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# Landscape Furniture Present in The Ancient Malay Garden According to Old Manuscripts and Their Effects on The Formation of Malay Garden Design Concept Model in Malaysia

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## Abstract

In peeling the dilemma of the Malay contemporary community nowadays, a study has been conducted to find out and discover the landscape furniture used by the Malay people in ancient times. The objectives of this research are to measure the image and culture of the Malays in Malaysia, which is applied in the design of the existing Malay Garden and also to identify the landscape furniture found in the existing Malay Garden. The method used in this research is, by referring to the old manuscripts and research papers done by researchers in the past about garden in the world of the Malay Archipelago. The main manuscripts in this research are as *Sulalatus al-Salatin* (Malay Annals), *Bustan al-Salatin* (The Garden of Kings), *Hikayat Hang Tuah*, *Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa*, *Hikayat Inderaputera* and *Hikayat Abdullah*. These methods consist of understanding and prove that culture, values on belief, the world of thought had been the base of Malay cosmology. Findings from this research can be concluded that the Malays in the past has had architecture skills and also have knowledge about every function of furniture and elements that been created by them. The knowledge possessed by the Malay people had inherited from generation to another generation. Therefore, to support a Malay garden design model, researchers have focused on the furniture's that have been used either in the gardens in the past, especially the palace garden, the home of the Malays and the vicinity at that time. Malay people are a special race, and there are many interesting elements through their creativity that may be highlighted to become a model for the design concept of a Malay Garden that are relevant in the present environment.

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**Keywords:** landscape furniture; Malay garden; Malay people; Malays history; old manuscript

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## 1. Introduction

Malay landscape is a complex design because it consists of culture as well as artistic values that portray the Malay symbolism and began only in palaces and houses of the Malays leader in the ancient times. As we know, the Malay community does not have a strong landscape design and their components, compared with landscape themes that were popular in the modern times. However, the strength of which can be detected in the old Malay garden are their furniture or hard landscape elements. Malay cosmologies that are based on the values on belief, the world of thought and the culture are indirectly defined by the art, design composition and symbolism. These elements also consist of indirect values and symbolisms that can be determined through the perception of meaning either in the aspect of belief, culture or function. It is so unique because it clearly symbolizes the civilized Malays, and has a strong knowledge in the use of every element in the garden or their environment with their daily life. Therefore, the identity and image of Malay garden can be expanded, and will be a reference for all landscape architects who are active in promoting the design of the Malay culture.

## 2. Malay garden landscape design composition

The main compositions of Malay garden landscape design are composed of the design concept and their two main components; soft landscape elements and hard landscape elements (which is known as landscape furniture). In the context of landscape, hard landscape elements can be categories as the man-made elements. It is the design of an additional element that complements the design of a garden [1].

Decorative elements, commonly known as landscape furniture emphasizes the character and identity of the landscape itself whether it is Balinese landscape, Japanese landscape, English landscape and so forth. The Malay garden landscape design considers all aspects of space organization in order to create a better place for the users and have their own specific functions and benefits. The design of the garden and its features are partially influenced by ethnicity belief and philosophy of the resident and generally, it is composed of vernacular timber houses laid in a garden of fruit trees, edible shrubs, herbs, flowering and fragrance plants in combination with landscape furniture [2].

The traditional Malay house compound is divided into three main areas which is front compound, side compound, and rear compound. The placements of its landscape furniture are based on its function on different compound. Normally, traditional Malay people develop their garden to attain synchronization with the environment which is the concept, activities and function of the interior Malay house is tolerant toward the external spaces.

Among the landscape furniture observed by the author as well as recorded in the research papers done by researchers in the past about the Malay garden in the world of Malay Archipelago are:

Table 1. List of landscape furniture observed by the author and recorded in the research papers done by researchers in the past about the Malay garden in the world of the Malay Archipelago

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

Each of this landscape furniture also arises from the influence of environment and geographical aspect likes Malay peoples settlement which is located in the lowland area where the rice is predominant crop. Wet rice cultivation, known as *sawah* ecosystem, shows a stable relationship between man and his environment. They have *titi* or bridge to cross the water canal, *pangkin* for rest after or during their works as well as *bangsai* and *kepok padi* at their compound for storing the rice in one season. In the context of internal and external space relationships, the placement of the *gerbang*, *kolah*, *kolam*, flower pots and *guri* on the front compound serves as a sense of welcoming and as a tool to clean feet before ascending to the house. *Kepok padi*, *pangkin*, *perigi* and *wakaf* placed on the side compound as a place to rest and enjoying their daily activities. While *reban*, *bangsai*, *jamban*, and *pelantar* were located on the rear compound in accordance with the individuality or personal items such as suspension, washing and cleanse.

### 3. The Art Of Storytelling

Storytelling, the favorite pastime of the past was shared throughout the region. As such there are quite a few art forms that transcend boundaries and belonged to the whole of Nusantara, the Malay Archipelago and beyond such as the *Wayang Kulit*, *Mak Yong* and *Mek Mulung*. Our own storytellers, the *Penglipurlara* of old travelled all over the Nusantara to bring news and entertainment to villages and royal courts [3].

The origin of *Sejarah Melayu* or the *Sulalat-us-Salatin* may never be uncovered but throughout the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, many versions were zealously updated. The *Hikayat 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 Program register in 2001, presently as the *Mak Yong* and *Batu Bersurat* Terengganu have been recognized as cultural and historical heritage. Many of our Malay *Hikayat* originated from a Sultan's wished to record his royal lineage. The *Sejarah Melayu*, *Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa* and *Misa Melayu* are a clear example of this [4].

Through the study of this manuscript, clearly shows the practices contained in the Malay world have a close relationship with the environment, belief and culture.

### 4. Malays Old Manuscripts

#### 4.1. *Sulalatus al-Salatin – Sejarah Melayu (Malay Annals)*

Writing that contained in the book of *Sulalatus al-Salatin* contains various things based on historical facts such as the story of the kings who ruled Malacca. For example, the things that happened during the reign of *Sultan Muzaffar Shah*, *Sultan Mansur Shah*, *Sultan Alau'd-Din Ri'ayat Shah*, *Sultan Mahmud Shah* and others. *Sulalatus al-Salatin* also includes the story of the figures that is considered legends of the Malays as *Badang*, *Hang Tuah*, *Tun Perak* and others. Among the landscape furnitures recorded in the *Sulalatus al-Salatin* are:

...membuat balai jawatan di sisi balairong, orang Kundur membuat balai apit pintu keduanya, dan orang Suntaini membuat balai kendi, orang Melai membuat pemandian, orang Upang membuat **bangsal** gajah, orang Tungkal membuat masjid, orang Bintang membuat **pagar** istana, orang Muar membuat kota wang. Adapun istana itu baik pula daripada dahulu. Setelah sudah...[5].

#### 4.2. *Bustan al-Salatin – Taman Raja-raja (The Garden of Kings)*

*Bustan al-Salatin* (The Garden of Kings) is a book authored by Nuruddin ar-Raniri in 1636. They produce a wide range of matters including the five clauses of reason, the knowledge and gut feeling and *kifarah*, *Tabib* the knowledge, the natures of the one female and one half of the book tells the tale of magic and passion. Among the landscape furniture recorded in the *Bustan al-Salatin* is:

... mengampar, perusahaannya seperti tembus, bergelar Banar Nila Warna. Dan adalah keliling pulau itu karang berbagai-bagai warna, bergelar Pancalogam. Di atas pulau itu suatu **pasu**, iaitu permandian, bergelar Sangga Mamaq. Dan adalah isinya air mawar yang amat merbak baunya, daripada tutupnya perak, dan alasnya daripada perak, dan caraknya daripada fidah.. [6, 7].

#### 4.3. *Hikayat Hang Tuah*

Saga tells the story of a man named *Hang Tuah*, a faithful admiral and a hero who is reliable in *silat*. *Hang Tuah* the lead character of this tale, representing the image of Malay supremacy as a cultured and civilized nation, highlighting the qualities of loyalty, courage, intelligence and fine manners. *Hang Tuah* was a superior admiral and a Malay warrior of valor during the reign of *Sultan Mansur Shah* of Malacca in the 15th century. Among the landscape furniture recorded in the *Hikayat Hang Tuah* is like:

...maka adalah dalam **kolam** itu pelbagai bunga-bunga daripada kenanga dan teratai dan seroja dan bunga tanjung; dan ada dalam **kolam** beberapa ikan, warnanya seperti emas, dan pada sama tengah **kolam** itu sebuah kolam diturap dengan batu putih, bergelar Pulau Sangka Sembika dan di atasnya suatu batu ..... [8].

#### 4.4. *Hikayat Inderaputera*

The theme of this tale is the adventures of a prince. It has highlighted the value of courage, wisdom and keeping promises. It also gives a lesson to us that should always use common sense in such situations as they emerge and to be always brave in the face of challenging situations. Among the landscape furniture recorded in the *Hikayat Inderaputera* is:

...Raja Gohar Hinis mengatakan, "Patik itu paduka anakanda Indraputra hendak datang mengadap duli tuanku." Maka anak raja mambang kedua pun pergilah, setelah datang ke pintu **gerbang** maka ujar anak raja mambang kedua kepada orang menunggu pintu itu, "Beri tahukan raja kamu, katakan dua orang anak raja pesuruh daripada Indraputra hendak datang mengadap... [9].

#### 4.5. *Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa*

The sagas take the title from the name of a king who comes from Rome, which is believed to produce dynasty *Mahawangsa* the source line of kings who open state, named as *Langkasuka*, later better known as *Kedah Zamin Turan*. The early parts of this book tells the stories of kings and the opening of the state based on myths and legends or fanciful stories, a trusted by the community at the time, whether it is local, or influenced by Hindu or stories that originate from the influence of Islam. In this section, this tale state ancestor king of *Kedah* is *Raja Merong Mahawangsa*, a king who has family ties to the King of Rome. Among the landscape furnitures that appear in *Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa* are:

*... kita datang jua, negeri itu pun jauhlah jua pelayarannya itu hingga sebulan belayar maka sampailah; terlalu banyak segala yang ajaib di dalam negeri itu, daripada tempayan dan guri dan pohon kayu malau-tahi-semut dan lagipun banyak pula kayu yang besar-besar dan di hulu sungainya jauh serta dengan luasnya, tuanku." Maka titah Raja Merong Mahawangsa.... [10].*

4.6. *Hikayat Abdullah*

It is the work of Munshi Abdullah. He was well known for writing his autobiography titled '*Hikayat Abdullah*'. It is written in the range from 1840 to 1843. It was published in 1849. Another published a book called *Abdullah Travelers* book tells the story of the voyage from Singapore to Kelantan in 1838. Impressed with the character Mr. Farquhar and Mr. Rafles that exhibit high courteous, Munshi Abdullah's escort them to do research about the community, about the plants and animals. Among the landscape furniture recorded in *Hikayat Abdullah* is like:

*... jenis2 rupa khemah, yang ada seperti rupa rumah betul2 serta dengan tempat tidurnya dan biliknya serta meja kursinya dan pintu jenelanya, dengan tempat permandiannya dan jambannya. Semuanya itu daripada kain belaka. Dan yang ada khemah kain merah semuanya. Dan yang ada di luarnya putih, dalamnya kain cita berbagai2 bunga. Bermula maka pekerjaan... [11].*

From side to side of this passage, the situation telling can be conceived clearly described the behavior of the traditional Malay community and landscape elements involved. Among the landscape furnitures recorded in the main manuscripts in this research listed in table 2.

Table 2. List of landscape furniture recorded in the old manuscripts

Manuscripts	Types of Landscape Furniture (as it appears in the manuscript)															
	Bangsai / Sulap	Gerbang	Guri	Jamban / Tandas	Jamung andang / kandil	Kepok padi / Jelapang	Kolam	Pagar	Pangkin	Pasu	Pelantar	Perigi	Reban	Tempayan	Titu	Wakaf
Bustan al-Salatin (The Garden of Kings)		x			x		x			x					x	x
Hikayat Abdullah.	x			x	x	x	x	x		x		x		x	x	
Hikayat Hang Tuah	x	x			x	x	x	x		x	x			x		
Hikayat Inderaputera		x			x		x	x							x	
Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa	x	x	x		x	x	x							x		

Sulalatus al-Salatin (Malay Annals)	x	x		x	x		x	x	x	x
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## 5. Analysis Of Landscape Furniture Used By The Malay Community At The Present Time

Malay community nowadays looking from the side of the comprehensive contact in gaining its attractiveness and dominates the need of a healthier as a satisfaction as one of the basic need in their routine. The traditional Malay garden landscape is simple, yet enhances the uniqueness of the tropical settings and the current societies prefer to use hard landscape as the attractive component to their landscape setting. Some landscape architects nowadays might design it as contemporary, some might combine both and some might sustain the precise element. But what we need is the originality of the Malay garden elements to form the basis development of the Malay garden design model.

Development of technology and knowledge among the Malay race allows them to constantly maintain all these landscape furniture by their ancestors. However, the trend of landscape development in Malaysia at the moment is more focused on landscape design ideas from abroad. Only a few applications preserved cultural landscape, where the kitchen garden is maintained because it is a space that connect the kitchen activities also composed of plants intended for food and medicinal purposes including pergola for creepers and climbers, *bangsal* as a store, *pangkin* as a place to gather and rest, concrete pots, *pelantar* for washing area, suspension and *perun*.

If seen from a list of landscape furniture that is found in old manuscripts, not all of these elements are for decorative or aesthetic purpose purely. Most of them are multi-purpose used and clearly built for the ascertaining function base for their daily life activities and its surrounding. This has proved that the Malay community not only chooses the landscape furniture for purely aesthetic purposes to be a source of hard landscaping for a garden.

When observed in detail we will be able to find that there is the same landscape furniture in each of the books writing although the date or time, the purpose and the authors are different. An example of what we can see is like the word *kolam* was written in the all manuscripts. Another example is the *bangsal* or *sulap* that was mentioned in the *Sulalatus al-Salatin* (Malay Annals), *Hikayat Hang Tuah*, *Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa* and *Hikayat Abdullah*.

After conducting a survey, the researchers found, landscape furniture recorded in the old manuscripts is very potential to form the basis for the development of the conceptual Malay garden design model. It is based on the following factors:

- The landscape furniture mentioned is composed of tropical weather as well as the traditional Malays environment.
- The landscape furniture is still used by the Malay community at present, but does not impose any concept to design along with their placement and where the nearest even is a tropical garden concept.
- Malay community nowadays has still not set aside some cultural aspect that is held indirectly although compliant with the various external influences that shape their live today.
- The landscape furniture also has high aesthetic value, and in some cases could provide more than one function at a time for example bollard as a lighting and fence can give the comfort and harmony of the area also alarm from any possibility danger.
- There are many options landscape furniture that can be recommended for both yard landscaping, open spaces and institutions.

## 6. The Strength Of Landscape Furniture For The Conceptual Malay Garden Design Model

The strength of this landscape furniture can be seen clearly when most manuscripts repeatedly expressed the elements or mentioned in various manuscripts. As we all know, to discover the trends of Malay garden models, researchers need data comparison and data recorded in the old manuscripts, this is because the researcher strongly believes that the narrative author or book at one time is closely related to their environmental conditions at the time. It also has a strong excuse, to receive the landscape furniture mentioned in the manuscript, to form the basis development of the Malay garden design model.

However, researchers need to investigate the use, function and origin of landscape furniture in advance, this is because not all of these elements are suitable for the entire region, and researchers should provide an explanation of the functions that appropriate to each landscape furniture mentioned in ancient manuscripts. It is important to ensure that the use of any such material at an appropriate place, and may reflect the atmosphere of the landscape or environment Malay community at one time.

## 7. Conclusion

In general, our society especially the Malays knows most of the landscape furniture mentioned in this paper based on their language, dialects and native land. But how many are aware of its existence in the old manuscripts, which have been used as a basis to historiography and literature to the Malay race. There are many more manuscripts to be explored by researchers in search of types of landscape furniture that have ever existed in the golden era and the fall of the Malays in the olden days. Six manuscripts were reviewed by the researchers in this paper is just a basic research project, but a more comprehensive study and the involvement of more than one profession such as landscape architects, architects, engineers, and historians are able to complete Malay garden design model in the future. Potentials of each landscape furniture should be more highlighted, so that it is easily commercialized and eventually will be a source of income to the Malaysian society as a result of the sale of the landscape furniture, and besides that, it is also expected to increase the number of tourists as well as being an asset and identity of the Malay community.

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