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Towards Safe Cities & Resilient Communities

13 & 14 SEPTEMBER 2018
IMPIANA HOTEL, IPOH, PERAK

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MALAY GARDEN CONCEPT THROUGH TRADITIONAL MALAY LITERATURE

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Abstract - This study discusses the development of the Malay garden concept through traditional Malay literature and site observation of the Malay villages along Peninsular Malaysia. The hereditary of traditional Malay culture, as well as garden design concept, can offer a guideline towards safe cities and resilience communities which lead to boosting the growth of the integrity and the authenticity of the traditional Malay garden design. The strength of these characters will extensively be used in developing the concept of landscape design in Malaysia due to the increasing awareness of community spirit and environmental development as to maintain the quality and sustainability of urban life.

Keywords - Malay Garden, Malay Landscape, Cultural Landscape, Resilience Communities, Quality of Urban Life

1 INTRODUCTION

The functional ability of the establishment and the development of landscape design concept is determined by the analysis of the spatial structure (traditional Malay house compound) as well as their traditional environment due to the increasing awareness of design, inequality constraints, social disruption, environmental detriment as well as direct impact on the delinquent behaviour that affects the quality of human life.

This paper deliberates the study of the features of traditional Malay landscape with the intention on the development of the Malay garden concept and significantly to the impact and the response of the global communities on traditional Malay landscape garden design. The traditional Malay garden design and their concept is an idea for the landscape architect in the direction of enhancing multi-faceted approach that ensures the success of sustainable cities, a long-term socio-technical system as well as to integrate and highlight the social, physical, culture and communities characteristics.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The merging of both social culture and climate of a place together with the community characteristics that evolved and developed due to the needs of the society have resulted in vernacular architecture (Noor Hanita et al., 2012). Therefore, our priority is to know and clearly understand both as the cultures and nation as to maintain the traditions that have been held through the years. The assortment of the Malay world is too widespread and need to be explained in detail to help and lead directly to the scope of the study as a whole. The term tradition and traditional in the way of Malay life should also be described explicitly. This is because there are many traditional elements used as a continuous tradition or hereditary as well as it becomes a part of the landscape design around their house compound (Abdullah Sani et al., 2006; Nor Atiah, 2005; Lim Jee Yuan, 1987) and with the declaration of territory for the space either within the owner of the house or it is free for all inhabitants. These are the inherited characteristics of a natural and traditional landscape which traditionally was self-sufficient for daily living. Therefore, landscape architect as well as the municipal council should take action as a social responsibility to the public while fulfilling the requirements of

clients when dealing with the design concept and clearly it is not recommended to erode the natural environment.

2.1 The Scenery of Traditional Malay Landscape Design

Storytelling was the favourite pastime of the past was shared and distributed throughout the region. As such there are quite a few art forms that transcend boundaries and belonged to the whole of Malay Archipelago and beyond (Zalina, 2012). The art of storytelling in Malay world including literature, manuscripts, poetry, poems, folklore as well as live show and performance such as folk dance form, the *Wayang Kulit*, *Mak Yong*, *Kuda Kepang*, *Barongan* and *Mek Mulung*. Zalina(2012) also states that the oral communication delivered by the storytellers (*Penglipurlara*) consider anything outside the narrative as extraneous and travelled all over the Nusantara to bring news and entertain the villagers and royal courts. The information usually delivered figuratively but full with knowledge and bits of advice especially in the way of living and customs tradition. According to Zaharah Mahmud (1970) (cited in Anisa Ani et al. (2012) as well as Abdullah Sani et al. (2006)), the traditional Malay identity and their culture could be studied through traditional Malay literature such as old manuscripts, folk tales, and poetry. She also found that these sources are the most excellent method to find out the information on the background of the traditional Malay culture in the region due to the limitations of other reliable documentation. Zalina (2012) similarly mention that many of our Malay hikayat originated from a Sultan's wished to record his royal lineage.

The Malay Annals, The *Misa Melayu* and The Tale of *Merong Mahawangsa* are clear example of this. The origin of The Malay Annals may never be uncovered but throughout the 16th and 17th centuries, many versions were zealously updated. The Tale of *Hang Tuah* is an example of a timeless Malay literary work which is now recognized by UNESCO as a Documentary Heritage under the Memory of the World Programed register in 2001, presently as the *Mak Yong* in 2005 under the Third Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity as well as Inscribed Stone of Terengganu or *Batu Bersurat Terengganu* in 2009 which constitutes the earliest evidence of Jawi writing in the Malay Muslim world of Southeast Asia.

Discussed by Al-Ahmadi (2003), Malays is known for their philosophy of manufacturing or construction of something as a symbol of symbolism, which means that either implicitly or explicitly based on the relationship with God, their environment as well as the human being. The strength of the Malay garden design is plants (soft landscape) and landscape furniture (hard landscape) as well as their composition and the interaction between internal and external spaces. It is unique because it clearly symbolizes the culture of the Malays in the past and shows the Malays have a substantial knowledge in term of plant functions in the garden or their environment.

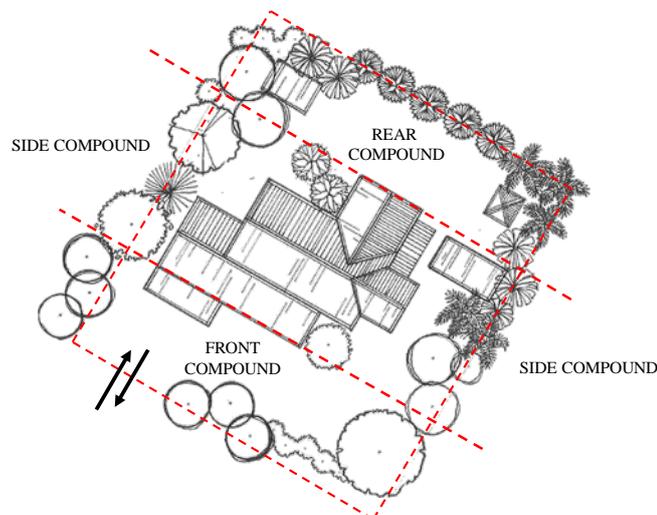


Figure 1 Typical layout of traditional Malay house compound divided into three primary compounds; (1) Front compound or front yard, (2) Side compound located either on the left or right side and (3) Rear compound.
(Source: Author, 2018)

Traditional Malay house compound separated into three main areas that are front compound, side compound, and rear compound. The placements of landscape furniture as well as plant species are dependent on its role in a different compound (Mohammad Rusdi, 2012; Ahmad Zamil et al. 2014; Nur Huzeima et al.; Anisa Ani et al. 2012; Abdullah Sani, 2006; Yuan, 1997).

2.2 Issues in Landscape Design and Planning

The traditional Malay living environment is planned carefully through harmonious interactions between man, nature, and culture translated into the house design and the surroundings (Anisa Ani et al., 2012). Shuhana et al. (2012) defined that the landscape approach is to conserve, manage as well as to observe the value of the historic areas by considering the original setting, interrelationship of physical form, social, cultural, spatial organization and connection with natural features. The concept of the overall design of traditional Malay house includes the space division of their interior architecture is parallel with the outside areas as well as their house compound (Ahmad Zamil et al.; Noor Aimran, 2014; Zumahiran & Ismail Said, 2011; Abdullah Sani, 2006). These attributes are interconnected and considered as essential ingredients for aesthetic design, form, and function, and fashioned in harmony around traditional Malay house compound.

During the arrival of Islam in the 13th century, the Malays were still strongly animistic in their belief and culture (Ibrahim, 1991). Islam is still held but the customs and beliefs of their culture are put as priorities. Hence, any form of decision-making entirely depends on the spirit of trust and profound spiritual influence which became the foundation in their daily routines. Anisa Ani et al. and Mohammad Rusdi (2012) also state that the Malays have adapted and responded well to the environment, subtly without causing harmful effects to the traditional landscape resources. This integration has developed the cultural landscape into a modified one (Appleton, 1975). Studies by Kaplan (1975) also support this by discovering that people often choose something based on the current season or the flow from the hassles of finding something uncertain and difficult to obtain.

3 METHODOLOGY

The qualitative research sought to gather diverse information through multiple methods about the antiquity, characteristics, influences and current practices relating to the traditional Malay landscape design and cultural landscape as a whole. The symbolism in the Malay landscape design either in physical (tangible) or metaphysical (intangible) form can be found by referring to the Malay traditional literature along with observation to the Malay villages along Peninsular Malaysia.

3.1 Traditional Malay Literature

From the traditional Malay literature, the significant characteristics emerge as the essences of Malay cultural identity, which have been identified as desperately in need of immediate acts of conservation. Mohammad Rusdi (2012) and Merriam (2009) also state that besides providing foundation or a theoretical framework for the problem to be investigated, the literature review can demonstrate how the present study advances, refines, or revises what is already known where both historical aspects and the development of the traditional landscape design and cultural landscape are appraised in order to identify key issues and recent evidence that are of significance to the research topic. Last but not least, Hasrina Baharum (2016) on her Ph.D. research illustrated the variation of traditional Malay garden from the past through Traditional Malay works of literature. All the illustration as follows:

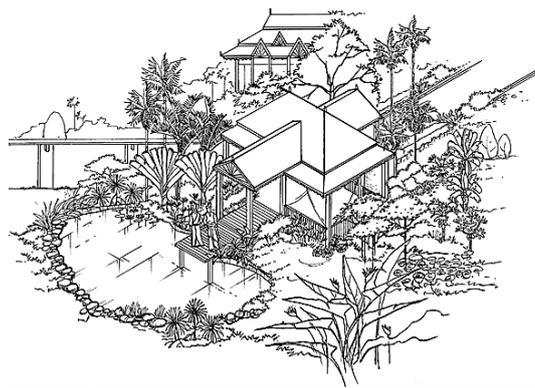


Figure 2 An Illustration of the Surroundings Ambiance of *Taman Larangan* According to the Traditional Malay Literature.

(Sources: Adaptation from the Variasi Lanskap Taman dalam Karya Melayu Tradisional. Tunas Cipta, Sastera Generasi Baharu, Februari 2016. DBP, 8-11.)

Taman Larangan or Forbidden Garden was usually located in the compound of the palace areas and full with magnificent traditional Malay landscape elements according to their placement and function. The garden serves as a play area as well as bathing for royal princesses to enjoy their daily life. Among the ambiances that are written through traditional Malay literature; *Syair Burung Nuri* and *Hikayat Malim Deman* as follows; a hall and pavilion as a place to relax or change clothes, pool for bathing, large trees as shading, flowers and fragrant trees as decoration and aesthetic elements, fruit trees as food, fences, gates and arch as demarcation along with to protection and maintain the honor of its inhabitants.



Figure 3 An Illustration of the Surroundings Ambiance of *Taman Kerohanian* According to the Traditional Malay Literature.

(Sources: Adaptation from the Variasi Lanskap Taman dalam Karya Melayu Tradisional. Tunas Cipta, Sastera Generasi Baharu, Februari 2016. DBP, 8-11.)

Taman Kerohanian was usually located outside the compound of the palace. Quite secluded but it is still close to the palace ground. The garden serves as a place for worship especially for the royal family who come to perform acts of devotion and religious study. All the structure, as well as landscape elements, were developed according to traditional cosmology and religious belief with magnificent detail and finishing. *Surau*, *madrasah*, *mimbar*, *balai delapan segi* and *pelantar* are example of structures that were recorded along with water elements, palm species, fruit, flowering and fragrant plant species. Among the ambiances that are written through traditional Malay literature; The Garden of Kings (*Bustan Al-Salatin*) and *Hikayat Jauhar Manikam* as illustrated above.

There are some traditional Malay landscapes elements that were mentioned repeatedly in each of the literature that was reviewed. Examples of what we can see are like the word *Anggur* (Vitis

spp.) was written in The Tale of Hang Tuah (*Hikayat Hang Tuah*), The Tale of Inderaputera (*Hikayat Inderaputera*) and The Garden of Kings (*Bustan Al-Salatin*). Another example is the *Bunga Tanjung* (Mimusops elengi) that was mentioned in The Tale of Hang Tuah (*Hikayat Hang Tuah*), The Tale of Inderaputera (*Hikayat Inderaputera*), The Garden of Kings (*Bustan Al-Salatin*) as well as The Malay Annals (*Sulalatus Al-Salatin*).

3.2 Current Traditional Malay Living Environment

The observation to the traditional Malay villages along Peninsular Malaysia was conducted to clearly define the character and significant role in creating their landscape garden design according to the traditional Malay literature (Refer Figure 4).



Figure 4 (a – c) Show the Landscape Typologies and Attributes of the Current Traditional Malay House Compound at Batu Kurau, Perak.

(Source: Author, 2014)

Table 1 List of Landscape Furniture observed by the Author from Site Survey, Traditional Malay Literatures, and Recorded in the Research Papers done by the Researchers in the Past

| HARD LANDSCAPE / LANDSCAPE FURNITURE | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|
| No. | Local Name (as be called by local people) | English name |
| 1. | <i>Ampaian</i> | Clothes line / washing line |
| 2. | <i>Bangsai / Sulap</i> | Barn |
| 3. | <i>Bilik air / Bilik mandi</i> | Shower |
| 4. | <i>Buaian</i> | Tree swings |
| 5. | <i>Gerbang</i> | Arch |
| 6. | <i>Guri</i> | Guri (smaller than common traditional Malay water vessel) |
| 7. | <i>Jamban / Tandas</i> | Latrine |
| 8. | <i>Jamung andang / Kandil</i> | Torch |
| 9. | <i>Kepok padi / Jelapang</i> | Paddy store |
| 10. | <i>Kolah</i> | Water tank |
| 11. | <i>Kolam</i> | Pond |
| 12. | <i>Pagar</i> | Fence |
| 13. | <i>Pangkin</i> | Resting hut (usually without shelter) |
| 14. | <i>Pasu bunga</i> | Flower pot |
| 15. | <i>Pelantar</i> | Open timber platform (usually for washing clothes) |
| 16. | <i>Perigi</i> | Well |
| 17. | <i>Perun</i> | Dump site |
| 18. | <i>Reban</i> | Hen coop |
| 19. | <i>Tempayan</i> | Water vessel |
| 20. | <i>Titi</i> | Log bridge (usually made from <i>Areca nut trunk / batang pinang</i>) |
| 21. | <i>Wakaf</i> | Gazebo |

(Sources: Author, 2018)

4 RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

The Malay community at present also follows the trend of the times. However, they can still retain some elements used by their ancestors. Through the study, it is found that 149 species have

recorded in the manuscript, and only 33 species have been used for now (only 22% of the active species). There has been an evolution of the traditional Malay landscape design nowadays even at the traditional Malay village itself.

The potential and strength of the traditional Malay landscape elements that can be used to develop the concept of the Malay garden design from the study are as follows:

- All the landscape elements that are mentioned in the traditional Malay literature composed of tropical species, and the overall material made from the Malay Archipelago is easily adapted to the local environment.
- Landscape elements are still used by the Malay community nowadays, but do not impose any design concept or properly related to the traditional Malay garden design concept.
- Malay's society has a strong belief in the use of certain landscape elements purposes, especially the group of herb and food plant as well as the placement of landscape furniture and interaction between each other in their daily life activities.

5 CONCLUSION

Due to the recent development and rapid urbanization for Malaysia, there is a need for improved understanding and appreciation towards traditional Malay cultural landscape among us. Through this study, it is clearly defined that the needs for the establishment of characterization for traditional Malay landscape design are required as a basis for informing the planning about the exact character design towards safe cities and resilient communities in future. Both of these aspects can offer the academician, scholar, contemporary planners, municipal council and landscape architect in their endeavour to preserve, conserve and create the sensitivity and the integrity towards cultural landscape as a whole.

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