

Preserving and Conserving Kampung Baru as a Malay Heritage in Kuala Lumpur

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Abstract: An urban village located in the heart of Kuala Lumpur, Kampung Baru was established by the British Government since 1899. It was managed by the Malay Agricultural Settlement (M.A.S.) that took care of the village's affairs and the needs of the residents. Kampung Baru was also gazetted as one of the Malay Reserved Areas (MRA) and created under the Malay Reservation Enactment of 1913 and the Land Enactment of 1987. Since then, Kampung Baru has witnessed major developments of the capital city of Malaysia with skyscrapers that surrounded this urban village. Some of the initiatives inspired by the Government to modernize the area have been welcomed by some quarters but there are others who remain silent and skeptical regarding the development plans. Kampung Baru is moving towards a new dimension whilst preserving and conserving it as a Malay and national heritage.

Keywords: Conserving, Development, Kampung Baru, Malay heritage, Preserving

1. Introduction

The British government has opened Kampung Baru since 1899 under the name "Malay Agricultural Settlement" (M.A.S.) as a special area reserved for the Malay ethnics in Kuala Lumpur (Md. Yassin, 2009). Furthermore, this area is situated at the centre of the capital city of Malaysia. The interesting part is that, Kampung Baru has been gazetted as one of the Malay Reserved Area (MRA) in Kuala Lumpur. Within this context, MRAs were created under the Malay Reservation Enactment of 1913 and the Land Enactment of 1987. This legislation has an important objective that was to ensure that the Malays would be able to own land in urban areas. At first, Kampung Baru was under the monitoring of Selangor State government before it was then transferred under the administration of Kuala Lumpur City Hall in 1973.

Kampung Baru has a unique characteristic that portrays the Malay culture and heritage (see Figure 1). Moreover, it has its own serenity and neat layout of traditional Malay villages (Alhabshi, 2010). This urban village has witnessed the developments of Kuala Lumpur in the economic growth and prosperity while sustaining its historical, institutional, political and socio-cultural factors (see Figure 2 and 3). The population of Kampung Baru in 2000 was recorded at 19,359 (Department of Main Plan, Kuala Lumpur City Hall as cited in Md. Yassin, 2009). Alhabshi (2010) reported that the number then rose to 35,000 in her study on traditional urban village in Kuala Lumpur. With this high number, Kampung Baru is still striving to attract high income residents to stay there although high cost apartments are built in that area. This is due to the fact that Kampung Baru is facing with complicated land status. However, this traditional urban village has a lot to offer (Chang, 2011).



Fig. 1 A Traditional Malay House in Kampung Baru (Source: The Star Online, 2015)



Fig. 2 Kampung Baru is situated in the middle of Kuala Lumpur (Source: The Star Online, 2015)



Fig. 3 Serenity at its own way (Source: The Star Online, 2015)

Kampung Baru is the Malay traditional village and the simplicity of *kampung* (village) life can be felt as it is common to see a bike ride along narrow roads. The area comprises seven small villages included Kampung Atas A (Mandailing), Kampung Atas B (Minangkabau), Kampung Paya (Javanese), Kampung Masjid (Rawa), Kampung Pindah, Kampung Hujung Pasir and Kampung Periok (Teng, 2014). Each of the village has its own character with different traditional and architecture design, belief and way of life.

2. Unique Attractions of Kampung Baru

Efforts are being carried out in preserving and conserving Kampung Baru. One of them is through local foods and delights (see Figure 4 and 5). A variety of hawker fare can be gathered in this urban village and the authenticity of this place is shown overwhelmingly during fasting month (Ramadhan). Working people in particular will be flocking into Kampung Baru to get

free ‘Bubur Lambuk’ or buy local delicacies at the street to break their fast. In addition, the night market brings people from all walks of life to choose whatever things that they prefer for a reasonable price (see Figure 6). Kampung Baru is also located near Chow Kit market that offers good bargains ranging from perishable products to stalls selling wares that include shoes, electronic equipment, antiques, clothing, textile and traditional medicine. Most of the sellers are local people and immigrants from Indonesia.



Fig. 4 Trays of chicken rice available in Kampung Baru (Source: Travel CNN, 2011)



Fig. 5 Grilled fish ready to be served (Source: Travel CNN, 2011)



Fig. 6 A night market in Kampung Baru (Source: Travel CNN, 2011)

Kampung Baru is seen as one of the tourist attractions as it is difficult to find a traditional village in a metropolitan city like Kuala Lumpur. This area highlights Malay entrepreneurial activities and Malay heritage although the Government has made several efforts to modernize it (Lim, 2015). There were certain issues with respect to the development of Kampung Baru as there were conflicts between the welcoming party and the remaining that prefer to keep silent and skeptical about the major change plans. As far as the Kampung Baru residents are concerned, retaining of Malay community as the identity of Kampung Baru must be maintained at all times.

3. Conclusion

Kampung Baru, a traditional urban village has received much support from the Government for its development but there some issues and concerns that need to be taken into account. This area has an exceptional characteristic that requires attention from relevant authorities to preserve and conserve this Malay heritage in Kuala Lumpur. Future challenges that Kampung Baru might face are traffic congestion, over flooding of immigrants and safety. Kuala Lumpur City Hall plays a significant role in carrying this difficult task.

The development plan of Kampung Baru based on the Kampung Bharu Detailed Development Masterplan (PITPKB) which will undergo a RM43bil facelift will encourage economic and improve resident well-being. This process will focus on three major aspects included preserving its cultural element, green development and sustainable development from economic, social and financial aspects. Besides, other plans included repairing the traditional Malay houses, upgrading the road and also the community-based structures such as Masjid Kampung Baru.

4. References

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