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THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MALAY CULTURAL HERITAGE CENTER: KAMPUNG KUCHAI, IPOH, PERAK

Ahmad Zamil Zakaria¹, Kartina Alauddin², Muhamad Ferdhaus Sazali³ & Norasikin Hassan⁴

^{1,2,3,4} Department of Built Environment Studies & Technology, Faculty of Architecture, Planning and Surveying
UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA, PERAK BRANCH, MALAYSIA

Abstract

In Ipoh, Perak, there is a place called Kampung Kuchai. It was a dense settlement with the Malay community at one time. The presence of this area reveals that the Malays have lived in Ipoh for a long time. The question is why the Kampung Kuchai area is not developed like other areas. This study was conducted to raise the potential of Kampung Kuchai as a Malay cultural heritage centre. The study aims to improve the identity of the Malay community and demand the importance of preserving the nation's culture. The researchers have chosen Kampung Kuchai as a case study by conducting site observations and interviewing several respondents who know the area. The strength of this area is not only in the development based on the nation's culture but also in implementing the development of goodwill by highlighting the diversity of building architecture, culture, and local way of life. The researchers found that this area has excellent potential to be developed as a Malay Heritage Center because of its strategic location. It has sufficient resources for developing traditional villages and local historical storytelling, a new tourism product in the Ipoh City Council area.

Keywords: Kampung Kuchai Ipoh, Malay Cultural Heritage Center, Malay Garden, Traditional Village, History and Heritage

¹ Senior Lecturer at Universiti Teknologi MARA Perak Branch, Malaysia. Email: zamil2227@uitm.edu.my

INTRODUCTION

Ipoh is a city located in the district of Kinta, Perak Darul Ridzuan. Apart from that, Ipoh, the state capital of Perak, was moved from Taiping in 1937. Kinta district is also known as a tin mining area in Malaya because many mines successfully influenced the development of Ipoh at that time. This relocation occurred because Ipoh was growing in the economy and urban development. According to Ibrahim et al. (2011), Ipoh originated from a Malay and Orang Asli (Sakai) village, and at that time, Ipoh was not yet a tin mining area. In 1988, His Royal Highness Sultan Paduka Seri Sultan of Perak Darul Ridzuan, declared Ipoh as an area upgraded to 'City' status (MBI Town Planning Department, nd). Over the past 100 years, Ipoh was only inhabited by the aboriginal and Malay communities near Sungai Kinta. Among the earliest settlements in Ipoh are Kampung Paloh and Kampung Kuchai. Kampung Kuchai was founded around 1900, and at that time, it was called 'The Wealthy Malay Enclave of Ipoh' (Suara Perak, 2021). Based on the Special Area Plan (RKK), Kampung Kuchai has been placed under Site ZPP (Site B) as a mixed development/multi-use zone with key components such as commercial, housing, and tourism (MBI, 2020). With 10.83 hectares, the current land use is monopolized by vehicle workshop activities. Kampung Kuchai has many old buildings and houses that have the historical value of the 'Pekan Ipoh' opening. Figure 1 shows the current condition of Kampung Kuchai, Ipoh.

Looking at the importance of old buildings and functions, Kampung Kuchai is still rich in historical relics. The preliminary study results found that this area has mosques, Malay dignitaries' houses, and old schools. Therefore, Kampung Kuchai has the potential to be developed as a Malay Heritage Village, which will be equipped with Heritage Trail activities. With that, it can restore the identity and spirit of the village that has long been lost. In addition, it can further accelerate the tourism industry in Ipoh, which is currently primarily monopolized by the 'Old Ipoh Town' area. The most critical issues for the development of Kampung Kuchai involve architecture, sociology, local economy, migration of indigenous people, and land ownership.

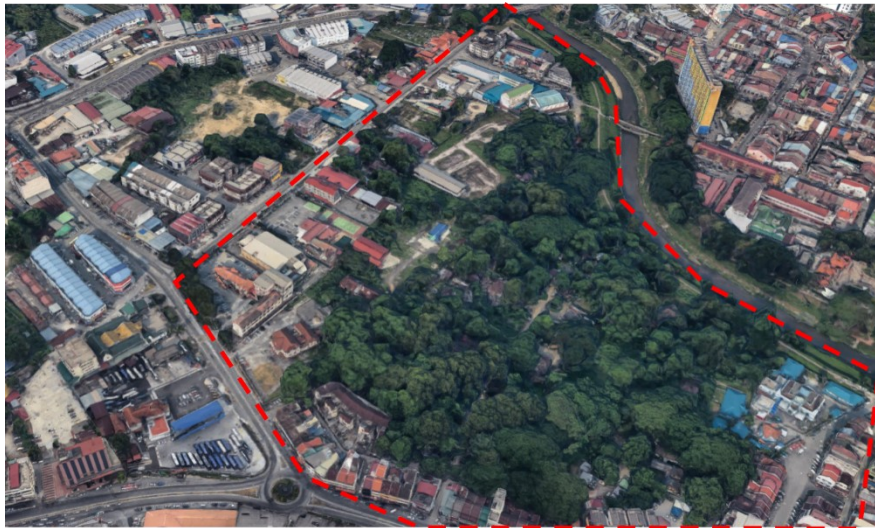


Figure 1: Aerial View of Kampung Kuchai Area, Ipoh, Perak.
Source: Google Maps

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this study, several things are considered essential to help understand the community's way of life in Perak in the past. First, based on the literature review, the researchers found that the culture of the Malay community needs to be emphasized because they opened the town of Ipoh long before modernization took place.

The Concept of Malay Traditional Village

'Kampung' is a Malay term that describes a village or rural settlement in Malaysia (Mohd Hussain et al., 2021). According to Zakaria et al. (2021a), the village is very close to the heart of the Malay community. The primary purpose of strengthening the concept of traditional Malay villages is to introduce the culture of the Malay community in the past to the younger generation today. The main attraction is the concept and atmosphere that does not change like the old Malay village. The need to apply the elements of security, socio-culture, privacy, and attractive landscape will make a settlement area more valuable. Malay traditional villages have been inhabited for more than one hundred (100) years, and the concept of architecture refers to their culture and way of life (Samsudin & Fitry, 2014). This concept will create a 'Sense of Belonging' in the Malay community and better appreciate their history.

The Malay Garden Concept

The Malay Garden Concept is adapting a space or yard for beauty, food, medicine, and socializing. This concept highlights the importance of philosophy, taboos, and traditions to be implemented by the Malay community today (Zakaria et al., 2017). Like other common landscape concepts, this concept also applies hard and soft landscape elements in the layout of courtyards and outdoor spaces of houses or buildings (Md Syed et al., 2019). The softscapes are used for food, medicine, utilities, rituals, and aesthetics. Hardscape is applied for safety, socializing, and doing daily work. From the material point of view of building materials, this concept will need to use local materials (materials used by the previous society; however, the production method can use the latest technology). This concept's peculiarity is that the soft and hard landscape placement layout does not have strict guidelines. It is more tolerant and according to the needs of garden owners but still adapts the concept of the way of life of the Malay community (Zakaria et al., 2021b). Baharum (2019) stated, if referring to the Old Malay manuscripts, the concept of *Taman Istana Melayu* has three (3) main components, namely *Taman Larangan* (Forbidden Garden), *Taman Buruan* (Hunting Park), and *Taman Kerohanian* (Spiritual Garden). Zakaria et al. (2019) also think that *Taman Istana* (Palace Garden) is one of the main branches of the Malay Garden concept. Still, there are two (2) other types of gardens that also contribute to the hierarchy of this concept, namely *Taman Bangsawan* (Nobleman Garden) and *Taman Rakyat* (People Garden). Strongly supported based on the records in the old Malay history discussed by Shellabear (1994), Md Syed et al. (2019), and subsequently, Ismail et al. (2015), who have stated that a park is a place of social negotiation that is a symbol of the identity of the Malay rulers and nobles in the past which is the identity until now.

The Concept of Adaptive Reuse

This concept is defined as the process of changing the function or structure of a historic building to be more contemporary after renovation. According to Mohamed & Alauddin (2016), the adaptive reuse concept is an important strategy to achieve sustainability in ensuring a continuous building life cycle and preventing building destruction. Ahmad (2009) stated that Malaysia has many existing potential buildings. However, most of these buildings are not well preserved, and most are in poor condition and not appreciated for their existence. Based on the arguments and views by Daeng et al. (2014), Malaysia is a country rich in historical buildings that are mostly part of the national heritage but have been neglected for so long. With the application of this concept, a building or area that displays the history and culture of the community will be more valuable from a commercial point of view and a tourist attraction.

The Concept of Heritage Trails

The concept is vital in supporting the development of an area classified as local or national heritage and can be highlighted by emphasizing aspects of education. According to Mat Nayan (2021), the concept always be supported in its existence, the historical, and the city narrative. When planning a heritage trail, one should examine aspects such as visitor experiences that have not been explored in the urban heritage arrangement towards realizing the 'integration of received experiences' when traversing a route (MacLeod, 2016). Heritage trail activities will encourage and educate the community to appreciate, understand, preserve, and collect the local community's traditional art and cultural treasures. It is in line with the elements of tourism and heritage images that are often linked in every aspect. According to Ilias & Mansor (2012), heritage can exist without the presence of tourism. Still, tourism involving origin will not exist without heritage or historical value in a place or area.

The Concept of Marketing Strategy

As everyone knows, marketing strategy is the activities that the manufacturer of a product will carry out to meet the needs and desires of consumers (Stanton, 1984). Marketing activities will be able to increase sales revenue or increase the added value of a new product. According to Rafiq & Ahmed (1995), marketing strategies are seen as very practical to increase the value of a product: the product itself, price, promotion, place, people, process, and physical evidence. By fulfilling all these marketing concepts, it has been seen to strengthen a product further and make it more sustainable in the market. In addition, marketing will be seen as an activity that can convince clients/customers to try or taste the product they want to highlight (Zakaria et al., 2021c).

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted using qualitative methods: on-site observation and selected interviews. This study adapts Non -Probability Sampling (Purposive Sampling) to facilitate data collection. According to Patton (2002), this sampling method is widely used in qualitative studies to obtain accurate and extensive data. Since the study area at this point is very different from the original history of its existence, data from observations, interviews, and secondary data are essential to enable researchers to design study procedures. The observation method was conducted for three (3) days by the researchers focusing on the existing condition of the Site. Apart from that, the researchers have interviewed residents in Kampung Kuchai. The selection criteria for respondents were divided into two (2), namely, someone who was found on the day the Site was conducted and someone who could explain the history of the existence of Kampung Kuchai. After that, the researchers collected secondary data to find out the history and background of the study site.

Figure 1 shows the research procedure that the researchers planned.

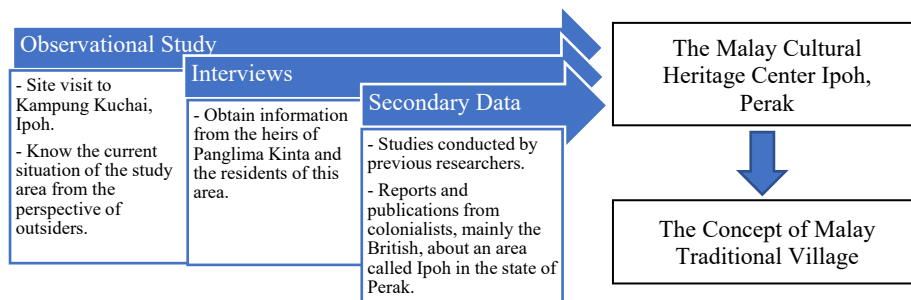


Figure 1: Study Procedure

Intending to form a study that can provide a high impact, the researchers have conducted three (3) stages, as shown in Figure 1. Finally, they will focus on the potential factors to create a concept that the Malay race elements will influence Kampung Kuchai. There are limitations to this study, namely the lack of respondents from the original Malay population and the condition of the Site, which is no longer a permanently inhabited area because it has been abandoned for so long. Currently, this area only has a business sector focusing on vehicle workshops.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

After conducting on-site research, the interview process, and searching for secondary historical data of Pekan Ipoh, the researchers found potential and opportunities for developing this area. From the information obtained, the researchers have divided it into several developmental potentials appropriate to the current situation. Refer to Figure 2, the development potential of Kampung Kuchai as a heritage site.

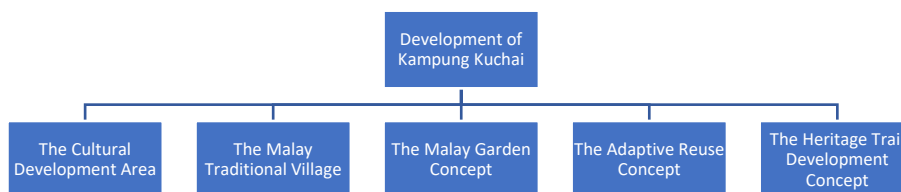


Figure 2: The Potential Development of Kampung Kuchai.

Cultural Development Areas

This potential is based on the history and location of Kampung Kuchai in Pekan Ipoh. It is a place opened by the Malay community hundreds of years ago. History covers all aspects of human society. The area is strategic and close to the Kinta River in location. It supports increasing the value in terms of design and storytelling of the origins of the Malay community in Ipoh. Kampung Kuchai is situated not far from other races' cultural development areas, and these areas have long been known as tourist attractions today. Those areas are Concubine Lane which represents the Chinese community, and Little India, which highlights the cultural activities of the Indian society. As seen in Figure 3, we can create a triangle of cultural development in Pekan Ipoh when the Kampung Kuchai applies or emphasizes the cultural development of the Malay community as a whole. Referring to MBI (2020), a proposal to redevelop the Kampung Kuchai area has been planned involving activities such as the Sungai Kinta Green Network, hotels adapting traditional Malay architecture and commercial spaces. It shows the potential to be developed by adapting the culture of the Malay community.

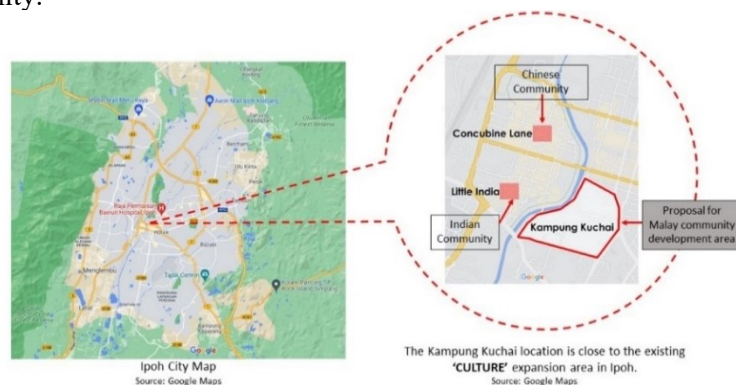


Figure 3: Cultural Development Triangle in Ipoh

Development of Malay Traditional Villages

Creating something with a Malay identity will often be influenced by the Traditional Village concept, and as we know, there is nothing wrong with this concept. However, adapting the idea of a traditional Malay village in the city of Ipoh will probably be a rare thing to think about. Regardless of the population of Ipoh, where the Chinese are the majority, there will be a proposal to create a Malay village, making planning awkward for all aspects of development. However, based on the preservation of Ipoh's history and the potential for tourism products, it is seen as 'strange but proper to be developed. The implementation of this traditional village needs to adapt to the Malay settlement concept, and its development must be in line with the Malay Garden concept. Therefore, it requires an in-depth study of various aspects, especially economics, history, and

culture. Figure 4 shows the idea of a traditional Malay village based on the Malay Garden Model.

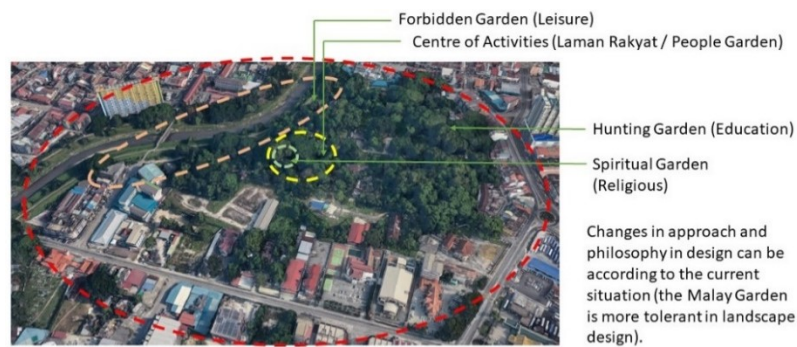


Figure 4: The concept of a traditional Malay village based on the Malay Garden Model
Source: Google Maps

Adaptation of the Malay Garden Concept

As explained earlier, the Malay Garden concept is referred to through writings in old manuscripts. In the case of Kampung Kuchai, the adaptation can be carried out comprehensively from all aspects of the Malay Garden concept, namely the Palace Garden, Nobleman Garden, and People Garden. To implement the Malay Garden concept in Kampung Kuchai, the researchers have considered the wide-scale type of Malay Garden, which is more focused on the type of Palace Garden. However, the current situation will change the approach and philosophy. More importantly, the design philosophy to be featured must be tolerant of land use and environmental issues. Referring to Figure 4, the Forbidden Garden, Hunting Garden, and Spiritual Garden are the highlights of the Palace Garden. Laman Rakyat is an adaptation of People Garden, a concept of gridded courtyard space implemented to place landscape elements in people's homes. The use of soft and hard landscape elements characteristic of the culture and hereditary use of the Malay community aims to highlight the originality of this concept.

Adaptive Reuse Concept

The concept of adaptive reuse is implemented by maximizing existing resources that lead to the activities, design, and environment of a building or area. Most activities that focus on this concept will be in the central location, which can impact the existing buildings and give new functions to all the elements to be highlighted. The old buildings (Malay architecture), culture, heritage, history, community activities, 'trending' activities today, business activities, preservation, and conservation of local areas, highlighting of new images, and implementation of relevant guidelines are examples of succeeding this concept. In this study, the researchers found several significant buildings and the need for layout changes to

increase the development potential of Kampung Kuchai. To highlight this concept by providing suitable space and place for the performing arts and culture of the Perak community. The traditional performance and game activities shown to the visitors will remind us of the original place and its splendour in the past. Styling traditional clothing can recall the atmosphere of the Malay way of life in the past. Showing off the fashion will attract tourists who want to learn more about the local culture. Figure 5 below shows an example of adapting the adaptive reuse method in development. Kampung Kuchai is suitable for being used as a Live Museum that will tell about the history of the early settlement of the Malay community in Ipoh.



Figure 5: Example of adaptive reuse method in Kampung Kuchai.

Adaptation of the Heritage Trail Concept

Kampung Kuchai has the potential to be developed as a Malay Heritage Village, which will be equipped with Heritage Trail activities. With that, it can restore the identity and spirit of the village that has long been lost. Road access systems (wayfinding) are essential in developing heritage trails to enable tourists or visitors to feel comfortable and informed, understand what the heritage is or what to highlight, and provide security. Furthermore, the use of elements for the main space, such as entrances/exits, circulation lanes, and landmarks, must be related to the images of Kampung Kuchai to create a sense of belonging for everyone who passes through it. According to Wan Ali and Ahmad (2021), architectural assets are significant because they depict Ipoh's glories and triumphs over the years; however, some heritage properties facing inappropriate façade modifications have resulted from faulty conservation efforts undertaken by the non-specialist workforce. In addition, historic and abandoned buildings in the area and surroundings of Kampung Kuchai need to be repaired to succeed in the development. The row of shophouses along with Jalan Masjid, Jalan C. M Yusuff,

Jalan Bendahara, Jalan Datoh, and Jalan Treacher Selatan has the potential to be used as a stop-point for the Heritage Trail route. Figure 6 shows the proposed route loop for the Heritage Trail that can be implemented in Kampung Kuchai.

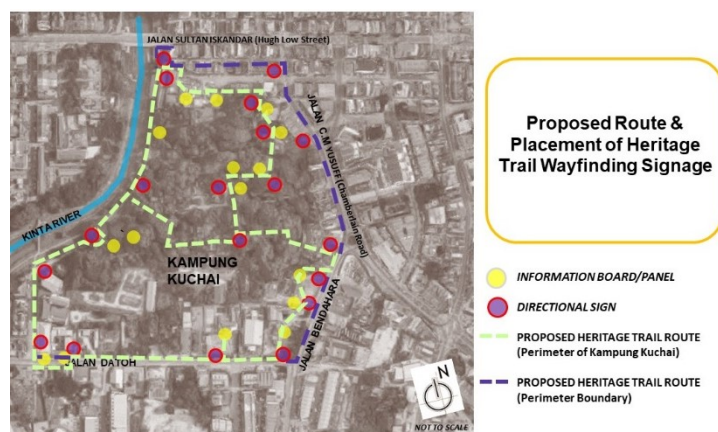


Figure 6: Proposed development of Kampung Kuchai Heritage Trail.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The strength of this area is not only in the development based on the nation's culture but also in implementing the development of goodwill by highlighting the diversity of building architecture, culture, and local way of life. If this project stands out, the tangible heritage (old buildings) can be saved, and the intangible heritage (culture/way of life) will be successfully highlighted to everyone. According to Mason (2002), all heritage values are related to an area's politics. It is part of the race for power and the effort that determines the future fate of a nation's heritage. The study by Harun et al. (2021) argues that traditional settlements are essential cultural land uses and landscape assets in terms of history, customs, culture, and architecture. Kampung Kuchai cannot stand independently because it still expects current land use elements to support it, such as the economic sector and property ownership. The researchers found that this area has excellent potential to be developed as a Malay Cultural Heritage Center because of its strategic location. It has sufficient resources for developing traditional villages and local historical storytelling, a new tourism product in the Ipoh City Council area. As a new development in the Kampung Kuchai, cooperation from the local community is needed because without their participation and sacrifice, the planning cannot succeed. According to Wan Ismail & Shamsuddin (2005), one of the significant challenges in protecting old or heritage buildings is ownership, most of which are privately owned. Potential to introduce Kampung Kuchai to the local and international level in tourism development.

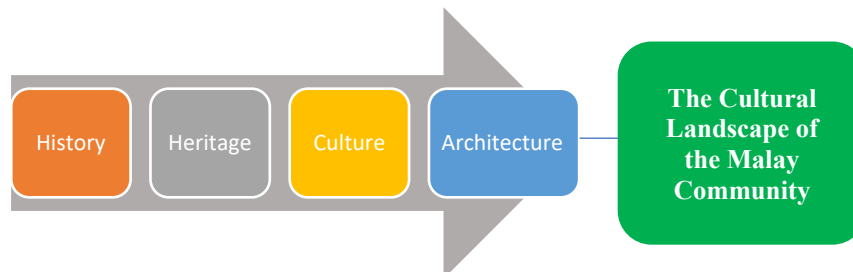


Figure 7: Main Components of Malay Traditional Village Formation.

Figure 7 above shows the main components required for forming a Malay Traditional Village. The history, heritage, culture, and architecture are highlighted as the original face of the Site. The community's cultural landscape will be the main thing presented to the public because it will incorporate all aspects of the life of the Malay community. Let us look back at the theory of effective marketing strategies, namely Product (tourism), Price (economy), promotion (heritage and historical publicity), Place (urban village), People (local community), Process (concept adaptation), and Physical Evidence (known of its existence). As far as we are concerned, the potential development and planning discussed previously can be translated into reality with support from various parties involved.

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