

UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

MALAY TRADITIONAL SPATIAL DESIGN FUNCTIONS RELATED TO ITS PORTRAYAL OF CULTURAL IDENTITY AT TOURIST DESTINATIONS IN MALAYSIA

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IDHAM HADI BIN MD NOR

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science.

MALAY TRADITIONAL SPATIAL DESIGN FUNCTIONS RELATED TO ITS PORTRAYAL OF CULTURAL IDENTITY AT TOURIST DESTINATIONS IN MALAYSIA

By

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May 2016

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Tourism has always been one of the major contributors to the economy in Malaysia. One subset of the industry that always been the front runner to promote tourism in Malaysia is culture tourism. Malaysia as a melting pot of ethnicity and culture is rich and diverse with intangible cultural resources that can be tapped and harnessed to further strengthen the growth of the tourism based economy. However not all of these cultural resources have been utilised fully by stakeholders and market players of the industry. One such resource is traditional Malay spatial design and aesthetics. Although many tourism based institutions in Malaysia adapt and adopt the design concepts, yet the degree of utilising the resource is still known by the tourism authorities as inadequate. Thus this study delves into examining these issues in one specific case study using the discipline of scenography. The methodology of the study undertaken is qualitative in nature and the main approach of research is intrinsic case study that has been hybridized to a certain extent with phenomenology and grounded theory methods. This hybridization is not only because the nature of the subject of the study but also due to the cross disciplinary approach to the research between the discipline of tourism, scenography and architecture. Kota Mahsuri has been chosen as the study site and the fieldwork at the site was undertaken within the duration of May 2014 to September 2014. The results have shown that the most common usage of the traditional Malay spatial design and aesthetics mainly revolves around façade visual forms rather than the evocatively 'living' content of the spatial function and its 'dramatic visual imagery'. It is also found that the visual form that is utilised the most would revolve around the roof part section of the institution's buildings. Other building elements or structure that portrays Malay spatial functions and design are used sparingly and is dispersed throughout the facility. Most are used

eclectically to build certain form of space that tries to function according to the intended objective but rather falls short to deliver. Even though there is lack of 'functional' space within the institution still the response and feedback received by the tourists is majoritively positive. The tourists can still relate the cultural aspect of the institution whilst at the same time anticipate and accept the visuality as one of the main factors that moves their visitation. In conclusion of the study, it is proven the notion set by the tourism authorities in Malaysia that traditional Malay spatial design and aesthetics is one of the underutilised resources of tourism. But on the contrary even though it is underutilised the effects on tourism are still prevalent strongly. Thus it also raises questions that would be suitable for further study on the extent of implementation that would in actuality be adequate enough to be acknowledged as adequate. From the conclusion of the results also, few recommendations on improving the institution's capabilities in harnessing the spatial concept was also forwarded.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sains.

HUBUNGKAIT FUNGSI REKABENTUK RUANG MELAYU TRADISIONAL DENGAN GAMBARAN IDENTITI BUDAYA PADA DESTINASI PELANCONG DI MALAYSIA

Oleh

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Pelancongan telah sentiasa menjadi salah satu penyumbang utama kepada ekonomi di Malaysia. Satu subset industri yang sentiasa di barisan hadapan untuk menggalakkan pelancongan di Malaysia ialah pelancongan budaya. Malaysia sebagai tumpuan pelbagai etnik dan budaya yang kaya dan pelbagai dengan sumber budaya tidak ketara yang boleh digunakan dan dimanfaatkan bagi mengukuhkan lagi pertumbuhan ekonomi pelancongan berasaskan. Walau bagaimanapun tidak semua sumber-sumber budaya telah digunakan sepenuhnya oleh pihak-pihak berkepentingan dan peserta pasaran industri. Satu sumber tersebut adalah reka bentuk ruang dan estetika tradisional Melayu. Walaupun banyak institusi berasaskan pelancongan di Malaysia menyesuaikan diri dan menerima pakai konsep reka bentuk ini, namun tahap penggunaan sumber yang telah dikenal pasti oleh pihak berkuasa pelancongan masih tidak mencukupi. Oleh itu kajian ini mengkaji dan mendalami isu-isu ini dalam satu kajian kes menggunakan disiplin sinografi sebagai alatan kajian untuk mendapatkan model yang mengesahkan jawapan yang asas dan panduan untuk perbincangan lanjut tentang perkara tersebut. Metodologi kajian yang dijalankan adalah kualitatif dan pendekatan utama kajian adalah kajian kes intrinsik yang telah di 'hibrid' ke tahap tertentu dengan teori fenomenologi dan kaedah teori 'grounded'. Penghibridan ini bukan sahaja kerana sifat subjek kajian tetapi juga disebabkan oleh pendekatan disiplin kajian 'cross-disciplinary' dalam penyelidikan antara disiplin pelancongan, sinografi dan seni bina. Kota Mahsuri telah dipilih sebagai tapak kajian dan kerja lapangan telah dilaksanakan dalam tempoh Mei 2014 hingga September 2014. Keputusan telah menunjukkan bahawa penggunaan yang paling biasa reka bentuk ruang Melayu tradisional dan estetikanya kebanyakanya berkisar tentang muka tampak bangunan dalam bentuk visual bukannya kandungan

'hidup' fungsi ruang dan 'imej visual dramatik'. Ia juga mendapati bahawa bentuk visual yang paling digunakan akan berkisar di sekitar seksyen bahagian bumbung bangunan institusi. Struktur dan elemen bangunan lain yang menggambarkan rekabentuk ruang Melayu digunakan secara bertaburan di sekitar kawasan institusi ini. Ia digunapakai secara bercampur aduk dengan tujuan untuk mewujudkan suatu ruang yang memiliki fungsi yang tertentu tetapi gagal mencapai objektif yang dikehendaki. Walaupun terdapat kekurangan ruang 'berfungsi' dalam institusi itu, sambutan dan maklum balas yang diterima daripada pelancong adalah positif. Para pelancong masih boleh mengaitkan aspek budaya institusi itu dan pada masa yang sama menjangka dan menerima visualiti sebagai salah satu faktor utama yang menggerakkan keinginan lawatan mereka. Kesimpulannya kajian ini, ia terbukti tanggapan ditetapkan oleh pihak berkuasa pelancongan di Malaysia bahawa reka bentuk tradisional Melayu spatial dan estetika adalah salah satu sumber yang kurang digunakan pelancongan. Akan tetapi walaupun ia tidak digunakan sepenuhnya kesan kepada pelancongan terbukti nyata dan jelas. Oleh itu, ia juga menimbulkan soalan-soalan yang akan sesuai untuk kajian lanjut mengenai sejauh mana pelaksanaan yang akan sebenarnya dianggap dan diterima sebagai memadai dan mencukupi. Dari kesimpulan, keputusan itu, beberapa cadangan untuk meningkatkan keupayaan institusi tersebut dalam memanfaatkan konsep ruang juga dikemukakan.

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Thus let the adventure begins. Thank you all.

I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 25 May 2016 to conduct the final examination of Idham Hadi bin Md Nor on his thesis entitled "Malay Traditional Spatial Design Functions Related to its Portrayal of Cultural Identity at Tourist Destinations in Malaysia" in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Master of Science.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 General Background

Tourism in the last ten years has been seen as a competitive contributor to the national domestic income of Malaysia with RM 60.6 billion worth of income for the year 2012 alone (Tourism Malaysia, 2013). With the marketing slogan "Malaysia Truly Asia", Tourism Malaysia has taken the industry to a commendable performance. Among the many subsets of tourism, cultural tourism has always been the main promotion material for marketing. As such that huge majority of promotion done on tourism for Malaysia would incorporate the nation's cultural diversity at the forefront. As the Malays are the majority citizens of Malaysia, it is seen as a unique standing that Malay culture, tradition and custom is put as a main proponent for cultural tourism.

In any form of tourism, the experience of the tourist is the main foci and when experience is being deliberated in this context the issue of authenticity will come to surface. It is through authenticity that is being experienced by the tourist that the nature of the specific culture could be understood and appreciated. These experiences, whether it is through the senses of sight, sound, taste, touch or feel, would then be an astounding asset to be exploited an thus provide a more dynamic form of economic resource that can be exploited by the country. This has been proven through the research by Aziz and Isa in 2014; and which was further expanded by Noorazlan, Aziz and Isa in 2015.

1.1.1 Malay Culture Dynamism and Tradition Authenticity

Authenticity of the Malay tradition and the dynamism of its culture have been and still is being debated, discussed and deliberated. Most common and academic assumptions will state in general that the Malay culture and tradition contains and blends the influences from other cultures. In this particular view, the Malay culture and tradition has no unique standing and was built upon the amalgamation of other major Asian cultures. This means that the Malay culture and tradition has no true identity and was made by taking what are others' to make it theirs' (Yousof, 2009). That point of view has been circulating for a considerable amount of time that it reaches to a point where questions concerning the true authenticity of the Malay culture and tradition came forth. In order to ascertain the uniqueness and authenticity of the Malay culture and tradition, it has to be dissected to its basic principles of design of the culture and tradition itself. The core principal of its philosophy and thoughts would be able to provide an insight to whether the Malay culture and tradition is unique on its own solid foundation or was it built upon others.

This question on the philosophy and thoughts within the elements of the Malay culture and tradition has always been a constant subject of research. With the extensive branches and aspects of the Malay culture and tradition that exist, it is a wonder that the Malay culture and tradition could be defined clearly. There are many interpretations and understanding of what Malay culture and tradition is and how it should be as at it has been discussed and deliberated over and over again through the years by scholars of their respective fields such as Kling, Abdul Rahim, A. Rashid, Harun, Yousof, Ahmad, Md Nor, Nasuruddin and Abdul Latiff. That is because human nature dictates that every human being will act and react according to the visual and verbal input that has been received from their lifetime of experience from their surrounding environment. The modern living needs have pushed the viability of practice of the Malay culture and tradition into a blur (Harun, 2005; Abu Bakar Ah and Abdul Wahab, 2005; Kahn, 2013; Samsuddin, 2014).

The argument and discussion presented is that no longer is the Malay culture and tradition seen as a practical guide to live out life in modern contemporary times (Mohd Noor, 2005; Yousof, 2009). The issue is that the Malay cultural and traditional reference holds no relevance to the socio-cultural aspects of living what more to the socio-economic side of life. As such, a general assumption has risen that most of the elements of the Malay culture and tradition are either lost, forgotten or fragmented (Faqih Ismail, 2002). What more concerning the thoughts and philosophy behind the whole idea of the Malay culture and tradition. Thus it is difficult to identify the exact nature of the Malay culture and tradition, driving further the general misconception that the Malay culture is non-dynamic in nature and the Malay tradition is non-authentic (Samsuddin, 2009). That is the first question and challenge that sparks the notions for the needs within this research and this is where scenography comes into perspective.

1.1.2 Scenography

Scenography is a branch of study that deals with spatial and visual elements within the performing arts. Whether it is an element that exists in 2-dimensional or 3-dimensional form within the perceived performing space, it is conceived through the process of interpretation and creation of scenography (Sabzali, 2004; Hamzah, 2009). It facilitates and inhibits the relationship and interaction within the specified spatial topography. It is as such that scenography is able to convey specific ideals of interaction through the communication of visual language (Singleton, 2001).

In the ever changing and challenging world, the art and science of scenography is heading towards a transdisciplinary engagement, moving from the more

traditional 'performance stage' into the contemporary 'living life'. With the advent of technological and creative breakthroughs, it is seen that the demand for scenography in spatial design is increasing not only within the 'ideals' of the performing arts but also the ongoing processes of daily life (Musashino, 2013).

Based on contemporary living, scenography is seen as an answer mechanism that can provide a keen perspective to the myriads of problems confronting society with insights from human nature and culture (Musashino, 2013). Furthermore it is implied that not only scenography is able to represent physical and visual aspects of space, it also can merge and fuse the physical and psychological aspects of the human being with the environment. Scenography also be used to decipher and deconstruct the whole creation process back to its fundamental form of thought and philosophy (Kahn, 2013). Thus it is able to provide, as a tool, a platform that can identify an identity portrayed through the 'living space' and its living occupants.

These fundamental forms of thoughts and philosophy would be identified through the means of translating the visual aesthetics and ethics of the Malay culture and traditional based designs. As aesthetics questions the true value of beauty, ethics will determine the range of appropriate conduct within the borders of the culture and tradition references. It is through ethics and aesthetics that the model of reality is constructed based on the Malay culture and tradition. The outlook of the model of reality portrays the base thought and philosophy of the Malay culture and tradition. The relationship between ethics and aesthetics will provide the compass needed to direct the whole idea of interpretation and analysis of a certain culture and tradition. This whole concept of culture and tradition identification is similar and based upon a research by proven by Samsuddin in 2010.

Within these first few parameters of thoughts, this research will delve in the matter of authorship of space defined through the interpretations of the Malay culture and traditional based design and its significant impact and effect as cultural and place identity in cultural tourism.

1.2 Statement of Problems

Even though tourism has been a significant contributor to the economy of Malaysia, the abundant resources available to the market are still underutilized (Ng, 2010). With the direction set by the Government of Malaysia that is trying to promote a further expansion and strengthening of the specific economic sector, certain tourism resources is seen as a potential to be developed further to optimize the benefits that it can contribute to the economy.

One of these resources that are seen as a potential is culture and tradition. Due to the nature of tourism, experiencing a multitude of unique culture is regarded highly by visitors to any destination (Nola and Irzik, 2009; Xie, 2001; Liu and Tee, 2004; Sudipta, Sarat and Babu, 2009). As tourist becomes more sophisticated, the needs to visit cultural sites have seen an exponential rise. These increases have been a current world phenomenon that became a game changer to the economies of many countries and destinations that have prolific cultural heritage (Anderson, Prentice, and Guerin, 1997; Richards, 1996; Glasson, 1994; Phillip, 1993; Sofield and Li, 1998; Janiskee, 1996, Jin Huh, 2002).

As such, Malaysia is not short of its own cultural heritage that can be harnessed to provide the ever growing demand of the tourism industry. Even though it is a melting pot of many different regional and ethnic cultures, the cultures that exist in Malaysia have its own specific and unique identity that makes it different from the rest (Nik Abdul Rahman, 1998; Yatim, 1998; Jaafar, 1998; Sarji, 2004; Ahmad, 2004).

Although the culture and tradition derivatives of other ethnicity has been significantly and clearly been defined in Malaysia, the Malay culture and tradition seemed lacking in its development and exposure (Kahn, 2013; Samsuddin, 2013). This can be seen through the fact that many other ethnic based spatial design and aesthetics have been represented and promoted to incredible extent in Malaysia such as in Jonker Walk and Sarawak Cultural Village. Efforts to not only to promote and enhance but also to conserve these resources has been constant and ongoing (Liu and Tee, 2004).

One of the cultural and traditional aspects that are in focus of this issue is Malay traditional spatial design and aesthetics. While researches concerning the Malay traditional spatial design and aesthetics also have been extensive, especially by renowned researcher such as Abdul Halim Nasir which can trace its research back to the 1970's and Badan Warisan, it is rare to see any tourism development that has the potential to utilize these resources to its fullest. A prime example of its full usage and implementation in the tourism industry can be seen in boutique hospitality based institutions such as in YTL Luxury Resort's chain of resorts and Bon Ton Resort Langkawi.

Even though there are some tourists' destinations that promote Malay traditional spatial design and aesthetics, most will end up not portraying the specific cultural aspect as a whole. Rather it will be an eclectic mix and amalgamation of other influences of cultures and tradition from neighbouring and foreign countries which is undoubtfully very foreign and against the uniqueness of authenticity of local cultures and tradition that is being promoted to the tourists.

This study would delve in this matter of Malay traditional spatial design and aesthetics that is being currently portrayed by tourists' destination and development in Malaysia through the eyes of the scenography discipline. Furthermore, it is hope that this study would provide an insight to much better planning and development concept for tourists' destination in Malaysia that would better utilize the Malay traditional spatial design and aesthetics where it is applicable.

1.3 Objectives of Study

The main objectives for this study are to assess the main elements of traditional spatial design and composition of the Malay traditional spatial design and aesthetics that is commonly used within the tourism industry and the effectiveness of its portrayal of its specific cultural identity of the tourists' destination through the discipline of scenography. Specific objectives of the study are:

- 1. To identify the Malay traditional spatial design that is being used in tourists' destination.
- 2. To analyze the Malay traditional spatial aesthetics in designs that is being utilized by tourists' destination.
- 3. To ascertain the foreign influences to the authenticity of the Malay traditional spatial design in use of the tourists' destination.
- 4. To define the design concept and composition principles of the Malay traditional spatial design from the perspective of scenography for tourism.

1.4 Significance of Study

Currently this is the first study in Malaysia that endeavours on the Malay spatial design and aesthetics in tourism and tourism development. The outcomes of the study may be useful to designers, planners, policy makers, and managers to become more familiar with the concepts of Malay traditional spatial design and aesthetics that can be strategized through planning concepts and physical development to promote and enhance tourism in Malaysia.

The study also would enable a better understanding on the dynamics of an element in the Malay culture and tradition that can be further developed and enhanced as a resource for tourism industry in Malaysia. The results from this study have the potential to provide and empower a solid ground of theoretical

framework for the preservation of the Malay culture and tradition through a visual representation of the model of reality that would be a participatory based project upon the understanding of the Malay spatial design and aesthetics.

1.5 Limitation of Study

The main limitation of the study concerns with the limited variety of development usage of the specific sites and tourists' destination that utilize Malay traditional spatial design and aesthetics. Most of the destinations are limited to institution based development or hospitality based development.

Since there is no specific fully integrated tourism development that has been based on Malay traditional spatial design and aesthetics principle, so the study would be limited to a choice from a selection of museums, historical sites, resorts or hotels.

The study also focus on a site located on specific destination in Malaysia so the results and findings would not be able to portray a general overview of the multitude of Malay traditional spatial design and aesthetics from other parts of the country. Furthermore the inventory for the study conducted would be limited to the time and financial constraint.

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Transcribed Interviews (Primary Respondents):

- Ali bin Jusoh, *Silat Belabat*, Kg. Tok Jembal, Kuala Terengganu (Private Interview, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010)
- Brian Singleton, Theatre and Scenography, Kuala Lumpur (Private Interview, 2001)
- Che Mat Jusoh, *Traditional Malay Performance*, USM, Pulau Pinang. (Private Interview, 2010)
- Duratul Ain Dorothy Jonathan Linggang, Traditional Malay Performance, UiTM, Selangor (Private Interview, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012)
- Faqih Musa bin Faqih Ismail, *Silat Gayang*, Kg Budiman, Kuala Terengganu (Private Interview, 2006, 2007, 2008)
- Harun Iskandar, *Malay Tradition, Custom and Culture*, Kuala Lumpur (Private Interview, 2013, 2014)
- Marzuki Bin Shaari, *Tourism*, Langkawi, Kedah (Private Interview, 2012, 2013, 2014)
- Mazdar Aziz, *Silat Tua Minangkabau*, Laman Marawar, Ulu Beranang, Negeri Sembilan (2009, 2010)
- Mohd. Effindi bin Samsuddin, *Malay Tradition, Custom and Culture*, UM, Kuala Lumpur. (Private Interview, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013)
- Mohd. Zain Ali, *Malay Tradition, Custom and Culture*, Negeri Sembilan (Private Interview, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012)
- Ramzi bin Ramli, *Malay Tradition, Custom and Culture*, UM, Kuala Lumpur (Private Interview, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012)
- Sabzali Musa Kahn, *Scenography and Visual Arts*, UM, Kuala Lumpur (Private Interview, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014)
- Saiful Anuar Sufyan, *Architecture*, Kuala Lumpur (Private Interview, 2008, 2010, 2012)