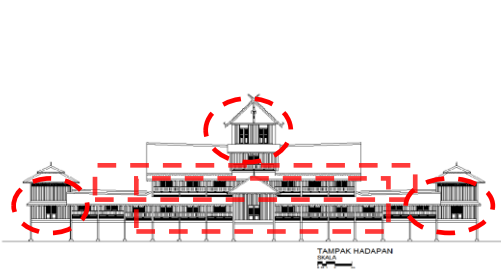
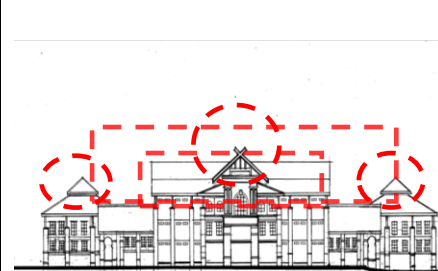
ILSM	SDO
	

Figure 5: ILSM – Roof design.

Source: Sabrizaa (2007)

There are *tunjuk langit* at the roof and overlapping roofs at both the right and left sides of the building. This creates a unique effect with a variation in roof type to provide a pleasant aesthetic impression. The edge on the roof and the long beam projections act as shading devices as well as protecting from rain and sunlight. *Tunjuk langit* can be seen at the apex of the roof at the front of the main building. According to E Kalsum (2024), the presence of ornamental elements on the building facades further reinforces the perception of regional identity in state buildings. The presence of ornamental elements on the building façades further reinforced the perception of regional identity in state buildings. Additionally, cultural symbols, such as totems or cultural elements like cannons present in some state buildings, significantly contribute to the formation of architectural regional identity. These factors have a strong association with the cultural aspects, highlighting their importance in shaping the regional identity.

To strengthen the analytical comparison, this research examines the adaptation findings within the concept of regionalism, where modern administrative design integrates locality and global modernity by selectively adopting vernacular spatial design, symbolic identity indicators, and climatic appropriateness rather than merely replicating forms. The ILSM-SDO comparison reveals a vernacular-modern hybridization pathway whereby historical syntax is functionally re-coded into contemporary governance architecture, culminating as a measurable cultural sustainability construct rather than decorative revivalism.

CONCLUSION

The research highlighted the significance of adapting traditional Negeri Sembilan architectural elements into modern administrative buildings, demonstrating how cultural identity can be operationalised rather than merely symbolised. Beyond improving aesthetic character, the adaptation of vernacular elements such as roof design, spatial layout, and façade design also strengthens environmental responsiveness and functional efficiency. Positioned through the lens of critical regionalism, the ILSM-SDO comparison shows a vernacular modern hybridisation pathway where palace-based cultural is translated into a contemporary administrative building that offers a replicable cultural sustainability model for future government building design. The novelty of this study lies in empirically evidencing how a specific royal palace typology can be systematically adapted into a district administrative office without losing its cultural integrity, contributing a measurable frame for Malaysian regional identity.

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Received: 28th June 2025. Accepted: 1st October 2025