

**THE DELI MALAY TRIBE CULTURAL CENTER WITH NEO-VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURAL APPROACH**

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**Abstract (English)**

The Deli Malay ethnic group is the indigenous community of Medan City. However, after the Dutch colonial administration brought in Javanese and Chinese ethnic groups to Medan, the Deli Malay people, being in the minority, gradually decreased in number as other ethnic groups arrived in the city over the years. This situation, coupled with a lack of information and education about the culture of the Deli Malay people among the public, can lead to the neglect and marginalization of Deli Malay culture. This issue is concerning given the significant role that the Deli Malay people have played in the development of Medan since pre-colonialism times. To address this concern, the design of a Deli Malay Cultural Center is proposed. It aims to serve as an educational hub providing informative insights into the culture of the Deli Malay people to the general public. Additionally, it serves as a facility for the preservation of Deli Malay culture, incorporating a Vernacular Architecture approach. This is expected to blend Deli Malay cultural elements with modern features. This approach could be seen as a solution to promote and preserve Deli Malay culture. This design is also expected to be a symbol of cultural preservation and can inspire other community groups to continue to preserve their culture so that the diversity of tribes and cultures in Indonesia does not decrease or even become extinct. The research for this proposal is conducted using observational methods, literature studies, and precedents.

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Culture, Deli Malay, Cultural Centre, Cultural Preservation, Informative, Vernacular Architecture

**1. Introduction**

At the end of the 19th century, Medan entered its golden era by establishing successful tobacco companies, leading to significant development spurred by the Dutch Colonial Government's opening of tobacco plantations from 1909-1942 (Pelly, 1994). Designated as a municipality in 1909, Medan's growth was significantly influenced by the cooperative yet authoritative stance of the Sultanate of Deli, which handed over lands for development while protecting certain areas and individual rights. The Sultanate of Deli influenced Medan's economic growth and played a crucial role in establishing governance structures and preserving the Malay Deli community's rich historical and cultural heritage, which continues to shape Medan's unique character (Yansen, 1925).

By the 1920s and 1930s, Medan's ethnic composition had dramatically changed, with nearly half the population being foreigners, while the Malay, Javanese, Minangkabau, Mandailing, and Batak Toba ethnic groups made up smaller percentages (Pelly, 1994). Post-independence migration further diversified the population, with significant Batak Toba migration adding to the mix (Pelly, 1994). These demographic shifts led to the marginalization of Malay culture despite the Malay community's significant cultural influence, mainly through the widespread use of the Malay language. Existing Sultanate Deli buildings like Maimoon Palace and Al-Mashun Mosque have become tourist destinations, yet facilities must directly engage the public with Deli Malay art and culture. A proposed Neo-Vernacular architectural approach for a Deli Malay cultural center aims to promote and preserve Malay culture, complementing historical sites and boosting Medan's cultural tourism and economy.

**2. Literature Review**

Here are some general criteria for a cultural center focused on education, along with sources referencing these criteria:

- Comprehensive Educational Materials: The center should provide educational materials covering critical aspects of the culture, including history, traditions, language, arts, and cultural values (Goldbard, 2006).
- Interactive and Hands-On Experiences: The center should focus on interactive and hands-on experiences, allowing visitors to participate in traditional arts performances, crafts, or traditional language learning (AASLH, 2020).
- Local Community Involvement: The center should actively involve the local community in planning, execution, and maintenance to ensure the programs' sustainability and relevance to the community's needs and desires. (Source: Guidelines and practical guides from local organizations focused on the preservation and development of specific cultural heritages)
- Environmental Sustainability: The center's building design and operations should consider environmental sustainability principles, including using eco-friendly materials and good waste management practices. (Source: Academic research and articles from scientific journals on cultural preservation, education, and community development)
- Accessibility: The center should be easily accessible to the general public and tourists, with a strategic location and adequate transportation access. (Source: Case studies of existing successful cultural centers that preserve and develop their cultural heritage)

Neo-Vernacular architecture emerged during the Post-Modern era in the 1960s, blending "Vernacular," meaning local or indigenous language in Latin, with "Neo," signifying new in Greek. Neo-Vernacular architecture can also be interpreted as a new approach to utilizing local language. It prioritizes local cultural participation in community life, encompassing normative and cosmological principles and striving for harmony between buildings, the environment, and nature (Artanti, 2022).

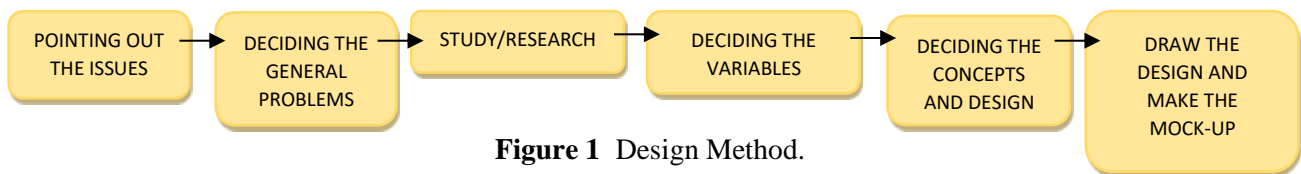
The criteria for Neo-Vernacular architecture include forms shaped by cultural and environmental elements, including local climate, expressed through ornamentation, layout, structure, and details. It integrates physical and non-physical elements, such as beliefs, cultural patterns, and modern layouts, to create innovative works that depart from strict adherence to traditional vernacular principles (Artanti, 2022). This approach utilizes physical and non-physical elements of local languages as a basis for architectural compositions, incorporating cultural values, philosophical perspectives on space, and religious insights into contemporary design concepts (Sumalyo, 1997). Despite not strictly adhering to vernacular norms, Neo-Vernacular architecture seeks to achieve a modern visual expression while retaining local elements, resembling vernacular buildings with a contemporary twist (Saputra, 2019).

The Malay community in North Sumatra has long shaped and developed traditions and customs integral to their lives, particularly in housing. Initially serving as protection from natural disasters, homes evolved with Malay cultural development to become centers for activities and socialization. Despite these changes, traditional Malay home construction retains symbolic values and universal meanings. Vernacular buildings, a hallmark of Malay society, feature designs reflecting religious significance. Over time, housing practices shifted from customary and social status-based principles towards communal efforts and social harmony, often located near flood-prone rivers or coastal areas (Tambunan, 2015).

Local communities prioritize safety against natural disasters by constructing homes elevated to knee-high levels for adults when standing. The distinctive architectural style of raised houses, known as "rumah panggung," relies on sturdy wooden pillars and adapts to tropical environments dominated by swamps and dense forests. Reflecting adaptations to local environmental challenges, these homes maintain cool temperatures in hot tropical climates and maximize natural light. Traditional Malay houses serve as complete living spaces, communal meeting points, and shelters, adorned with ornamental motifs derived from nature, such as flora and fauna, often imbued with philosophical and religious significance (Sumanti & Batubara, 2019).

### 3. Methods

The research method in this design consists of three studies: observation, literature, and comparative study. This research method started with observation by collecting data through observation of cultural-related objects, the architecture of the Deli Malay Tribe, and the characteristics, conditions, and methods of applying neo-vernacular architecture, either directly or indirectly. The second step was the literature study by collecting data related to design objects based on Terms of Reference (TOR), theories of architectural design, history, and culture of the Deli Malay Tribe, and other supporting theories sourced from journals, books, the internet, and previous studies. In this method, data collection is also carried out by searching for existing records or documents that have been published. The final step, comparative study, ended this research. A comparative study is the data collection obtained through the comparison of several case studies of similar functions and themes according to the design object as a reference in designing, which triggered the emergence of alternative options. After the research was completed, the designing process started with this method (figure 1).



**Figure 1** Design Method.

## 4. Result and Discussion

### 4.1. Location

The site, which has a 9.204.59 m<sup>2</sup> area, is located on Sisingamangaraja Street, No.18, Mesjid, Kec. Medan Kota, Kota Medan, Sumatera Utara 20213. It is used for trade and services.



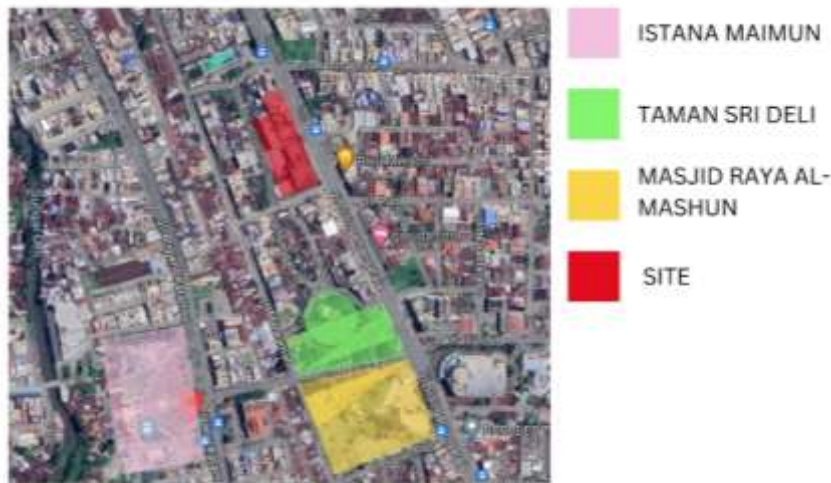
**Figure 2** Site Location.

This location was chosen based on criteria that were formed after research:

- **History and Cultural Significance:** The location must have a strong historical connection with the culture of the Deli Malay tribe. Ideally, it could be a place with a historical connection with the Sultanate of Deli or a rich Malay cultural presence.
- **Accessibility:** The location should be easily accessible to locals and tourists. The availability of adequate transportation facilities and infrastructure is essential to make cultural centers easily accessible.
- **Tourism Potential:** Locations in tourist areas or with high tourist potential can attract more visitors. This can contribute to the local economy and the popularity of cultural centers.

- **Government Support:** It is vital to get the support of the local government in building and maintaining cultural centers. This includes licensing, resources, and financial support.
- **Infrastructure and Facilities:** The location must have appropriate facilities to host various cultural events and activities, such as exhibition halls, auditoriums, libraries, and performance venues.
- **Resource Availability:** Ensure that the site has access to the resources needed to support the operation of the cultural center, such as electricity, water, and communications.
- **Safety and Environment:** The safety and cleanliness of the environment around the site are essential to attract visitors and maintain the sustainability of the cultural center.

The historical site is a residential area for elite people during the Deli Sultanate era. The site is also very close to the Triangle Area, which consists of Maimun Palace, Al-Mashun Grand Mosque, and Sri Deli Park. This makes the cultural center a complement to the area and can encourage the Medan City Government to make it a historical tourist area of the Deli Malay Tribe.



**Figure 3** Site Area.

The site was previously the Garuda Hotel. Since Polonia Airport is no longer active, many hotel businesses in the area and Garuda Hotel have died. Therefore, the existence of this cultural center is hoped to revive the area.

**Table 1** Site Analysis.

Element	Analysis	Image
Shape and Dimension of The Site.	The site is shaped like a combination of several squares, rectangles and trapezoids.	
Site Borders.	The northern part of the site borders the settlement, the western part of the site borders Dolok Sanggul Street, The eastern part of the site borders Sisingamangaraja Street and the southern part of the site borders Dolok Martimbang Street.	

**Site Potentials.**

The site is close to 3 other Deli Malay cultural history tours, this can encourage the Government to make this area a Deli Malay cultural history tourism area and further develop it. In addition, since Polonia Airport is not operating, there are a lot of businesses that are mostly hotels that have gone out of business along Jl. Sisingamangaraja and its surroundings.

The design carried out on the site has the potential to boost this dead area to come back to life.



**Site Circulation and Access**

Site is surrounded by 3 streets, Sisingamangaraja Street (W: 20m) in the east, Dolok Martimbang Street (W: 7m) in the southeast and Dolok Sanggul Street (W: 7m) in the southwest.



**Sunpath.**

The long side of the site face northeast and southwest and the short side of the site face northwest, so there is a thermal challenge.



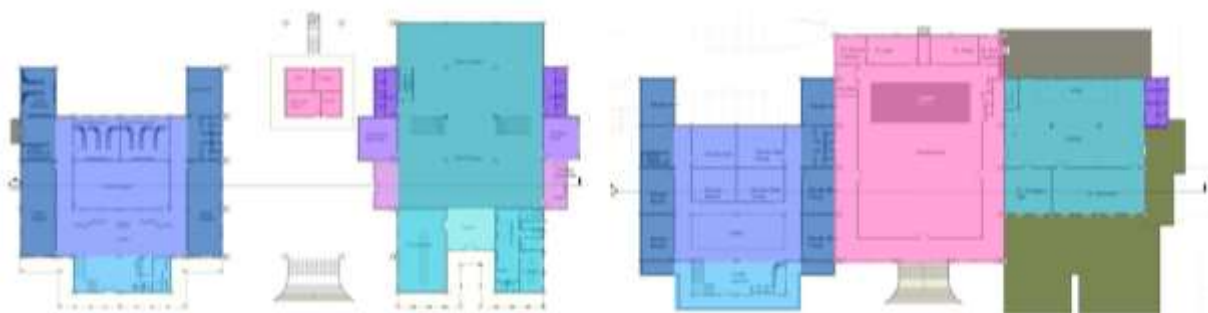
**Noise.**

- Noise source:
- Big Street (Average 80 dB)
- Settlement (Average 60 dB)
- Small Streets



## 4.2. Concept

The plan's concept is inspired by Deli Malay traditional buildings, which usually feature symmetrical layouts and subtractions from several square shapes.



**Figure 4** Deli Malay Cultural Center Plan Concept.

The traditional Deli Malay building is characterized by its elevated structure. The central part of The Deli Malay Cultural Center, the multi-purpose hall, uses this elevated concept. This central part also serves as a connector between the workshop and gallery buildings. Underneath the elevated structure is a flexible space that can be used for temporary exhibitions.



**Figure 5** Deli Malay Cultural Center Elevated Concept.

Many arch shapes can be found in Istana Maimun and Masjid Raya Al-Mashun. Similarly, many traditional Malay houses feature decorative motifs inspired by flora, often crafted in arch shapes above doors or windows. Therefore, the concept of arch shape is incorporated into the design of the Deli Malay Cultural Center.



**Figure 6** Deli Malay Cultural Center Arch Concept.

Due to the land area being less than 10,000 m<sup>2</sup>, a roof garden was created to ensure there is still an outdoor space.



**Figure 7** Deli Malay Cultural Center Roof Garden Concept.

### 4.3. Design

It consists of three buildings that are separated by their uses: workshops and studios, a multi-purpose hall, and a culture gallery. There is also a commercial space to facilitate "Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises" (MSMEs) so that this design can be directly useful for the people in the area. The commercial space can also be an attraction so that the building can be busy every day; everything can be seen in the design.



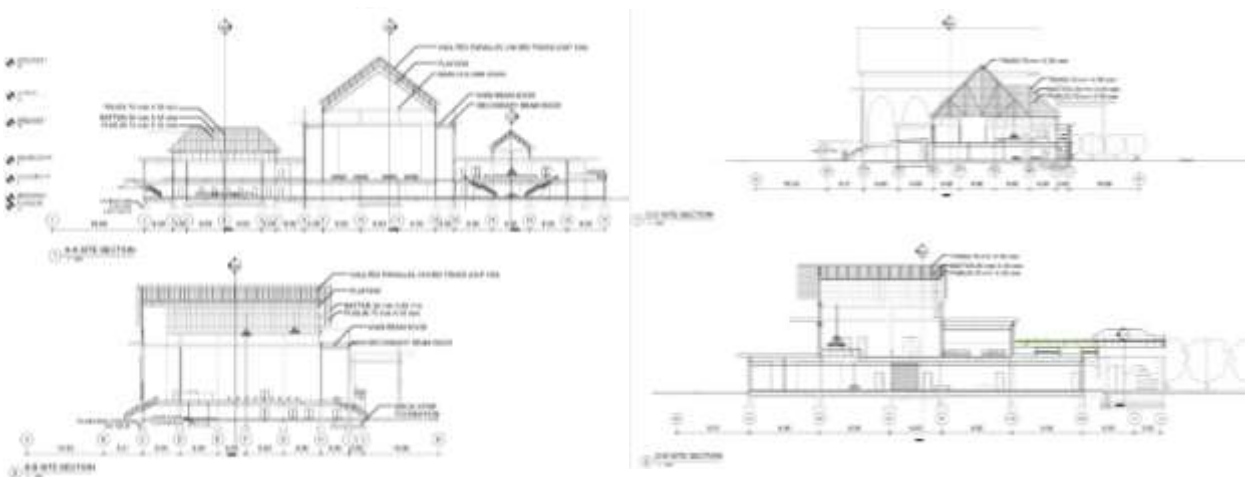
Figure 8 Deli Malay Cultural Center Plans.

The Deli Malay Cultural Center was designed using a neo-vernacular architectural approach. Therefore, the design reflects the characteristics of famous Deli Malay buildings and traditional Deli Malay houses. Modernization is also evident due to the theme being "neo" vernacular.



**Figure 9** Deli Malay Cultural Center Elevations.

The Deli Malay Cultural Center uses regular materials like concrete and CNP.



**Figure 10** Deli Malay Cultural Center Sections.

## 5. Conclusion

The Deli Malay Cultural Center proposal addresses a critical issue of cultural preservation and education in Medan. The decline of the Deli Malay ethnic group amidst increasing diversity highlights the urgency to safeguard their rich heritage. By integrating a neo-vernacular architectural approach, the center aims to blend traditional Deli Malay elements with modern functionality, ensuring relevance and appeal to both locals and visitors. Serving as an educational hub and community space, it preserves Deli Malay culture and promotes understanding and appreciation among the public. This initiative stands as a beacon of cultural preservation, inspiring similar efforts across Indonesia to uphold the diversity and heritage of its tribes and cultures for future generations.

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