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The Perak Malays Sub-Ethnic Hard and Soft Landscape Elements: An overview

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Abstract

The Malay community in the Malay Archipelago has various sub-ethnics. The aim of this study was to identify the traditional elements of each sub-ethnic of the Malay community in Perak. The objective is to determine softscape and hardscape that is still used by sub-ethnic of the Malay community in Perak. This study has focused on the results of previous research findings that are relevant to the "user preference" of soft and hard landscape elements used by the Perak Malay community. This research can be promoted and help in the process of designing a model of Perak Malay garden design concept.

Keywords: Malay landscape; Malay garden; Malay sub-ethnic; Vernacular landscape

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<https://doi.org/10.21834/ajqol.v3i11.133>

1.0 Introduction

Perak is a beautiful state, peaceful and prosperous, and has its unique presence of individual fragments of the Malay ethnic group. In this study, researchers will share some valuable information about the landscape of the Malays in Perak. The aim of this study was to identify traditional elements of each Malays sub-ethnic in Perak. The objective of this study was to identify plants and hard landscape that is still used by the Malays sub-ethnic in Perak. Besides, the purpose of this study is to find differences on the use of landscape elements in the Malay community house compound.

2.0 Literature Review

The literature review of this research is to get to know what is meant by a so-called “*Kampong*” and landscapes in rural areas. When making a study of the “*Kampong*” researchers cannot avoid considering the traditional Malay house. The landscape identity of the Malay community needs to be identified because it could be a “benchmark” to study about Malays culture. Finally, the need to understand what is meant by cultural landscape nowadays.

2.1 Kampong and Rural Landscape

According to Samsudin & Fitry (2014), traditional Malay Kampong is a settlement that has been occupied for more than 100 years ago and has a very high value of the architecture and culture of the Malays. Referring to Amir et al. (2015), rural areas need to maintain the main elements of its natural environment because people were so excited to have something original.

2.2 The Malay Traditional House

According to Wan Teh & Nasir (2014), the form of traditional Malay houses was significantly influenced by the factors such as the natural surroundings, the way of life of the owners, their economic status, and the climate. Hometown or “*Kampong*” is intended; an element of the village as a place of residence as a whole, and as a compound surrounded by plants (Zakaria et al., 2015).

2.3 Identity of the Malay Landscape

Referring to Zakaria et al. (2014), the Malay garden design needs the re-branding to make it attractive and could represent the culture of the Malays in Malaysia. Thus, indirectly will be another attraction of tourism products in the future. The purpose of creating a new identity is to highlight the uniqueness and character of a civilized Malay community.

2.4 Cultural Landscape

The cultural landscape is an extraordinary technique for preserving land use, by considering the appearances and boundaries of nature, and spiritual connection with the environment. According to Idilfitri et al. (2015), there are eight (8) potential cultural attractions that can

attract tourists to visit the area. Among those factors are the architecture, artifacts, crafts, folklore, landscape, language, local cuisine, and tradition that may not be available in other areas other than those places.

3.0 Methodology

The research methodology is through a visit to the traditional houses of Malays sub-ethnic in every district in Perak. The data obtained using both quantitative and qualitative methods in the study. The simple random sampling was used and the method of interviewing technique "semi-in-depth interview."

Table 1: Number and age of the house which has been sampled.

Duration of year	House
<1900	21
1901-1920	10
1921-1940	22
1941-1960	10
1961-1980	7
1981>	1

(Source: Author, Site visit, 2015)

Table 1 shows the age of the samples that have been home when conducting site visits. The selection was made on the 71 houses in each district in the state of Perak, and researchers have done a preliminary review at the data collection stage. The results of field studies have shown that the majority of the houses surveyed over the age of 75 years (N = 53). Selection of research sample was made of the traditional Malay houses in every district in Perak. The Malay house that has been selected must have a particular character and retained the original identity design, and the compound of the house can still be seen today.

The scope of the study is to find out the traditional houses and sub-ethnic of the Malay community in every district in Perak. Figure 1 shows the breakdown of Perak Malay sub-ethnic according to a survey of seventy-one (71) houses. The researchers only managed to interview sixty-five (65) homeowners, and another six (6) is uncertain because the house had long been vacant.

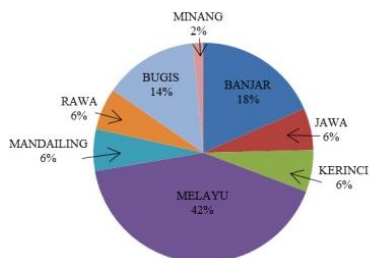


Figure 1: The study sample involving various of the Malays sub-ethnic in Perak.

(Source: Author, Site visit, 2015)

The number of ethnic around the state that are involved in this study; Malay ethnic with a percentage of 42% (27 houses), followed by Banjar ethnic 18% (12 houses), Bugis ethnic 14% (9 houses), while Rawa, Mandailing, Kerinci, and Java ethnic acquire as much as 6% (4 houses) and Minang ethnic obtained by 2% (1 house).

4.0 Findings and Discussions

Researchers need to study the relevant Malay landscape research that has been discussed by other researchers before to understand the Perak Malay landscape design. Through the study, researchers found there were philosophy and theory that can be used in this research and subsequent studies.

4.1 Space Composition in Typical Malay Landscape

According to Abu Dulaf, when he arrives at Kalah he found that it was prodigious, with a great wall, numerous gardens and abundant springs (Wheatley, 2010). Today's "Kalah" is referring to Kedah, which is a state located on the northern side of Peninsular Malaysia. The passage describes the Malays in ancient times already have a great garden, and when it relates to garden, it certainly relevant to the landscape.

Nowadays the Malay landscape can be characterized as a concept that been asleep. It means the inability to homogenize or give identical to the elements of the cultural landscape. Below is a typical model published to represent the Malay garden design idea.

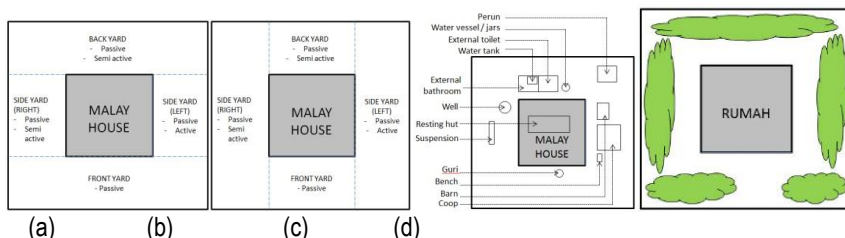


Figure 2: Common Model 1 (a) & 2 (b) The placements of landscape furniture based on its function on a different compound. (c) The general model of the hard landscape and (d) the general model of softscape area of the Malay house compound.

(Source: Zakaria et al., 2016)

4.2 Space Composition in Perak Malay Landscape

The division of space on the Perak Malay landscape retained the front yard, back yard, right side yard and left side yard. Each side of the compound has different functions, and it has been determined solely by the homeowners. The traditional Malay house has a spacious front yard, and it usually planted grass to enable a variety of family activities undertaken. According to Omar et al. (2015), in the Islamic context, recreation is very much emphasized as it contributes a great deal to live satisfaction, quality of life, health, and wellness. The biggest problem for the Malay community is not interested in landscape design because of

the lack of exposure to them. This issue can be overcome by promoting the concept of Malay landscape and encourage them to implement this idea. The picture below will explain a bit about the exterior of the Perak Malay traditional house.



Photo 1: Among the traditional Malay house that had been sampled in this study (a) Bota (b) Ayer Tawar (c) Gopeng (d) Gerik.
(Source: Author, Site visit, 2015)

4.3 Analysis of the Perak Malay Landscape

To study a landscape design concept, the researchers need to explain the existence of softscape and hardscape element. In the field of landscape architecture, both of these things are important, and there is a mutual relationship in making people's lives more conducive, peaceful and secure.

4.3.1 Soft Landscape elements

Plants are often associated with human life. Plants were grown with various functions such as food, medicine and the use of everyday activities. It is the reason these plants are planted around or near the house.

The results of this research have found, a species closely related to the daily use of the Malay sub-ethnic in Perak since it is similar concerning its use in the ethnic cuisine. From site survey has been done, the researchers found ethnic Malays have used 59.00% (n = 19) plant species. The second is the Banjar ethnic representing a total of 44.00% (n = 12) plant species.

The use of coconut (*Cocos nucifera*) and chili (*Capsicum frutescens*) in every ethnic cuisine have led to this plant is easily found around the home compound that has been studied. These factors may be influenced by local circumstances where soil conditions are suitable, climate as well as high demand for coconut trees and chili in everyday use of the community. Apart from food, the use of plants such as coconut trees has diversified its use as a roofing material, making from its leaves and the production of handicrafts from coconut shells and leaves.

The use of the lemongrass plant (*Cymbopogon citratus*) in the life of the community is such as cooking ingredients and herbs, and it has caused this plant is widely grown around the house. For the henna plant (*Lawsonia inermis*), its use is not only used for weddings, but it is also used as medicine for external use such as skin disease and heal wounds. Besides, henna is also used as an ingredient in washing the deceased, and this info is the result of interviews conducted during the study.

4.3.2 Hardscape Elements

Hardscape obtained in this study is the findings from field studies of Malay houses in every district in the state of Perak. Each hard landscape features in the house compound have been recorded in the data collection process. Among the hard landscape obtained in this study is the bench, barn, bird cage, coop, dump site, flower pot, guri, kolah, latrine, outside bathroom, outdoor store, planter box, resting hut, suspension, swing, gazebo, water vessel, well, a mortar and pestle, metate and bridge. Percentage of hard landscaping obtained can be viewed below.

The highest percentage of hard landscape obtained in the study area is a flower pot, representing 67.59% (n = 611) from the entire hard landscape. It is influenced by the concept of planting trees in pots for ease of management and decorations on the house compound of the Malay community. Most of the plants are planted in decorative pots are like paper flowers, bamboo, tree pudding, aloe vera and many others. For culinary herbs and plants grown in containers, it aims to make it easier for the owner to get this plant and its location adjacent to the kitchen.

The second highest percentage of hard landscaping elements obtained in the study area are water vessel with a 5.53% (n = 50). The use of water vessel is to collect rainwater or as a store of water. The results of the interviews have been made, the use of water vessel is often used in feasts (weddings, celebrations, funerals). Also, water vessel lent to neighbors to keep the water as food, drink, and cleaning. There is also a water vessel used as a material for housing construction. It is used as a necessary tool to support the load of the house. By reversing the water vessel so that there is air in the spaces, and it is appropriate for the type of peatland (many in Bagan Datoh district).

4.3.3 Space Composition

The aim of the study was to determine the number of elements found in every part of the house was conducted. For example, hard landscaping elements located on the front and rear sides of the house compound. With the data obtained, it can assist researchers in identifying the layout of the hard landscape.

The results obtained revealed that the placement element most hard landscape is on the left side of the house with a total of 34.00% (n = 307). It is influenced by the continuation of space between the left side compound with the front compound. It occurs when there is a flower pot in the yard as a decoration, and the arrangement is accordingly to the preferences of the homeowner. The second element of the placement in the house is in the front yard. It accounted for 25.00% (n = 223) of the total. The aim is to enrich the front compound as a sign of welcoming for guests. The third place was the right part of the compound represents a percentage of 24.00% (n = 220). The arrangement of each element depends on the daily needs and the design of a house, such as the placement of water vessel and benches. Space the least used is the rear compound, which is 17.00% (n = 159), we can see the element, such as a chicken coop and outdoor toilets are mostly found in the rear house.

In conclusion, the plans and designs are following the preferences of homeowners like putting a plant in front of the house is to beautify the scenery, and there was left an open area to facilitate activities such as feasts to be held. The placement of hardscape elements

such as a coop and an outside toilet at the compound behind the house due to its occupants wanted privacy setting (do not wish to be seen by others) and maintained cleanliness. While the placement of hardscape element on the left and right of the house is influenced by the design of the yard that serves as a daily activity and relaxation. For example, the placement of the suspension is to hang clothes and resting hut for relaxing and gathering. Besides, the resting hut is also used for drying tamarind activities.

5.0 Conclusion

This study has shown us even though the Malay community has various sub-ethnic groups, but from the point of unity in life, they still maintain the same philosophy and principles in the selection of softscape and hardscape elements in the compound of their house. The choice of plants to be planted in the house compound is as food, medicine, and aesthetics. Selection of a hardscape was seen closely associated with the activities of the household.

From the analysis that has been carried out, the researchers realized that not all sub-ethnic using the same softscape in their house compound, and flower pots are elements shall be utilized for each house in the Malay community. Regarding the composition of space, the researchers found most of the respondents use the left compound of the house, and through interviews conducted found that most of the activities carried out in this area. From this study, it can be concluded that the general guidelines can be published and can be used as a reference for other researchers in the future.

Acknowledgement

We would like to express our gratitude to the Research Management Institute (RMI), Universiti Teknologi MARA, for granting full trust to us to do this research. Special thanks to our sponsors of MOHE - Fundamental Research Grant Scheme (FRGS) for providing an adequate provision for this project.

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