

# Chapter 28

## Preservation Characteristics of Malay Garden: A Catalyst for Sustainable Cultural Landscape in Malaysia

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**Abstract** Understanding of the Malay community in the past was too difficult to understand by the present generation. The easiest example, that be posted to us is whether the Malay Garden really exists, or earlier Malay only be regarded as a foolish people without knowledge. The purpose of this study is to highlight the characteristics of the Malay Garden that will be used as a concept in the development of the garden in Malaysia. The objectives are to introduce the characteristics of the Malay Garden to the public and to promote the concept of the Malay Garden as a catalyst in creating sustainable cultural landscapes in Malaysia by using the old manuscripts of the Malay community and old Malay film and doing a site visit to the traditional Malay house throughout the states of Peninsular Malaysia. Finally, the researchers believe that the Malay Garden really exists, and have interesting features, for us to highlight to the public.

**Keywords** Malay garden • Malay landscape • Malay garden concept • Malay • Cultural landscape

### 28.1 Introduction

The garden does not even have a complete design model if compared to the other garden concept such as Balinese garden, Japanese garden, and English garden. So what are the characteristics of the Malay Garden that researchers would like to highlight? To facilitate the understanding of all, the Malay Garden is not one of the

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popular garden concepts in the field of landscape architecture. The answer lies in the religion and culture of the Malays.

At present, if observed, Malays are a Muslim society. Even so, when referring to the Malay historical records, in ancient times their ancestors are said to have a religion other than Islam. This is because Islam is spread a little bit late to the Malay Archipelago, if to compare with Hinduism and Buddhism.

The Malay community in the past using their strength of culture and religion at the core of the garden development. It can be seen clearly when the influence of the Hindu religion is found in the Malay culture, even the Malay community has long embraced Islam. The Malay culture is basically gentle and well mannered, has high self-esteem, and has been combined with the belief in supernatural beings, medicinal values, and philosophical beauty. An advantage if the concept of the Malay Garden is adopted in landscape development in Malaysia is that the arts and culture of the Malay community will be promoted throughout the world.

### ***Terminologies in the Field of Landscape Architecture***

Before we go further to know what is the Malay Garden, it is better if we have an understanding of some of the terminologies used in the field of landscape architecture. These terminologies are representing all the special features available on the Malay Garden model design. All this terminology refers to the National Landscape Policy (NLP) to match the topic of sustainable cultural landscape [1].

- “Conservation” – Preservation, restoration, reconstruction, rehabilitation, and reconciliation or any of its affiliates. Conservation of a Malay Garden will make it a national treasure.
- “Preservation” – With the aim to preserve, treat, care of (the treatment and maintenance), and salvage something with the aim to stop the damage, decay, or dilapidated condition and provide a safe and solid structure. Preservation of national treasures will be one of the challenges because it requires high technical expertise and a relentless effort.
- “Sustainable” – Ability to maintain a good performance or achievements of all time. Making a sustainable landscape product can be achieved if the concepts used are oriented to the ecological based.
- “Heritage landscape” – A landscape that has a high value in terms of visual, scientific, cultural, and historical, resulting from the effects of previous community activities or occur naturally. Heritage for generations to come can be maintained up to the next generation if the previous community is sensitive to documentation and teaches all knowledge to their heirs.
- “Natural landscape” – A landscape formation occurs from natural processes. Natural landscapes are displayed by highlighting the natural elements that can be a trademark to a place.
- “Country landscape” – Rural landscape or a low-density area. It is usually based on the environment that is influenced by socioeconomic activities and local

culture. Most of the remains of the Malay Garden are currently available in rural areas (traditional house), because the landscape that existed is a legacy of previous generations.

### *The Cultural Landscape*

People are doing various activities on the physical environment to meet their needs. These changes occur not allow the cultural landscape that formed in ancient times has been in existence at this time. As in [2], The World Heritage Committee has identified and adopted three categories of cultural landscape which are:

- “A landscape designed and created intentionally by man”
- An “organically evolved landscape” which may be a “relict (or fossil) landscape” or a “continuing landscape”
- An “associative cultural landscape” which may be valued because of the “religious, artistic, or cultural associations of the natural element”

Reference [3], groups of people alter the landscape in particular ways at different times in different places. Consequently, a distinctive cultural landscape results from three types of differences as follows:

- Differences among groups of people
- Differences in the time period when people undertake activities
- Differences among areas of the Earth’s surface

As in [4], the cultural landscape is fashioned from a natural landscape by a cultural group. Culture is the agent, the natural are the medium, and the cultural landscape is the result.

### *National Landscape Policy*

There are two strategies in the National Landscape Policy which can be used as reference in establishing the Malay Garden in landscape development [1]. The strategies are the following:

- Strategy 4.2 – Identify and develop the landscape of high value in terms of visual or culture.
- Strategy 4.4 – Preserving the landscape that has high heritage value as national assets.

All parties who are involved and engaged in the field of landscape architecture today, such as landscape architect, park managers, and planting nursery operators, need to increase knowledge and skills to face new challenges as well as to advance in the field of landscape architecture in Malaysia today. The new idea is to create an attractive landscape besides introducing local arts and cultural uniqueness.

At present, we have directed at creating a quality living environment and sustainable development for all segments of society in line with Vision 2020. This was seen as a noble effort in line with government requirements to drive the industry of landscape architecture to a higher level and thus to have the ability to promote the beauty of the landscape in Malaysia to other countries. It can provide benefits to consumers and the nation through higher economic returns and contribute in improving the quality of landscape development in the country. All parties involved are urged to be more persistent and constantly work to develop the landscape industry by diversifying and increasing the production of hard landscape elements and introduced local plant species in landscape development in Malaysia.

Implementing agencies involved in the realization of the strategy are the National Landscape Department (JLN), the State Authority (PBN), the Local Authority (PBT), the Department of Town and Country Planning (JPBD), the Ministry of Agriculture and Agro-Based Industry (MOA), the Ministry of Tourism and Culture (KPKM), the Ministry of Rural and Regional Development (KKLWB), and the Department of Agriculture (DOA).

## 28.2 Methods

A Malay Garden concept also requires the same elements as the concepts of the other garden, such as soft landscape elements, hard landscape elements, placement, function, and creative arrangements (design principles). However, in the case of the concept of the Malay Garden at present, it is still not clear if all things are related to design principles. The positive side of this concept is the philosophy of the function and placement of an element that is very clear; it represents the Malay culture in ancient times.

In this study, researchers reviewed seven old Malay manuscripts to get a list of soft landscape elements and hard landscape elements which are listed in each manuscript with their species, functions, and placement. The manuscripts are *Bustan al-Salatin* (The Garden of Kings) [5, 6], *Tale of Abdullah* [7, 8], *Tale of Hang Tuah* [9], *Tale of Inderaputera* [10], *Tale of Merong Mahawangsa* [11], *Sulalatus al-Salatin* (Malay Annals) [12], and *Traditional Malay Medicine* [13]. Refer to Table 28.1 and Table 28.2.

This research also uses Malay films as a medium of information prior Malay ways of life. There are three categories of film used in this research:

- The first category is the Malay film published in early 1956–1972.
- The second category is the old Malay film that portrays life in the palace in the olden days.
- The third is the modern Malay film depicting the old Malay lifestyles.

The researcher strongly believes that every producer and film director will do a little research about the old Malay community before producing a film. By using the old Malay movies, researchers will identify from the using of the ancient prop to

**Table 28.1** 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 Malay archipelago [14]

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 common 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.	Planter	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 Areca nut trunk)
20.	Wakaf	Gazebo

**Table 28.2** List of the most often cited plant species in the old Malay manuscripts [15]

No.	Plants Species		Description
	Local Name (as it seems in the manuscript)	Botanical Name	
1.	Bunga gandasuli/gandasuli	Hedychium coronarium	4 (BaS, TOHT, SaS, TMM)
2.	Kelapa/bunga kelapa/nyior/nyior	Cocos nucifera	5 (BaS, TOA, TOHT, TOI, TOMM)
3.	Bunga delima/bunga delima wanta/delima	Punica granatum	6 (BaS, TOHT, TOI, TOMM, SaS, TMM)
4.	Pinang	Areca catechu	5 (BaS, TOA, TOHT, TOI, TOMM)
5.	Langsat	Lansium domesticum	4 (BaS, TOA, TOHT, TMM)
6.	Anggur	Vitis spp.	4 (BaS, TOA, TOHT, TOI)
7.	Gaharu	Aquilaria malaccensis	4 (BaS, TOA, TOI, TMM)

Legend, 1. Bustan al-Salatin (The Garden of Kings) (bas), 2. Tale of Abdullah (toa), 3. Tale of Hang Tuah (toht), 4. Tale of Inderaputera (toi), 5. Tale of Merong Mahawangsa (tomm), 6. Sulalatus al-Salatin (Malay Annals) (sas), 7. Traditional Malay Medicine (tmm)

**Table 28.3** List of landscape furniture observed by the author from the Malay films [16]

No.	Malay Films	Types of Landscape Furniture (as it appears in the film)	Ampaian (Suspension)	Bangsai / Sulap (Barrn)	Buahan (Tree swing)	Gerbang (Arch)	Guri	Jamban / Tandas (Latrine)	Jamung andang / kandil	Kolam (Pond)	Pagar (Fence)	Pangkin	Pasu (Flower pot)	Pelantar	Perigi (Well)	Perun / perunan (Dump site)	Reban (Hen coop)	Tempayan (Water vessel)	Titi	Wakaf (Carzabo)
1.	Hang Tuah (1956)				x				x	x	x		x							
2.	Pendekar Bujang Lapok (1959)		x			x					x		x		x	x				
3.	Batu Belah Batu Bertangkup (1959)						x	x	x	x	x		x				x	x		x
4.	Nujum Pak Belalang (1959)		x				x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x		x			
5.	Bawang Puteh Bawang Merah (1959)		x	x	x		x	x			x	x			x			x		
6.	Seniman Bujang Lapok (1961)							x			x	x	x		x			x		
7.	Ahmad Albab (1968)						x				x		x					x		
8.	Laksamana Do Re Mi (1972)						x				x							x		
9.	Puteri Gunung Ledang (2004)					x			x		x				x			x		x
10.	Magika (2010)		x		x	x	x		x	x	x		x		x			x	x	
11.	Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa (2011)					x	x		x		x	x		x				x	x	

give a little info about the lifestyle of the Malay community (refer to Table 28.3 and Table 28.4). The other methods are a site visit to the traditional Malay house throughout the states of Peninsular Malaysia.

### 28.3 Result and Discussion

The field of study is the Malay garden design concept, and the subject investigated is the landscape elements which are hard landscape elements and soft landscape elements as well as architectural order as manifested in the selected houses based on their state from the observation and site visit. The design form and architectural order emphasis are in the physical body of the building, the conventions that give the buildings their form, and the compound of the garden itself.

#### *The Strength of Soft Landscape Elements and Hard Landscape Elements for the Concept of Malay Garden Design Model*

Through the observation, there are some differences in the concept of the Malay community garden, in terms of geographical aspects, cultural of societal aspects, and terrain aspects.

**Table 28.4** Among the plant species founded from the Malay films [16]

Plants Species			Malay Films									
			Hang Tuah (1956)	Pendekar Bujang Lapok (1959)	Batu Belah Batu Bertangkup (1959)	Nujum Pak Belalang (1959)	Bawang Putih Bawang Merah (1959)	Seniman Bujang Lapok (1961)	Ahmad Albab (1968)	Laksamana Do Re Mi (1972)	Puteri Gunung Ledang (2004)	Magika (2010)
No.	Local Name	Botanical Name										
1.	Andung merah	<i>Cordyline fruticosa</i> spp.		x		x		x	x			x
2.	Buluh / bunga buluh gading / rebung	<i>Bambusa vulgaris</i>		x	x		x		x	x	x	x
3.	Buluh perindu	<i>Bambusa mogica</i>		x	x		x		x	x		
4.	Kelapa / bunga kelapa / nyiur / nyior	<i>Cocos nucifera</i>	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x
5.	Pinang	<i>Areca catechu</i>	x	x	x	x			x		x	
6.	Sirih	<i>Piper betle</i>	x	x	x		x				x	
7.	Pisang	<i>Musa</i> spp.	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
8.	Nipah	<i>Nypa fruticans</i>	x	x	x	x	x		x		x	x

There are differences in terms of visible geographic distribution zones in Peninsular Malaysia, divided into four, which are the Northern zone (Perlis, Kedah, and Penang), the Middle zone (Perak, Selangor, and Kuala Lumpur), the Southern zone (Negeri Sembilan, Melaka, and Johor), and the Eastern zone (Kelantan, Terengganu, and Pahang). It shows that culture has played an important role in the design and arrangement of a garden and its elements in the Malay community (refer to Figs. 28.1, 28.2, 28.3, and 28.4).

The potentials of the soft landscape elements that can be used to develop the concept of the Malay Garden design model are as follows:

- All the plants mentioned in the manuscripts are composed of tropical plants.
- The plants are still used by the Malay community at the present time, but do not impose any concept in terms of planting design.
- The Malay society strongly believes in the use of certain plants for medicinal purposes, especially the group of herb plant.
- The high aesthetic value of plants (multifunction, e.g., aesthetic purposes, aromatic, and medicines).
- There are many options of plants that can be recommended for yard landscaping, open spaces, and institutions to adopt the Malay Garden concept.

The development of technology and knowledge among the Malay race allows them to constantly maintain all these hard landscape elements which were revealed by their ancestors. From a list of hard landscape elements that is found in old manuscripts, not all of these elements are for decorative or aesthetic purpose only. Most of them are multipurpose used and obviously built for the ascertaining function base for their everyday life activities and its surrounding. This has proved that the Malay community in the past not only chooses the landscape furniture for purely aesthetic purposes, but it has included their functions and use.



**Fig. 28.1** (a, b) Shown are the architectural landscape elements and the concept of the Malay community garden at the Northern zone, Kg. Jalan Bahru, Balik Pulau, Penang (Source: Author, 2013)



**Fig. 28.2** (a, b) Shown are the architectural landscape elements and the concept of the Malay community garden at the Middle zone, Kg. Repoh, Batu Kurau, Perak (Source: Author, 2013)



**Fig. 28.3** (a, b) Shown are the architectural landscape elements and the concept of the Malay community garden at the Southern zone, Kg. Tanjong Penajis, Rembau, Negeri Sembilan (Source: Author, 2013)





**Fig. 28.4** (a, b) Shown are the architectural landscape elements and the concept of the Malay community garden at the Eastern zone, Kg. Berembang, Kuala Lipis, Pahang (Source: Author, 2013)

Beginning with the search for Malay garden landscape character, researchers have found that there are influences in the design of the park in the past and the present. After that, the landscape elements surrounding the house compound of the Malay community have been identified and will be used in the concept of the Malay Garden design model.

Information on the characteristics, influence, elements, and compounds mentioned are taken from old manuscripts, old Malay films, and also observations at the study site. The next phase of research is the investigation process, a process in which researchers look for similar elements found in soft landscape elements and hard landscape elements, which arise from three main references used in this research. As a result of the processes of research conducted, researchers have been able to find function, potential, marketability, and sustainable design which are available in the Malay garden design. In addition, it becomes advantageous to the Malay garden to be promoted to the public. Researchers have gained a good Malay garden design model, and it is the result of the process of research that has been conducted before. Function and arrangement of soft landscape elements and hard landscape elements will be issued to be the guidelines for the construction of Malay garden design model in the future (refer to Fig. 28.5).

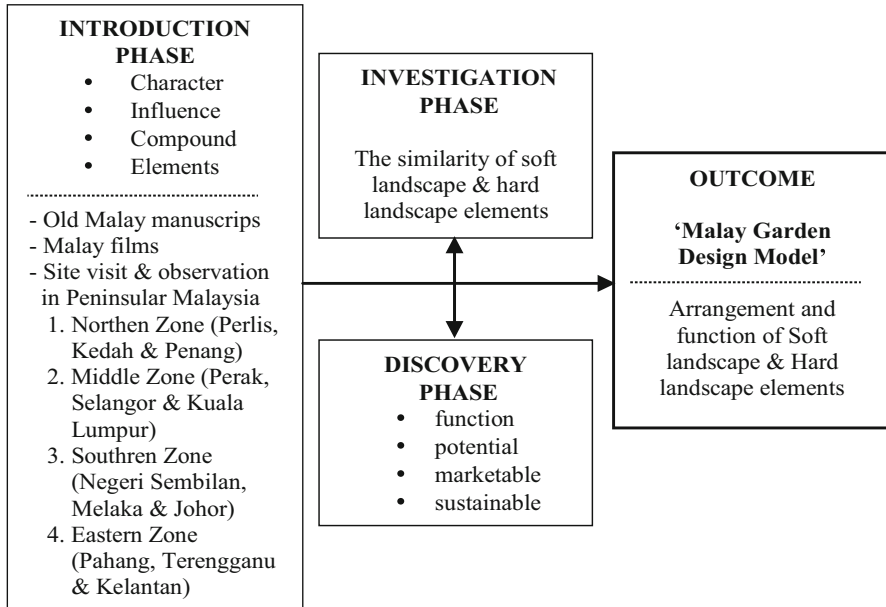


Fig. 28.5 Phase and involvements of the development of Malay garden design model

### 28.4 Conclusion

Tun Seri Lanang who wrote *The Malay Annals* agreed that the Malay language was the regional lingua franca, a language of trade and trades, as also confirmed by the Portuguese Tome Pires through his book *Suma Oriental*. Malay people are a special race, and there are many interesting elements through their creativity, such as *songket* weaving, carving, matting handicrafts, and architecture that may be highlighted to become a model for the design of a Malay Garden. Finally, it will foster the Malay community to be proud of their own race.

The history of Malacca recorded that the Malays are a superior race and are able to create an international maritime trade center known throughout the world. Malay people are very much the philosophies that can be translated in every element of landscape design. However, the main problem is not the philosophy of the Malays and the elements. The main problem of the Malays is that they are too humble and do not even know that there is potential. Potentials of each plant and hard landscape elements 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 plants and landscape furniture. Hence, 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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