

**A STUDY OF THE KELANTAN MALAY CULTURAL  
LANDSCAPE: RECENT TRENDS AND FUTURE  
PROSPECT**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Due to the scale of recent development and rapid urbanisation in Kelantan, Malaysia, there is a general lack of understanding and appreciation of the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape. This PhD research was undertaken in order to identify the characteristics and identity of the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape. Through this improved understanding, it is hoped to better respect the heritage in contemporary planning and landscape design. The investigation highlights the authentic traditional elements that the inherited landscape can offer to contemporary planners, landscape architects, and municipal administrators in order to preserve the integrity and the beauty of the Kelantan Malay landscape. The search for the Kelantan Malay regional identity is quite a complicated endeavour both because of the diverse causes of change, and the difficulties in obtaining references and documentation about the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape. There is an urgent and imperative task to secure the future of the authentic Kelantan Malay cultural landscape. Basically, Kelantan is being becoming acknowledged as a cradle of Malay cultures since most of the traditional Malay cultures can be found there. Traditional arts and culture are crucial to regional identity and, significantly, their vernacular qualities also play a vital role in creating the beauty of the cultural landscape. They have their own expression in architecture and landscape that could be identified as unique within the Malay Archipelago. The study will also consider the Kelantan traditional Malay house, the village, and the landscape elements of the capital city of Kota Bharu. This research will also look into the influences from other landscape traditions in creating the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape. These include the early stage of Kelantan, during the Hindu-Buddhist era, the philosophy and culture of the Islamic era, Siamese influence, British colonial influence, and the period after Independence in 1957. In addition, this research will look into the approaches that have been used by Kota Bharu Municipal Council in creating the new landscape, especially in the city centre. At the same time the process of creating the regional identity will be considered. Kota Bharu, as an Islamic city, represents a symbolic trademark to the urban development of the Islamic state of Kelantan. It appears that there have been many changes in the cultural landscape of Kelantan, especially in the traditional villages and the city centre, that have gradually been transformed. In an important sense, recent new building and new urban development have transformed the cultural landscape either in a traditional matter or in a

pastiche way. This thesis recognises the importance of incorporating the existing heritage alongside contemporary design. This research also seeks to consider the future prospects for the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape since there are many evolutions currently underway. Optimistically, there will be better landscape practices in the future, as well as further research on the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape.

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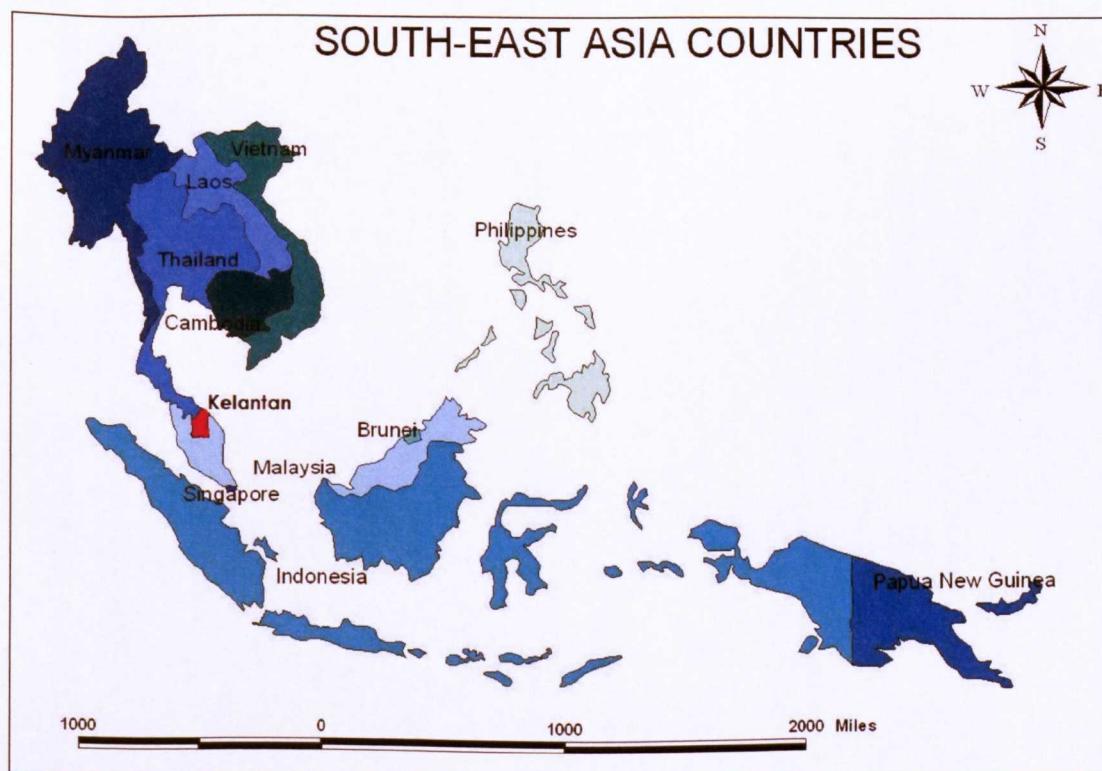
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## **Chapter One : INTRODUCTION**

### **1.0. Introduction**

This thesis is a study of nature of and challenges facing the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape. Kelantan is a state of Malaysia (Figure 1.1) which is renowned for its traditional arts and culture as well as having distinctive traditional vernacular landscape and architecture. Principally, the study focuses on recent trends affecting landscape design and urban planning issues in Kelantan and the future prospects for its cultural landscape. The study concentrates on the Malay community in Kelantan which contributes a variety of arts and cultures to the state of Kelantan and Malaysia in general. This first chapter starts by setting out the importance of research and reasons for study. Subsequently, it is followed by the scope of work and the research questions and objectives. The chapter concludes by presenting an outline of the structure of the thesis.



**Figure 1.1.** Location of Kelantan, Malaysia. (*Source: GIS lab, Geography Department, UPSI*)

### 1.1. The Importance of This Research

Due to the recent development of and rapid urbanisation in Kelantan, there is a need for improved understanding and appreciation of the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape among practitioners and citizens. This thesis seeks to identify the characteristics and identities of the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape, as a basis for informing the planning and design of landscape in the future. The investigation highlights the traditional elements that the former cultural landscape can offer to contemporary planners, landscape architects, and municipal administrators in their endeavours to conserve, in an authentic way, the integrity and the beauty of the Kelantan Malay landscape. The search for a Kelantan Malay regional identity is complex because there have been many recent changes and a lack of documentation about the traditional Kelantan Malay landscape. Currently there are many new landscape developments and new urbanisation schemes that introduce various design concepts to the cultural landscape. There is an urgent and imperative task to ensure that the future of the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape respects its diverse heritage.

The reason for selecting Kelantan as a case study is because of its diverse cultures that continue until the present day. Indeed, Kelantan has been labelled as a cradle of Malay cultures because most of the traditional Malay cultures can be found there. Significantly, these traditional arts and activities also play a vital role in creating the beauty of the cultural landscape. In particular, they impart their own identity on architecture and landscape in a way that produces a singular and characteristic design in the Malay Archipelago. These make Kelantan popular as one of the most important cultural tourism spots in Malaysia. A further reason for this study is the potential conflict that has emerged between Islamic design principles and the vernacular regional identity since the election of the Islamic Party (PAS) in Kelantan in 1990.

As a starting point, this research will look into the various cultural influences that have helped to create the Kelantan ‘vernacular’. This will comprise the early stage of Kelantan, during the Hindu-Buddhist era, the philosophy and culture of the Islamic era, the Siamese

influence, the British colonial phase, and the period after Independence in 1957. Every period has its own characteristics, and these have made the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape so unique and esteemed. The influences can be witnessed throughout the vernacular designs and the motifs that currently still exist.

In addition, this research will look into the approaches that have been used by the Municipal Council of the capital city, Kota Bharu, in new landscape developments, especially in the city centre. Kota Bharu, as an Islamic city, represents a symbolic icon in the urban development of the Islamic state of Kelantan. There have been many changes in the cultural landscape of Kelantan, and the traditional villages and the city centre have gradually transformed day by day. Recent new construction and new urban development have changed the cultural landscape, sometimes in ways that have appeared faithful to the traditional matter, and sometimes in ways that appear ‘pastiche’. The research recognises that the cultural landscape should not simply be preserved, but that ways should be found of utilising the existing together with contemporary design.

This research also intends to distinguish the prospects for the future Kelantan Malay cultural landscape, building upon the multiple historical influences in the evolution of the cultural landscape. Optimistically, there will be some improved landscape practices that reinforce and extend the regional identity of the ‘Kelantan Malay’.

## 1.2. Scope of The Research

The scope of the research comprises an exploration of the current approaches to planning and designing cultural landscape in Kelantan and the influences of traditional styles, materials and activities on design. In this research, cultural landscape refers to the vernacular landscape that has evolved through use by the people whose activities or occupancy shaped that landscape. Through the social or cultural practices of an individual, family or a community, the landscape reflects the physical, biological, and cultural character of those everyday lives. This is a rather more specific view of ‘cultural landscape’ than might be used in geography or fine arts, for example, and looks particularly at the ways in which people

have engaged with their physical setting to produce characteristic settlement forms and public realm.

### 1.3. Research Questions

The research study focuses on three key questions:

- 1.3.1. What have been the influences on the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape?
- 1.3.2. What are the current landscape design approaches in Kelantan, and how sensitive are they to the heritage?
- 1.3.3. What are the future prospects for the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape?

### 1.4. Research Objectives

The first objective of this study is to identify the elements, characteristics, history and influences of the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape. The study will discuss the influences from several eras, namely, the Islamic, Siamese and Western colonial eras.

The second objective of this study will examine cases where recent practices of landscape planning illustrate ways in which the cultural landscape has been incorporated or disregarded. Correspondingly, the current landscape approaches by the municipal council will be analysed in detail.

Finally, the study will contribute constructive ideas for improved practices towards the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape as well as recommend and develop principles and guidelines that can be used in practices which are more respectful towards the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape.

### 1.5. Thesis Structure and Rationale

The thesis centres on Kelantan Malay as an internationally significant cultural landscape that derives much of its importance from the mingling of cultural influences over many

centuries. However, the nature of this cultural landscape resource has not been properly documented, and so the thesis seeks to provide a profile of its key attributes and trends. Further, current approaches towards landscape planning and design in the region are under-developed, which is a serious matter in the light of the strong drivers of change which could lead to the irreversible loss of cultural landscape distinctiveness. The drivers of change are both exogenous (from outside) such as globalisation and Islamisation, and endogenous (from within) such as migration from the villages to the city.

In this regard, the state and municipal government are pursuing a policy of Islamisation which means a conscious alteration of urban imagery and public realm. At the same time, the traditional legacy is highly valued, although its imagery and belief systems are sometimes in conflict with religious orthodoxy. It is also vulnerable to the imposition of international architectural styles. Hence, this thesis responds to a need to document the nature of the resource, and to propose some educational and policy responses.

This thesis includes surveys and interviews that aim to discern whether new changes in the cultural landscape are authentic or inauthentic, or sympathetic or conflictual. It reflects on existing legislation and guidelines and questions whether these should be reinforced.

The thesis is organised into ten chapters and begins with an introduction to the research study. This chapter focuses on the importance of the research and the significance of the study. The chapter also illustrates the scope of the study and the research questions, and provides a concise view about the whole thesis in general.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature, drawing upon several subject areas concerning issues about the cultural landscape in general, and the Kelantan Malay landscape in particular.

Chapter 3 provides the background study of Kelantan, Malaysia and some of the issues concerning Kelantan Malay cultural landscapes.

Chapter 4 sets out the methodology in detail, particularly the mixed methods approach that was used to gather information in the field. The chapter also describes the analysis process used to interpret the data.

Chapter 5 discusses the background to the case study in Kelantan.

Chapter 6 reports the case study findings from the analysis of documents and information provided by the local municipal council.

Chapter 7 presents the analysis and findings of visual observation of selected sites in the case study area.

Chapter 8 presents the analysis and findings from the interviews with key informants in the case study areas.

Chapter 9 provides a discussion of the findings from the preceding analyses and concludes with a summary.

Chapter 10 presents the overall conclusions of the thesis. The chapter ends with some recommendations on better ways of implementing contemporary designs and developments in ways that respect the local traditions. In addition, some suggestions for future research will be made.

## 1.6 Conclusion

The study of the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape is particularly important in view of its distinctive contribution to Malay heritage. This thesis seeks to provide a basis for new approaches to landscape planning that show greater respect for the traditional vernacular landscape. Islamic principles and modernism are important factors that currently impinge on traditional elements, for example, the inclusion of Arabic script and geometric arabesque patterns. Although some of the key influences are external, this is merely the continuation of a

historical trend, and adapting from other landscape approaches can contribute to the evolution and richness of designs in Kelantan. The issue is whether or not they display acceptable degrees of authenticity and sympathy.

This study of the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape addresses two main themes, namely: the lack of an existing account of the elements that contribute to this landscape; and a lack of awareness/action regarding trends that are diminishing this heritage. The study aims to explore the traditional elements in Kelantan Malay cultural landscape that can potentially be used to improve present approaches to the development of landscape and public realm in Kelantan. It is proposed that, although new development should still proceed apace, it should respect the sense of place of Kelantan, its history, built heritage and traditional characteristics. Presently, many cross-cultural influences are manifest in Kelantan especially in Kota Bharu city centre, where there is a varied mixture of traditional, Eastern and Western elements. This research seeks to provide a stepping stone for improved development of the contemporary Kelantan Malay vernacular landscape in the future.

## **Chapter Two : REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### **2.0. Introduction**

This chapter investigates the meanings and issues associated with cultural landscape. The notion of ‘cultural landscape’ has been extensively discussed by human geographers (e.g. Robertson and Richards, 2003), and this chapter does not aim to replicate this complex literature, especially as it is not always pertinent to the practical issues of landscape design. From the perspective of policy and planning, Phillips (2002) considers the cultural landscape to comprise: nature-plus-people, past-plus-present and physical attributes-plus-associative values. This more direct definition has guided the present enquiry. After a brief introduction to cultural landscape issues generally, this chapter reviews three key topics – the specific cultural landscape of the Islamic city, the questions surrounding conservation and continuation of the ‘vernacular’ in landscape design, and the historical stages in the development of the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape.

### **2.1. The Nature of Cultural landscape**

Based on the definitions by UNESCO World Heritage (UNESCO, 2008), cultural landscapes are the combined products of the interaction of people and nature. These have been categorized as ‘defined’, ‘evolved’ and ‘associative’. The first category is the Clearly Defined Landscape, designed and created intentionally by a single person or a group. This embraces garden and parkland landscapes constructed for aesthetic reasons which are often (but not always) associated with religious or other monumental buildings and ensembles. The second category is the organically evolved landscape. This results from an initial social, economic, administrative, and/or religious imperative and has developed its present form by association with and in response to its natural environment. Such landscapes reflect that process of evolution in their form and component features. The evolved landscape may either be continuing to evolve as a living place or the evolutionary process may have ceased so that the landscape is in remnant form. There are two sub-categories which are:

- Relict Landscape or fossil landscape where the evolutionary process came to an end at some time in the past, either abruptly or over a period. Its significant distinguishing features are, however, still visible in material form.
- Continuing Landscape is one which retains an active social role in contemporary society closely associated with the traditional way of life, and which the evolutionary process is still in progress. At the same time it exhibits significant material evidence of its evolution over time.

The third category is defined as the Associative Cultural Landscape which is connected to cultural tradition. The inclusion of such landscapes on the World Heritage list may be justifiable by virtue of, for example, powerful religious associations. The associative cultural landscape is the physical place where intangible aspects of cultural heritage are embodied.

Further, the International Federation of Landscape Architects (IFLA) (n.d.) has looked at the issues and challenges facing landscape architects working on cultural landscapes. These are deemed to be multiple and complex, and include addressing documentation, selecting an appropriate preservation approach and philosophy, and incorporating multiple values, both tangible and intangible.

One of the earliest definitions of the cultural landscape was given by Sauer (1925, page 343), who argued:

*“The cultural landscape is fashioned from a natural landscape by a cultural group. Culture is the agent, the natural area is the medium, and the cultural landscape is the result. Under the influence of a given culture, itself changing through time, the landscape undergoes development, passing through phases and probably reaching ultimately the end of its cycle of development. With the introduction of a different, alien culture, a rejuvenation of the cultural landscape sets in, or a new landscape is superimposed on remnants of the old one”*

Later, Tisher (1979) showed how the term of landscape is commonly accepted in a natural resource context, but that its definition in cultural terms is a far more complex matter that has long been the concern of geographers. McClelland (1991) reinforced the understanding of landscape as a palimpsest, which discloses traces of past events, actions and ideas. As such, landscape is a valuable source of information about culture, past and present, and a reflection of cultural history, as well as being the setting for tomorrow's environment. The cultural landscape is the product of dynamic process of continuity and change driven by natural and cultural forces. Tension between past and future, between change and continuity, between conflicting and competing social and political interests, between tradition and modernism has historically marked the evolution of cultural landscapes. In addition, an understanding of the nature of landscapes requires a variety of approaches for gathering information and a number of non-traditional sources and methods. Specifically, in this thesis, the cultural landscape is focused on urban landscape planning and its design elements as well as the vernacular architecture including the traditional Kelantan Malay house, village and the regional city centre of Kota Bharu.

In addition, Hough (1990) in his book *Out Of Place* stated that landscape is an expression of a place's regional context, especially in the absence of distinguishing architectural styles. Regional identity is based on the limitations of technology, on limited options or choices to effect changes to the environment, or on one's ability to move freely from one place to another. The conscious use of culture in urban regeneration has been an increasing aspect of contemporary planning (Wansborough and Mageean, 2000), and it requires a sound understanding of the local culture so that this can be effectively expressed in land-use planning and economic development. Culture has become a well-known feature of the urban landscape and has a vital role in place-marketing strategies by representing the identity of a city and, through its expression, demonstrating the city's qualities, with the intention of both attracting investment and improving civic pride.

The ideas of Lynch (1960) have been highly influential on contemporary ideas about what confers identity of "place". As is widely known, Lynch related the legibility of a place to five key elements - paths, edges, districts, nodes and landmarks. Latterly, Ouf (2001) has

argued that the idea of Sense of Place (*genius loci*) is crucial in creating a regional identity, and has remarked on the importance of urban conservation to urban designers and city administrators concerned with providing both a historical and an authentic urban identity. The increased role of urban designers and the new understanding about urban heritage in creating a sense of place have brought new professional and theoretical approaches to urban conservation during recent decades. In doing that, the designers need to develop more theoretically informed conceptions of sense of place, authenticity and character (Jiven and Larkham, 2003). The United Kingdom has been a leading example of the ways in which such qualities can be promoted through the use of design guidance, and especially of creating closer links between good planning and good design (Punter, 2010).

Authenticity and character have become critical issues in applied cultural landscape studies, particularly because of the risks of creating false-looking ‘neo-vernacular’ designs as a reaction against anonymous building styles. This issue will be re-visited later, but it is important to note how Relph’s (1976) exploration of the idea of ‘place’ distinguished between authentic and inauthentic responses, where the former comprised “a direct and genuine experience of the entire complex of the identity of places”, and the latter displayed “quite arbitrary social and intellectual fashions... following stereotyped conventions” (p64). Relph identified the spread of ‘placelessness’ due to the casual eradication of distinctive places and the use of standardised landscape approaches that are insensitive to locally significant qualities. The resulting form, despite the good intentions of designers, can be ‘kitsch’.

Whilst the cultural landscape was previously thought of as something quite stable and timeless, recent research has emphasised the role of ‘drivers of change’ (e.g. Rayburn and Schulte, 2009). Land Use Consultants (2009) have identified a wide range of change drivers affecting cultural landscapes, such as natural, technological, economic, social, and deliberate policies. This thesis acknowledges the powerful drivers of change affecting the urban and rural cultural landscapes of Kelantan. In addition to the predictable impacts of globalisation and modernisation on the built form of the region, must be added the distinctive effects of Islamisation as a driver, a critical aspect which has so far received very little attention in the literature. Where religious or political orthodoxies assert their presence through the built

environment, it may involve removing traces of former cultures, introducing new material expressions alongside the old, or ‘appropriating’ (Davies and Robb, 2002) traditional artefacts and spaces that once belonged, for example to folk religions. It is important to understand the presence of these drivers, and the issues they raise for designing and conserving in ways that accommodate new forms without losing the traditional cultural heritage. Moreover, Malaysia is notable for its multiracial nature, and is home to three main ethnic populations, namely, Malay, Chinese and Indian. This cultural ‘melting pot’, with their distinctive traditions and styles, creates a further dimension in understanding the complex nature and significance of landscape changes.

## 2.2. Malaysian Issues in Urban Landscape Planning.

A brief cultural survey of the peninsula in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century showed that the full range of traditional Malay decorative arts was only to be found in Kelantan (Rasdi *et.al*, 2005). Additionally, Rasdi *et.al* (2005, p.4) in their book *Malaysian Architecture: Crisis Within* state that an architectural identity can be defined as one which has what modern authors refer to as a “spirit of times” and postmodern authors refer to as a “spirit of place”. A building is supposed to possess true identity if it responds authentically to the idea of both spirits. The idea of spirit of the times refers to a direct response of the users and builders to the available technology, the structural know-how and the economic consideration of a particular time. The idea of spirit of place is less tangible but invokes the sense of local uniqueness derived from natural and cultural features, and personal associations. The authors conclude that a nationally distinctive architectural identity has failed to emerge and that there is a crisis for both architectural practitioners and educators.

Said (2001) has further shown how rural settlements in Peninsular Malaysia such as villages of Malay and Chinese origins, and plantation settlements of Indians, possess some cultural landscape characteristics. Generally, a village residential environment of the Malays is composed of vernacular timber houses laid in random layout with simple application of site planning. Moreover, Said (2001) commented that in Malaysia, the cultural landscape is widely practised in rural areas but is lacking in the urban residential communities.

Malaysia's historic cities generally portray unique local cultures, important historical sites and outstanding heritage buildings. Kota Bharu is widely regarded as a cultural city for its rich history and the unique local cultures. However, the continual process of adopting western styles and other design concepts has resulted in buildings and landscapes which disregard the environmental and climatic factors of Malaysia and this has led to problems of identity in the development of the cultural fabric.

According to Watson and Bentley (2007) Malaysia is among the countries where fast development trends pose new, challenging questions when it comes to designing contemporary place-identities. Rapidly growing cities like Kuala Lumpur for instance generate strong images through development types associated with the globalised world economy, whilst also raising complex multicultural design issues. Furthermore, they added that the most challenging issue in building the new Malaysian nation has been the need to involve the country's varied socio-cultural groups - each holding strong feelings and perceptions of itself as a unique imagined community, whilst at the same time belonging to a modern nation-state with strong beliefs in an overall Malaysian identity.

Watson and Bentley (2007) then argue that the issue for Malaysian designers is how to work with this complex tapestry of cultural traditions and to understand the origins of particular place-identity ideas. There have been two main historical building sources to consider in contemporary place-identity construction processes: on the one hand traditional rural timber-framed houses, built on stilts with very characteristic roofs; and on the other hand, urban design traditions developed in the major centres such as Kuala Lumpur, Malacca and Georgetown.

In this geographical context, Saleh (1998) has stated that the key to examining the urban form is through its system of arrangement, which evolves from interplay between mutable and immutable forces. These can include politics and security concerns, climate, economics, cultural traditions and religious precepts. These forces provide the foundations of the built environment.

### 2.3. The Concept of the Islamic City

This section considers the specific issue of the Islamic city, as this has become a key driver of the Kelantan Malay landscape since 1990. Petherbridge (1995) stated that Islamic villages, towns and cities rarely conform to the geometric symmetry of urban planning. They are characteristic of cultures who conceive their settlements as images of an ordered cosmos. Islamic settlements are neither fortuitous nor amorphous in their organization, and reveal a consistent underlying order of hierarchical sequences of access and enclosure responding to patterns of social intercourse and allegiance particular to Islamic society. Thus, traditional settlements tend to respect norms rooted in Islamic religious principles, and reflect a social system that requires a balance between segregation in domestic life and participation in the economic and religious life of a community. This creates a hierarchy of spaces within the constructed form of Islamic settlements

Ahmad (2002) stated that the present-day models for training architects in Muslim traditions need to have both a symbiotic relationship with the essence of what architecture has been about in its historical context and a global perspective on architecture as a living phenomenon in the world today. Moreover, the dilemma for the so-called developing world, including the Islamic lands, is that in the name of progress they have been compelled to adopt processes and methodologies without regard to their own historical past, at the point where each has been awakened from the enforced slumber of the past couple of centuries (Ahmad, 2002). Ahmad (2002) further describes how some Islamic cities have copied western practices blindly, out of context, and with no relevance to local conditions.

In most Muslim nations, architectural education is a public activity under the direct control of the state; occasionally it is autonomous or semi-autonomous. Ahmad (2002) considers that this has led to bureaucratic and state interference by non-professionals and unnecessary procedural restrictions and constraints which have prevented institutions from developing a distinct identity, a teaching philosophy, or a personality and image of their own. This reflects a concern that architectural education in Muslim societies has generally remained

influenced by foreign and alien points of view, and consequently a failure to adapt to local culture, socio-economic realities, and even climatic factors in a particular area. Thus, the challenge is to embody various concepts and movements from foreign countries, and at the same time to rediscover the spirit of a distinctive past and historic architecture.

A particular influence on Malaysia's cultural landscape has been that of colonialism. Ozkan (2002) argues that this has imposed a pattern of cohabitation of local population and colonizers; they not only had to live together and share the same environment, but were committed to the yields of the same lands and seas. The only differences lay in their backgrounds and identities, and ultimately their loyalties.

Ozkan (2002) further shows how, with the end of colonialism in the twentieth century, the next wave of influence from the West was modernism, with its new values for living in an industrial society, which not only contrasted with existing traditions, but also distanced itself as much as possible from traditional societies and values, often to the point of denying or suppressing cultural continuity altogether. The dictates of newly developed modes and expressions of Western societies that modernism imposed were not limited to architecture or design, but also affected music, literature, drama, and the plastic arts.

### 2.3.1. Islamic Garden Concept in the Arab World.

Much of landscape development in Kelantan is based on the Islamic garden concept from Arab countries. In regard to Kelantan, it seems that a collection of Islamic garden concepts from other Islamic countries has been adopted and acclimatized to local characteristics. There is a long and very strong tradition of the concept of the Islamic garden through the Arab world, and this has particularly been incorporated into Kelantan through the imposition of the Islamic influences from Arab countries. Basically, the fundamental character of Islamic design is based on the three main sources namely:

1. The Holy Quran, where there are a number of verses dealing with the Islamic concept of heaven,

2. The *hadith*, the traditions, teachings and saying of the Prophet, and
3. The arid geography of much of the area in which Islam developed and gained supremacy.

These sources lead to seven basic considerations in the making of the Islamic garden, namely, diversity, beauty, conservation, context, individualism, multiple-use and moderation.

### 2.3.2. Paradise Garden

Ardalan (2002) stated that the idea of the paradise garden is a visual paradigm of the alchemical process that existed in Islamic cultures, where spirit and matter reached perfect union in a visual model of great potency common to all Muslims.

There is a significant correlation between the concept of the Islamic garden and paradise. In Arabic, the heavenly garden is *jannah*, of which the highest level of garden is *firdaws*, most commonly used in the Holy Quran to describe the garden of paradise. Ruggles (2008) states in his book *Islamic Gardens and Landscapes* that Paradise is envisioned as a garden in Muslim thought, and the Quran gives a fairly detailed description of it. Some of the verses that describe the garden as paradise have been stated in his book (Ruggles, 2008, p. 89):

*"The semblance of Paradise (jannah) promised the pious and devout with streams of water that will not go rank, and rivers of milk whose taste will not undergo a change, and rivers of wine delectable to drinkers, and streams of purified honey, and fruits of every kind in them, and forgiveness from their Lord" (47:15). Other verses describe gardens and springs (44:52), and endless variety of fresh fruit suspended within easy reach (44:55 and 55:54), garments of brocade and silk (44:53), carpets (55:54), and companions with large dark eyes (44:54). One passage describes two gardens with shady boughs traversed by flowing springs, as well as two other gardens with dark green foliage, fruits such as dates and pomegranates, and two gushing fountains (55:46-68)*

### 2.3.3. The Concept of the Ideal Islamic City

Haider (1984) stated that Muslims seek their spiritual energy from the Quran and the example of Prophet Muhammad, the *Sunnah* and their social ideals from the history of early Islam. However, they face their contemporary problems of government, economics, education and environment: as they decide to build their houses, roads, airports, factories and universities they seek their models from the scientifically and technologically advanced West. Haider (1984) has emphasised the elements below as underpinning the ideal Islamic city:

1. *Iman* (Faith) – believe in Islam which is trust in the One and Only God, His Divine Attributes, His Prophets, His Guidance and the Final Judgement.
2. *Shariah* (Law) – can be describing as the revealed law and code of practice based on the Quran and the model of the Holy Prophet.
3. *Khilafat* – the trusteeship, the vicegerency of God given by Him to man. With this comes the unique privilege that distinguishes man as the best of creation (*Ashroff-ul-Makhloqat*)
4. *Khilqat* (Nature) – this is all of God's creations that are subservient to their respective immutable laws and do not, in contrast with man, have any conscious will and choice.
5. *Mushaqqat* (Hard work) – man is created for hardship and perpetual purposeful action. Idleness is the death of his selfhood.
6. *Ummah* – is the expression of unity in Islam community on a social plane. Muslims who uphold the Shariah, based on the Quran and Risalat, all over the world, regardless of race, colour, language and temporal station are part of the Ummah.
7. *Infaq, Zakat, Sadaqah* – this means spending in the way of God from all that has been bestowed upon man.
8. *Adal* (Justice) – to make sure that justice and freedom among the individual and society.

9. *Jihad* (Directed struggle) – requires unity of idea and action and frowns upon either idle thought or unthoughtful action. Every individual is responsible for things that happen around them and they should strive for the establishment of right and the abolition of wrong at every time and in every direction.
10. *Ibadah* (Subservience) and *Taqwa* (Piety) – is the worship to the God and have obligation to perform daily tasks to the God.
11. *Ilm* (Knowledge), *Fikr* (Thought) – to have deeper understanding about the Creation and a firmer belief in its Divine Purpose.
12. *Jamal* (Beauty) – the important in creating a sense of beauty.

#### 2.3.4. Design Principles for the Islamic Environment.

Haider (1984) has suggested that the ideas of Islamic environmental design are based on three main formative values i.e.:

- i. Environmental sensibility which is based on the natural topography, climate, garden and tools.
- ii. Morphological integrity, based on size and scale
- iii. Symbolic clarity, based on tradition, culture and identity

#### 2.3.5. Factors That Influence the Making of an Islamic City.

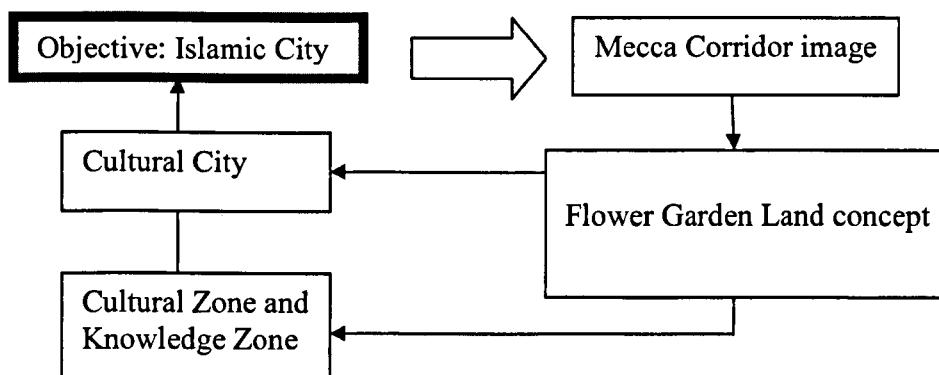
Similarly, Haider (1984) identifies several factors that influence the making of an Islamic city. The most significant ones are:

- i. Political and Islamic law which is concentrated mainly on aspects of family and community matters.
- ii. Climatic factors, especially the need to enable people to dwell in comfortable conditions through urban and building design.
- iii. Introducing the use of local materials in construction which are suited to the regional environment and climate.

- iv. Considering the current economic conditions and people's lifestyle in order to prevent any waste through unnecessary development.
- v. The use of existing technology that can be utilised as continuous improvement.

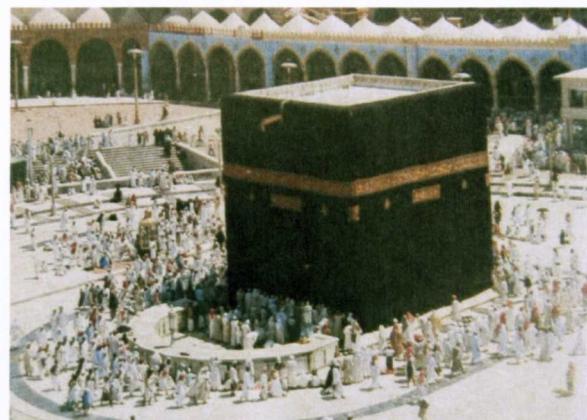
#### 2.4. The Concept of Kota Bharu Islamic City

Fundamentally, Haider's principles have contributed greatly to the development of the Islamic City concept in respect of Kota Bharu. Based on his writing, the Municipal Council of Kota Bharu have defined the Islamic city as a city where spaces promote an interrelationship among humans, environment and God. The objective of the Kota Bharu Master Plan can be described as the diagram below:



**Figure 2.1.** Objectives of the Kota Bharu Islamic City Master Plan (Source: MPKB-BI, 2002, 2006a).

A core element of the Kota Bharu design concept is the Mecca Corridor, which is being implemented in order to create an important setting to learn about Islam, spiritually linking Kelantan and Mecca city of Saudi Arabia. Mecca is known as Islam's holiest city and home for the Kaaba shrine and the largest mosque in the world, Masjid al-Haram. The Kaaba (Figure 2.2) is the place which Muslims turn towards while offering daily prayer. The city is well known for the annual Hajj pilgrimage, being one of the five pillars of Islam. In the 7<sup>th</sup> century, the Islamic prophet Muhammad proclaimed Islam in the city, by now an important trading centre, and the city played an important role in the early history of Islam.



**Figure 2.2.** The Kaaba in Mecca city of Saudi Arabia. (Source: Michell, 1995, p.17)

#### 2.4.1. The Aims of the Islamic City

Based on the Kota Bharu Municipal Council- Islamic City 2006-2015 Master Plan Report (MPKB-BI, 2006a), the criteria that have to be considered in landscape planning are as follows:

1. Spiritual development of the community between humanity and God.
2. Clean Environment as one of the Islamic requirements. The community has to treat the environment as God-created, to be cared for.
3. Social relationship among the community.

Consequently, based on the criteria mentioned earlier the landscape planning of Kota Bharu has to provide the basic needs for the people:

1. Provide more public realm for the community in a way that ensures that integration among the community is based on Islamic rules.
2. Provide more space for economic activities in order to raise the economic status of the community.
3. Encourage people to protect the environment in order to show gratitude for God's creation.

4. Provide more landscape elements as a reflection of the garden in paradise '*al-jannah*' by providing more water elements, gardens, flowers and fruit trees.
5. Provide more religious space to perform prayers for God.

Accordingly, design principles to indicate the Islamic city have been proposed, such as:

1. Every design has to remind people about the almighty God.
2. Every design has a good quality of space.
3. Every design has to work well at the human scale in order to produce feelings of comfort and safety.
4. Garden design should consider the human senses of feeling, smell and sight.
5. Garden space should consider the flow and circulation for people's privacy.

#### **2.4.2. The Basic Concept of Kota Bharu Islamic City**

In order to make sure that the objective of the Islamic city can be realized, the Municipal Council of Kota Bharu has incorporated Islamic values and the traditional identity of the Kelantan Malay into its design principles. Islamic value identities have been described as:

##### **1. Open mosque concept.**

The concept highlighted a mosque as a focal point for various activities such as religious activities, meeting place, knowledge and education activities as well as arts. The mosque has to be easily accessible and welcoming towards people, and the surroundings have to comprise softscape and water elements as the main features. In terms of vegetation, it was suggested that a selection of suitable palms trees is integral. In addition, a pathway should be provided to link the mosque with commercial and surrounding areas.

2. Types of vegetation should not obstruct the public view, in order to prevent any antisocial behaviour.
3. Lighting has to be provided to give more security and to prevent antisocial activities.

4. Iconographic images from the Holy Quran have to be provided to remind people about God.
5. Integration between mosque and recreation areas in order to make it easier for people to perform their religious activities.
6. Maintenance and cleanliness of the mosque when community activities are also present.
7. Promoting family recreation.
8. Implementation of Islamic tourism, namely an Islamic school and Islamic theme park.

#### **2.4.3. The Objective of Kota Bharu Islamic City**

It was stated in the Kota Bharu Municipal Council- Islamic City Action Plan and Design Guidelines Report (MKPB-BI 2006b) that the objectives of the Kota Bharu Islamic City are:

1. To provide a schematic city plan design with the concept of Islamic City of Kota Bharu.
2. To make sure that the architecture and landscape design were based on Islamic City planning.
3. To fulfil a spiritual need in the creation of the physical environment.
4. To offer more user friendly public infrastructures.
5. To provide safe and comfortable traffic circulation and pathways.
6. To provide a conducive environment for locals and visitors.
7. To provide more learning places.
8. To provide design guidelines for the city centre in order to control the development of the city area.
9. To pursue the Islamic City concept in all aspects of physical development.

#### **2.4.4. The Objective of Kota Bharu Cultural City**

Alongside these principles, however, is the rich vernacular culture, sometimes at variance with Islamic concepts, which also needs to be integrated. Indeed, in addition to being

proclaimed as an Islamic City, Kota Bharu is also deemed to be a Cultural City. Since Kelantan still has many traditional arts and cultural practices that remain, it is necessary for the local government to promote the richness of the culture as part of the Kelantan Malay landscape. Thus, it is part of the official planning strategy of Kota Bharu Municipal Council to preserve and retain the Kelantan Malay culture, in a manner that is compatible with the measures for *Developing With Islam*.

Local identities of the Kelantan Malay can be recognised through cultural activities, crafts, traditional games, traditional foods and traditional lifestyles. Some of the traditional games that still persist include *wau*, *rebana ubi*, *wayang kulit*, *dikir barat*, *silat*, *gasing*. These activities need urban and rural spaces in which they can occur. Traditional elements of craft can be incorporated into built structures. In addition, three types of plant which are synonymous with the Kelantan heritage have been declared for use in landscape schemes in Kota Bharu, namely *Tamarindus indica*, *Clitoria ternatea* and *Ixora Sunkist*. In the same way that the palm tree reflects Islamic identity, other plants can have vernacular associations.

## 2.5. Issues of Authenticity and Pastiche.

With regard to the contemporary Islamic city, Ouf (2001) has examined the use of physical elements of new construction in a historical area. He considers that, whilst new buildings do not need to slavishly follow traditional design, they can be ‘authentic’ if they augment the essence of the place. He suggests that ‘authenticity’ is important but this does not always mean copying or preserving historical styles. He describes how recent good practice shows collaboration between archaeologists, planners and urban designers for the sake of creating overall urban experiences that have historical identity. According to Ouf (2001) authenticity is a time-honoured concept that came to the field of urban design from archaeology, which was the guardian of historic authenticity for centuries before urban designers were involved. Authenticity in urban design needs to be dealt with sensitively, as it involves conserving streets, alleys, buildings, social practices and community cultural beliefs that are spread over a large urban area. Achieving authenticity in architecture is relatively straightforward, since

it only covers a small area of one building or a part of a building and is mainly focused on physical architectural details. In contrast, urban designers need to deal liberally with authenticity in large urban areas because of its complexity and near impracticality to achieve. It also must not be confused with the concept of creating a historical illusion (or ‘Disneyfication’, as it is sometimes known in the field of urban design), which bears no direct connection to the history of the area. Authenticity is vital to the honesty of an urban conservation project but there does not need to be false accuracy or unnecessary deference towards all the urban or social details of the urban conservation project.

Ralph (1976) identified the classic components that characterize any place. Thus, not only the static physical setting and its elements, but also the activities and meanings, of a place need to be held in creative tension if its authentic qualities are to be maintained. Ouf (2001) found that the key lesson learned from the Dubai gold market zone is that authenticity is central to urban conservation practices. This required the urban designers to work on augmenting the essence of the local urban heritage through complementary, well designed physical features without losing the authentic physical features. In addition, a good urban design concept in the older city districts might entail the creation of sense of place as an imageable physical setting with a strong meaning, which affords several urban activities. This concept allows enough flexibility to integrate the older city districts into the modern city development plans while being honest in dealing with the authentic physical features of the site. Respect for heritage is essential to urban conservation but should not be kept as its sole objective, as urban designers can always augment the historical identity and activity profile through their insightful ideas.

Jiven & Larkham (2003) also refer to the concept of ‘authenticity’, which they note has previously been common in the fields of heritage, artefacts and museums (Jones, 1990), but is now also becoming applied to conserved urban landscapes (Assi, 2000). They illustrate this with regard to the place-specific form of design guidance, informed by extremely detailed morphological survey that was developed by Stratford-on-Avon District Council (2001). This reflected UK central government guidance, which stated that:

Considerations of design and layout must be informed by the wider context, having regard not just to any immediate neighbouring buildings but the townscape and landscape of the wider locality. The local pattern of streets and spaces, building traditions, materials and ecology should all help to determine the character and identity of a development...(Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, 2000, p.19)

The authors also note the recent influence from the ‘New Urbanism’ paradigm, of which a key belief is that the characteristics - which mean literally the elements that positively contribute to ‘character’ - of successful places can be identified and re-interpreted. The concept of ‘authenticity’ is familiar in the broad field of conservation, although the importance of the survival of original material varies greatly according to context: for example it is highly important in relation to museum curation, but much lower for working machinery (Larkham, 1996, pp.257-264). It is reasonable to assume, therefore, that flexible approaches can be taken towards strict historical accuracy in urban design, whilst still achieving authentic outcomes. This is not a new concept; indeed, it has been the subject of a major international conference (Larsen, 1995).

While, Assi (2000) has specifically examined the issue of authenticity in relation to built-environment conservation, it could also be applied to newly designed environments that borrow their cues from the past. Assi (2000) rightly draws attention to the fact that it is society that places value on authenticity: “to be authentic does not give a value *per se*; rather it should be understood as the condition of an object or a monument in relation to its specific qualities” (2000, pp.60-61). Moreover he added that there is a clear ‘cult of authenticity’, at least in modern Western society. In areas other than the built environment there are considerable parallels in concerns regarding authenticity but considerable differences in its values and conceptions. In art, for example, there is a general consensus over what constitutes ‘fake’, ‘restoration’ and ‘replication’. The intent to deceive is here viewed as a major consideration, more significant than actual deception; this may be more a factor of the perceiver rather than the perpetrator. Indeed, Lowenthal suggests that:

Many fabrications are essentially mental rather than material; the fake inscription or manuscript is simply an adjunct to an intended historical deception. Yet their supposed veracity, sanctitude and uniqueness makes fraudulent physical objects seem essentially repugnant...Although it is now evident that artefacts are as easily altered as chronicles, public faith in their veracity endures: what can be seen and touched cannot lie. Material objects attest to the pasts from which they came because they are tangible and presumably durable. (Lowenthal, 1990, p.21)

To exemplify the problems inherent in art history, and the approaches that have been developed, Jones (1990, pp.28-49) cites the cases of replication, the collector's copy, artists' copies, the persistence of tradition, and deception. All are approaches to the elusive concepts of 'original' and 'fake'.

In addition, Jiven and Larkham (2003) state that items copied by artists as part of their training, particularly in the studio of a master, were not intended to deceive. Indeed, they were accepted as 'genuine', and often marketed by the master as such - an accepted practice in the Renaissance period. They added that copies of original artworks, produced by craftsmen for collectors, became popular from the Classical revival brought about by the aristocratic Grand Tour. Such works were often regarded as works of art in their own right, and only when collections were broken up were some passed off by traders as genuine. Since the same time there has been a demand for mass-produced replicas as souvenirs. Many such objects are not direct copies, and are instead historicist re-interpretations or are clearly cast and moulded using new materials.

## 2.6. Urban Form and Cultural Distinctiveness

The above discussion of authenticity offers clear lessons for the built environment. Relph's (1976) discussion of 'inauthentic' attitudes to place refers to the practice of 'kitsch' design styles (which, since his study, has become commonplace in postmodern planning). The implication is that designers need to develop more theoretically informed conceptions of sense of place, authenticity and character. Hubbard (1994) in his investigation of

professional versus lay tastes in design control comments that many buildings and places are often dismissed as ‘kitsch’ and ‘ephemeral’ by those claiming ‘sophisticated’ architectural taste, and that questions of aesthetics remain integral to development control system. His analysis of design concepts found that planners produced a more complex and detailed terminology than the public with respect to certain construct categories such as style, context and materials. For example many planners adopted a tripartite division between historical revivalist developments, late Modern buildings and the more hybrid post-modern styles. At the same time planners adopted an increasingly sophisticated vocabulary to describe their classifications such as ‘hi-tech’, ‘neo-vernacular’ or ‘post-modern pastiche’ style.

For example, Tiesdell (2002) described New Urbanism as a term applied to a set of ideas that appeared in the USA during the second half of the 1980s and early 1990s which is intended to guide public policy, development practice, urban planning and design at three interrelated scales, namely:

- The Region.
- The Neighbourhood, the District and the Corridor.
- The Block, the Street and the Building.

Somewhat mirroring this, a new generation of residential design guidance and advice in England was emerging, notably:

- Places, Streets and Movement: A Companion Guide to Design Bulletin 32 Residential Roads and Footpaths (DETR, 1998);
- Planning Policy Guidance Note 3: Housing (DETR, 2000);
- By Design: Better Places to Live: A Companion to PPG3 (DLTR/CABE, 2001).

All this design guidance confirms the importance attached to landscape and public realm. Although prescription about architectural style is essentially a discretionary element rather than an essential part of New Urbanism, the architectural idiom is seen as important in giving an image to a place and, in essence, is a reaction to the ‘anywhereness’ and placelessness of much contemporary development. Although encouraging development responsive to the local and regional character, Tiesdell suggested that the notion of ‘architectural idiom’ was given less emphasis in English government guidance than in the New Urbanist literature.

One particular challenge in the Malaysian context is to design in ways that are sensitive to the complex legacy left by different ethnic groups and periods of external cultural influence. There is relatively little literature to draw upon in this regard, though writing in a different Asian context, Sinha & Sharma (2009) note that the majority of heritage sites in India are characterized by structures from different periods in history awkwardly juxtaposed in a layered landscape, the result of many accretions over time to which are added the pressures of present day realities. In addition, they allude to the complication of planning policies, which may use heritage conservation as a tool for social and economic development. Thus, intervention by planners may aim to improve legibility and promote a strong identity guided by the idea that such action can provide a frame within which heritage buildings can be viewed, made accessible, and understood to be part of the larger cultural landscape. Hence, landscape design of the site should be considered as a ‘frame’ that facilitates reading and interpreting historical sites. The authors argue that such an approach does not cut off heritage structures from their surroundings, nor does it result in a theme park that recreates a fantasy world based upon fake reconstructions.

Shadar (2010) draws attention to the important contribution of Critical Regionalism to planning and design. He describes vernacular architecture as the architecture that has been developed by the native residents (even without architects). Critical Regionalism is the ability to create a sense of place in our time, that is, the ability to integrate global architectural and technological developments into elements emanating from the specificity of the local place. In view of this, two definitions are required: global architecture and place. Global architecture contains aesthetic and technical codes that are devoid of borders, local distinctiveness and unique identity. The strength of this architectural trend lies in its ability to create an international language. Its weakness lies in its inherent detachment from the specific location where the structures are built and from society using the architectural environment. Place, by contrast, contains elements that make a locality distinctive and characteristic, usually related to local materials, skills and practices. One useful simplification of the nature of Critical Regionalist Architecture is to see it as moving along a two-pole scale: at one end is the global pole characterized by international and multi-cultural

images and advanced technologies; at the other end is the local pole, predominantly expressed by vernacular architecture.

Critical regionalism emerged in the early 1980s as a means of combining the universal and the local through architectural language and tectonics. Critical regionalism, as defined first by Tzonis & Lefavre and then later elaborated by Frampton (1983, pp.244-246), attempts to “mediate the impact of universal civilization with elements derived indirectly from the peculiarities of a particular place”. Form is of primary interest to critical regionalism and it is the mixing of indigenous and universal formal and construction languages that creates the basis for hybridized identity. In addition, Larco (2010) refers to “glocal” processes, namely, those in which global identities are grounded through localized physical manifestations.

Referring to the layer of culture introduced by colonialism, Schmidt (2005) discusses the indigenous and colonial cultural influences determining the use and creation of urban space. He admits that the need for European habitation in Kumasi, Ghana made new demands of the colonial city, beyond that of a centre for resource extraction and economic exploitation, and brought European cultural determinants to bear on the urban landscape. Moreover, this research provides an historical narrative of the city of Kumasi to show how cultural and intellectual practices informed the use, creation and modification of urban spaces. It remarks that, as noted by King, neighbourhoods designed for occupation by colonial officials were constructed to provide a “culturally familiar and easily recognizable environment which was a formal and visible symbol providing psychological and emotional security in a world of uncertain events” (King, 1976, p.39). This was primarily accomplished by importing contemporary trends in English town planning, such as landscaped parks and various garden city ideals, both of which were popular trends in English planning at the turn of the century. As a justification and source of legitimization, colonial administrators referred to the work of recognized ‘experts’ in the field of ‘tropical’ planning.

Another prominent idea on the challenges of conserving historical cities in the UK, in the light of modernising pressures and new demands has been presented by Pendlebury (2005). This shows that the issues of how to balance planned modernity with the conservation of the

character of the historic city came to the fore in the 1960s. Based on critical reviews of the reconstruction and 1960s government-sponsored conservation plans for two historic cities, Bath and York, it is clear that, for example, this has been a key planning concern in the UK for half a century. However, at the heart of planning for these historic centres is still a debate about ‘the balanced approach’: of reconciling historic character with modern economic and social life. The appropriate balance between these two has evidently shifted over time.

Montgomery (2003), discussing the way in which Cultural Quarters can be devices for urban regeneration, clarifies that authenticity is associated with a clear ‘meaning’, not just visual form or else it will be a mere ‘pastiche’. Moreover, Montgomery (1998) states that place may come to represent memory, meaning and association for individuals, groups and societies who can forge new images for themselves through the activities found in such places. These activities and meanings can be reinforced, it is argued, by selective iconography in the form of new architecture and public art. A cultural quarter which produces no new meaning - in the form of new work, ideas and concepts - is all the more likely to be a pastiche of other places in other times, or perhaps of itself in an earlier life. A good cultural quarter, then, will be authentic, but also innovative and changing.

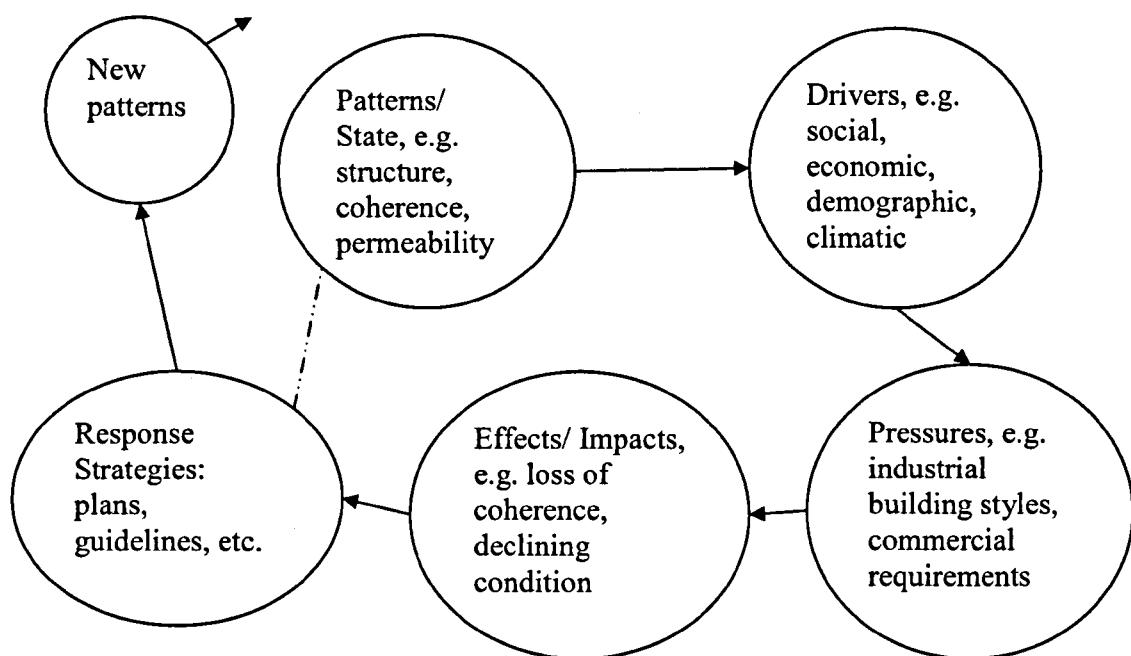
Larco (2010) in his study of Puerto Madero, Buenos Aires addresses the merging of global and local identities through design. He notes that due to the rise of globalization, many municipal governments have developed large areas of their cities specifically to attract global capital and labour. While these areas are designed, in part, for a global audience, the fact that physical development is geographically fixed means it is also often used and given meaning by local residents. Although this mixed condition of global and local influences is often described as confrontational, it is possible to merge these influences to create areas that have a hybridized identity that is both local and global. Global and local influences are made manifest in the redesign and revitalization of this area through formal characteristics, architectural language, social narratives and the design and planning process. The lessons gleaned from the study can be used as a strategic foundation for future design and development in cities facing similar global/local issues around the world. The study provides a guide for understanding this mixing of global and local scales of influence and also acts as

a model for future urban and architectural design that can be applied in cities around the world that are facing similar challenges. Larco (2010) then states that contemporary urban projects can merge and intertwine local and global identities, providing a means through which a range of interests and identities are represented.

Similar to this study, Bosselmann et.al (2010) explore the using of morphological mapping to describe cultural areas in Dadun traditional water village in the Pearl River Delta Region, China. Great pressures on cultural landscapes have helped to create an awareness of the lack of conceptual foundations capable of guiding past and current practices (Whitehand & Gu, 2006). At the national level, land development practices are now being reconsidered in the light of their social and environmental consequences for example a ‘harmonious’ integration of such villages into the newly-developing urban fabric. Through direct observation, selective interviews with villagers, mapping and measurements, an international design team developed proposals demonstrating how social and ecological conditions could be incorporated into the design of Foshan’s new urban centre, producing a transformation that has roots in the village’s essential spatial structure and the functioning of its water system.

## 2.7 Drivers of Change in Cultural Landscapes

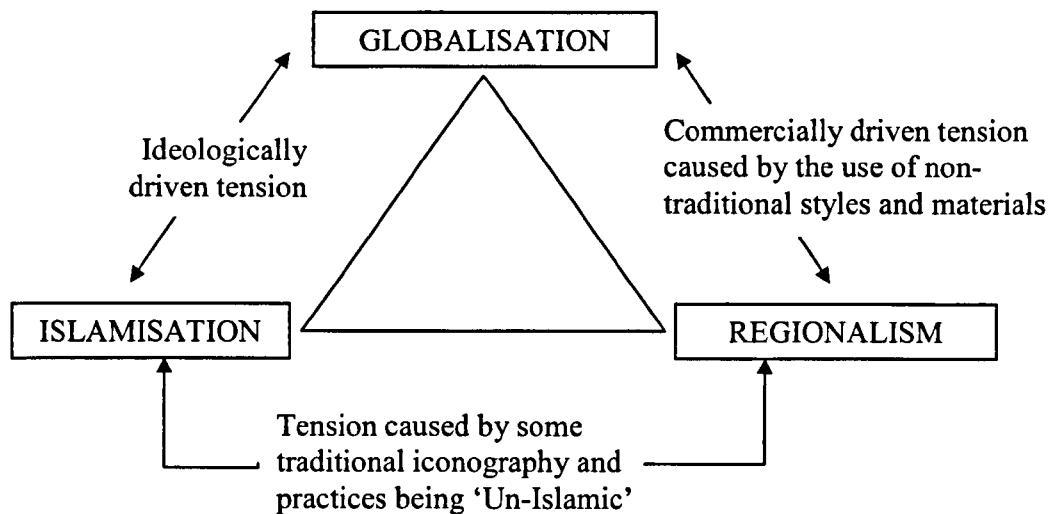
It is clear that the cultural landscape is inherently dynamic rather than static, and is subject to continuous drivers of change (Figure 2.3). The presence of change drivers need not be incompatible with place authenticity provided designers have a sound understanding of the physical distinctiveness, activities and meanings of the locality in question. Drivers can be influenced through a combination of policy, planning, design and management.



**Figure 2.3.** Drivers of change in cultural landscapes (Based on Selman, 2006)

In a modernising city, with the status of regional capital, it would be expected that change would be driven by a range of global and regional/local pressures, and that these would be in tension. Further, in a cultural melting pot such as Kelantan Malay, the baseline pattern or state of the landscape would be complex, so that authenticity would be difficult to ascertain. Superimposed on this situation, however, is a new and pre-eminent driver, albeit one which has historically been a driver of many cultural landscapes – that of religion. The arrival of new expressions of Islam has changed the lifestyles of Kelantan Malay people. Moreover, the state government, under the Islamic Party of Malaysia (PAS), has adopted the slogan of “Developing with Islam”. This has transformed Kelantan to be a more Islamic state than the rest of the regions in Malaysia. Since 1990 until the present, there have been many changes in Kelantan to establish an Islamic way of life and introduce Islamic laws. Some of the issues were quite controversial but, for the purpose of promoting an Islamic law, they have been implemented. Hence, Kelantan has been labelled as a “Mecca Corridor” for its Islamic appearance and Islamic influences on people’s lives.

Referring to the current situation in Kelantan, the drivers of landscape change can be summarised in Figure 2.4.



**Figure 2.4.** Drivers of Cultural Landscape Change in Kelantan.

There are three main issues concerning the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape, namely, globalisation, Islamisation and regionalism. The effect of globalisation is to make places ‘more like everywhere’. In practice, Islamisation is tending to make places more like the Middle East, whilst regionalism is seeking to retain local material and intangible culture. Between globalism and regionalism, there is a commercially driven tension caused by the use of non-traditional styles and materials. For example concrete has been used to replace timber in the construction of new buildings. Between Islamisation and regionalism there is a tension caused by some of the traditional concepts being viewed as heretic, for example folk deities and the portrayal of human images. While, between globalisation and Islamisation there is an ideologically driven tension associated with norms, for example about the separation of men and women, as well as more general pressures to express identity in a non-western manner.

The scale and impact of recent development in Kelantan shows the effect of these change drivers. Many new developments and urban spaces in Kelantan have been adapted from a mixture of traditional and contemporary design. Moreover, design influences from other Islamic countries are becoming widespread. As a result, the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape is being gradually changed day by day, almost imperceptibly. Much of it is

concentrated in Kota Bharu city centre which is the focus for much social activity, trading and administration. Many new commercial buildings as well as government buildings have adopted various design concepts mixed from many sources.

Clearly, Islamisation is among the most significant factors influencing the current development of Kelantan, especially in the public realm and architectural styles. It reflects the state government's aspiration to develop with Islam. This is increasingly widely expressed in patterns and designs that give a strong identity to Kota Bahru as an Islamic City. The most common features include Arabic script and geometric arabesque patterns within new building styles.

## 2.8 Conclusion

In conclusion, there are several issues in Kelantan Malay cultural landscape that need to be addressed. The overarching agenda is for designers to seek ways of developing a new landscape that will respect the authenticity of the host culture. The concern is how to maintain vernacular identity in the face of powerful external drivers. It was found that the drivers are both commercial and cultural, and reflect both widespread processes of globalisation in urban development, and more specific religious influences. The effects of globalisation, Islamisation and regionalism bear upon the making of Islamic city of Kota Bharu, and need to be balanced with approaches that ensure the vernacular Kelantan Malay cultural landscape still remains prominent.

In looking at the definition and concept of cultural landscape according to UNESCO and IFLA, it is clear that Kelantan Malay possesses many qualities of the continuing, associative cultural landscape type. Issues and challenges in such areas are multiple and complex, and include addressing documentation, selecting an appropriate conservation approach and philosophy, and incorporating multiple values, both tangible and intangible.

From the perspective of authenticity and pastiche, it is apparent that new buildings can be authentic if they augment the essence of the place. Likewise, augmenting the essence of the

local urban heritage is necessary through complementary well designed spaces. In addition, a good urban design concept in the older city districts might contribute to the creation of sense of place as an imageable physical setting with a strong meaning, which affords several urban activities. This concept allows enough flexibility to integrate the older city districts into the modern city development plans while being honest in dealing with the authentic physical features of the place.

Ouf (2001) has shed some helpful light on these complex issues. He considered that authenticity in urban design needs to be dealt with sensitively, as it involves conserving streets, alleys, buildings, social practices and community cultural beliefs. Moreover, authenticity is essential to urban conservation but should not be its sole objective. The “authentic” comprises a direct and genuine experience of the entire complex of the identity of places while the “inauthentic” displays quite arbitrary social and intellectual fashions following stereotyped conventions. ‘Placelessness’ has spread due to the casual eradication of distinctive places and the use of standardised landscape approaches that are insensitive to locally significant qualities. The resulting form, despite the good intentions of designers, can be ‘kitsch’. In addition, a building is supposed to possess true identity if it responds authentically to the idea of “spirit of time” and “spirit of place” - new buildings can be authentic if they enhance the essence of place. Such considerations are compounded in Kelantan because of its cross-cultural influences from the local, the East and the West.

McClelland (1991) has also drawn attention to issues of continuity and natural and cultural drivers of change that lead to tension between past and future, change and continuity, conflicting and competing social interests as well as tradition and modernism. Ozkan (2002) has noted the effects of modernist influences from the West after the end of colonialism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Here, Kelantan is facing influences both from the West and from other Islamic countries – not just limited to the architecture, landscape or design, but also affecting other aspects including some of the daily lifestyles. Complementing the built environment is the concept of the Islamic garden. As noted by Ruggles (2008), this emanates from the Arab countries and is based on the principles of the Holy Quran and the *hadith*. Emerging

landscape designs in Kota Bharu are based on the Paradise garden, especially in water feature elements and Islamic monuments.

In responding to these multiple considerations, it is possible that the characteristic elements of a “continuing” cultural landscape can be supported via place-specific forms of design guidance. Thus, considerations of design and layout must be informed by the wider context, having regard not just to any immediate neighbouring buildings but to the townscape and landscape of the wider locality. For example, the local pattern of streets and spaces, building traditions, materials and ecology should all help to determine the character and identity of a development. The classic three main components characterizing any place are the static physical setting, activities and meanings. These components offer a basis for the exploration of prospects for the evolution of a distinctive future landscape in Kelantan Malay.

## **Chapter Three : BACKGROUND OF KELANTAN, MALAYSIA**

### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter will discuss the background of Kelantan, Malaysia in terms of historical, geographical, economic, social and political influences. Subsequently, this chapter will look into the current issues concerning landscape and public realm in Kelantan.

### **3.1 Background of Kelantan**

Kelantan is one of the fourteen states of Malaysia, and is situated on the northeast of Peninsular Malaysia facing the South China Sea and bordered by Thailand to the north. Kota Bharu is the state capital and has become the central point for Kelantan's administration and business activities. It is drained by the Kelantan River which is very close to the Kota Bharu area. As a border state and former vassal state of Thailand, Kelantan has absorbed many influences from Thai customs and traditions that help to make the state's culture distinct from those of other states of Malaysia. Kelantan is synonymous with Malay arts and crafts and has become a popular centre for a variety of traditional arts and cultural activities of Kelantan Malay. About 95% of Kelantan's population is Malay ethnic, and under the Malaysian Constitution, all Malays are Muslims; therefore, Islam a strong cultural influence over the state.

Nasir (1979) in his book "Guide to Historical Sites of Kelantan" states that very few of the events after the pre-historical age are to be found either in books or in the form of unwritten folktales. This makes it difficult to gain an understanding of the historical events that have shaped the heritage and cultural landscape of the state. From the various historical sources collected, it was found that Kelantan is one of the oldest states in Peninsular Malaysia. Following the pre-historical era, it appears that the land was under Hindu-Buddhist influence, but doubts have been cast on this view due to lack of traceable evidence. It was claimed that, as a civilised state a Kingdom known as the Sri Vijaya Kingdom existed in the year 5 A.D., before Palembang became the centre of the Sri Vijaya Kingdom.



**Figure 3.1.** Illustration shows Kota Bharu as a busy port with traders along the Kelantan riverbank during 15<sup>th</sup> century. *Source:* Museum of Kelantan.

Kelantan was ruled by Sri Vijaya until the 13<sup>th</sup> century before it fell under the sway of Malacca in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. After the fall of Malacca (1511), conflict among many powers resulted eventually in the establishment by Siam of sovereignty over the area in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Kelantan then became a protectorate of Great Britain in 1909. By the 20<sup>th</sup> century Great Britain had established protectorates throughout the Peninsula, which later formed the Union (1946) and then the Federation (1948) of Malaya before total independence in 1957.

Additionally, the Sultan of Kelantan is the Constitutional Ruler of his State. The role, duties and powers of the Sultan are as laid out in the State's constitution and other state laws. The Constitution proclaims that the executive power of the state is vested in the sultan, that he is the Head of the Religion of Islam in the state and that he is the source of all honours and dignities in the state. In this case, the Sultan and royal family play a vital role to the state government and to the local people.

Kelantan has been governed by the Islamic Party of Malaysia (PAS) from 1990 to the present. On 1 October 2005, Kota Bharu was declared by the state government as an Islamic City, so that the city now observes Islamic principles in every aspect of daily life. One of the most visible Islamic iconographies is the prevalence of *Jawi* script which is a modified form of Arabic script used for writing the Malay language in the names of streets, shops,

signboards and billboards. A unique feature as compared to other states in Malaysia is that even the signboards of the local Chinese premises bear the *Jawi* script besides the Chinese character and the compulsory Roman script. Social activities that do not contradict with the Islamic norm are permitted. Presently, the state government is actively promoting some Islamic laws. For instance, there are separate check-out counters in supermarkets for males and females as well as different shelters at the public areas. Additionally, new buildings in the city centre must be decorated with the arabesque pattern especially on the walls and facades. Furthermore, all the animal statues around the city centre have been replaced with the replica of holy *Quran* symbol, along with other Islamic decorations such as calligraphy, geometric patterns, floral patterns and arabesque. One of the most controversial steps PAS has taken in Kelantan is to place tough restrictions or outright bans on the traditional performance of syncretism, notably Malay theatrical forms, such as the shadow play known as *Wayang Kulit*, traditional Malay theatre known as *Makyong*, and traditional performances of *Dikir Barat* and *Main Puteri*. Modified versions without the traditional references to Hindu and spirits or ghosts are, however, tolerated in certain cases. Apart from that, PAS also banned public performances by women if any men are in the audience. PAS has insisted that these steps were essential to promote Islam and put an end to immoral behaviour among the Muslim population, even though many consider them to be at variance with Federal Government's laws which are more tolerant, as well as a major loss to Malay traditional arts.

On the other hand, in recent years, tourism has become an important factor in the state economy. A number of reputable hotels have been established and more modern shopping malls have been opened to cater for the urban population and new lifestyle among the locals. Many mega projects were built in the city centre area including the development of the new township and business centre of Lembah Sireh along the Kelantan Riverbank and the development of Kota Bharu Trade Centre. Under PAS government, the environment and the cultural landscape of Kelantan, especially in Kota Bharu, have markedly changed based on their own perspective of creating a genuine Islamic city. Most of the developments were inspired from other Muslim countries especially from the Middle East. Consequently, Kelantan is very famous as a Mecca corridor because of its appearance. Apart from being

well known as the cradle of Malay culture, Kelantan has now become notable as an icon of the Islamic city in Malaysia too.

### 3.2 The Concept of Islamic City and Flower Garden Land

In essence, the urban design of the city is based on the state government slogan, *Developing with Islam*. The aim was to create a city which could be related to an Islamic identity. The basis of the Kota Bharu Islamic city was to build an environment that consists of three major connections, namely, human with God, human with human, and human with nature. In conjunction with this, the Kota Bharu Municipal Council has undertaken strategic landscape planning by using a combination of the Islamic values and the regional identities of Kelantan. They have considered the essential needs for the community and the cleanliness of the environment as the foundations to meaningful development. Based on the Kota Bharu landscape master plan report, it was suggested that some green and open spaces will be provided for the community. At the same time, the economic spaces at the city centre will be upgraded to give greater variety to people. The government has exhorted people to respect the nature and environment to have a better understanding of God. They have also provided a landscape area that reflects the concept of a garden in heaven. It was common in Kota Bharu to relate the concept of heaven garden through the use of water elements, flower trees, and the use of Arabic letters and calligraphy in the design. Consequently, they have provided more religious spaces and buildings for the community especially for the Muslim community.

Furthermore, the Kota Bharu Municipal Council has created a set of Islamic design principles and guidelines to make sure that every landscape planning proposal suits the Islamic fundamental values. They have stated that every design concept should relate to almighty God, and schemes should have a quality of space that provides for comfortable design and ergonomic aspects. Garden design has to stimulate the human senses so as to ensure the full use of and engagement with the spaces. In addition, privacy within spaces for different genders and ages needs to be created.

In general, the concept of the Islamic city was based on the mosque as the focal point and a centre for the main activities. The mosque was used as a religious place, gathering area, and for education and learning purposes. Further, the use of water elements, such as fountains and cascades, were very important in the Islamic landscape, and selections of palm trees commonly represented Islamic identity. Landscape schemes include a walkway to link the mosque to the business area and the surrounding areas. Meanwhile the selection of plants should be from species that will not obscure views so as not to create cover for crime and incivility. It was suggested that the use of good lighting with proper signboards was important to educate people about Islam as the way of life together with Quranic quotations. Alongside this, the regional identities of Kelantan have coalesced through their cultures, crafts, traditional games, local foods and their lifestyles.

In order to realize the local identity and regional style, Kelantan vernacular architecture and craftsmanship have been applied widely in relation to the hardscapes and streetscapes. The use of timber as part of the structure of the new buildings has made them more compatible with traditional architecture. These can be seen through the pillar, floor, wall and decoration of buildings. The principles of Islam can be witnessed through the use of floral elements, geometrical designs and calligraphy especially applied to wood craft, textiles, ceramics and interior design. These are utilised not only because of their aesthetical and design value, but also because they are functional.

In terms of softscape, plant selection has been based on the concept of the Flower Garden Land (*Kota Serendah Sekebun Bunga*) which was synonymous with the 15<sup>th</sup> century royal garden of Kelantan, during the time when it was recorded that Sultan Iskandar was the ruler for the Kota Serendah Sekebun Bunga. Whilst there are no specific documents that describe what the city looked like, assumptions have been based on the traditional Malay garden, and have drawn from fragrant plants, herbs, shrubs, fruit trees, palms and bamboo. Some of the main species involved were *Mimusops elengi* (local name: *Tanjung*), *Tamarandus indica* (local name: *Asam jawa*) and *Ixora Sunkist* (local name: *Siantan*) which were declared as formal plants for Kota Bharu. Some of the common herbs that often been used in Malay gardens were *Piper macrophyllum* (local name: *Sireh*), *Emyopogon nardus* (local name:

*Serai wanggi*), *Pandanus sp* (local name: *Pandan*) and *Nicolaia elatior* (local name: *Kantan*). A varied selection of palms trees have been used, for instance *Veitchia merrillii* (local name: *Palma manila*), *Roystonea regia* (local name: *Palma raja*), *Phoenix roebelini* (local name: *Kurma rubelini*), *Normanbya normanbyi* (local name: *Normanbia*), *Livistona chinensis* (local name: *Serdang cina*).

Naturally, the concept of Flower Garden Land was applied only to the softscape. The combination of the Islamic images and traditional elements in the hardscape, as well as the use of local plants, has resulted in a landscape in urban Kelantan that now varies significantly from other states in Malaysia.

### 3.3 Kelantan Malay village

The Malay village in Peninsular Malaysia is known as *kampung* which is made up of many traditional timber houses. Most of the typical Malay kampung in Peninsular Malaysia share the same layout design but differ in the traditional house styles. Kampungs are seen all over rural Malaysia and are usually sited near the source of the villagers' livelihood. For example, fishing villages are found close to the sea while inland villages are usually located near paddy fields or smallholdings of rubber trees or oil palm. In Kelantan, Malay villages are easily found just away from the capital city of Kota Bharu and scattered everywhere in all the districts of Kelantan. Fee (1998) stated that most of the kampung comprises several Malay houses and their compounds. The houses are usually organized in family clusters, each house being occupied by a family and each cluster belonging to related families. Every house has a compound which is demarcated by trees, usually coconut or fruit trees, at the corners of the compound. There are no physical boundaries, such as fences, in a Malay kampung, so the concept of trespassing on someone else's property is alien. The openness of the kampung and the impression that all external spaces are communal is enhanced by a network of paths leading from house to house and from the house to the various public buildings. Life in a kampung focuses not only on the individual household but also on the community. The public buildings in a village comprise the mosque or *surau* (prayer house),

*kubur* (cemetery), school and shop, which are regarded as communal rather than formal places.

Further, Fee (1998) described how a kampung does not develop according to a plan. Instead, the sites of houses are usually selected according to traditional beliefs. House-building rituals are important in Malay society, for the Malays believe that the spirit of site must be appeased in order that the house is peaceful and the well-being of the occupants assured. Unlike in modern housing estates where the infrastructure and services determine the siting of houses, in the kampung electricity and water supplies, drainage systems and telephone lines are installed only after the kampung has developed into a substantial settlement. An access road leading into kampung might also then be built by the local authorities.

Meanwhile, in remote rural areas where piped water is not available, wells, rivers, streams and springs in the foothills are the common means of water supply. Wells and rivers provide not only water resources, but also act as focal points for villagers to meet socially. Children bathe and play in the shallow streams, womenfolk gather to collect water for their household chores, to bathe and to do their washing, and men do fishing in the river. Nowadays, this scene has widely changed, as more and more houses have their own water supply especially wells and piped water for a better and easier way of living.

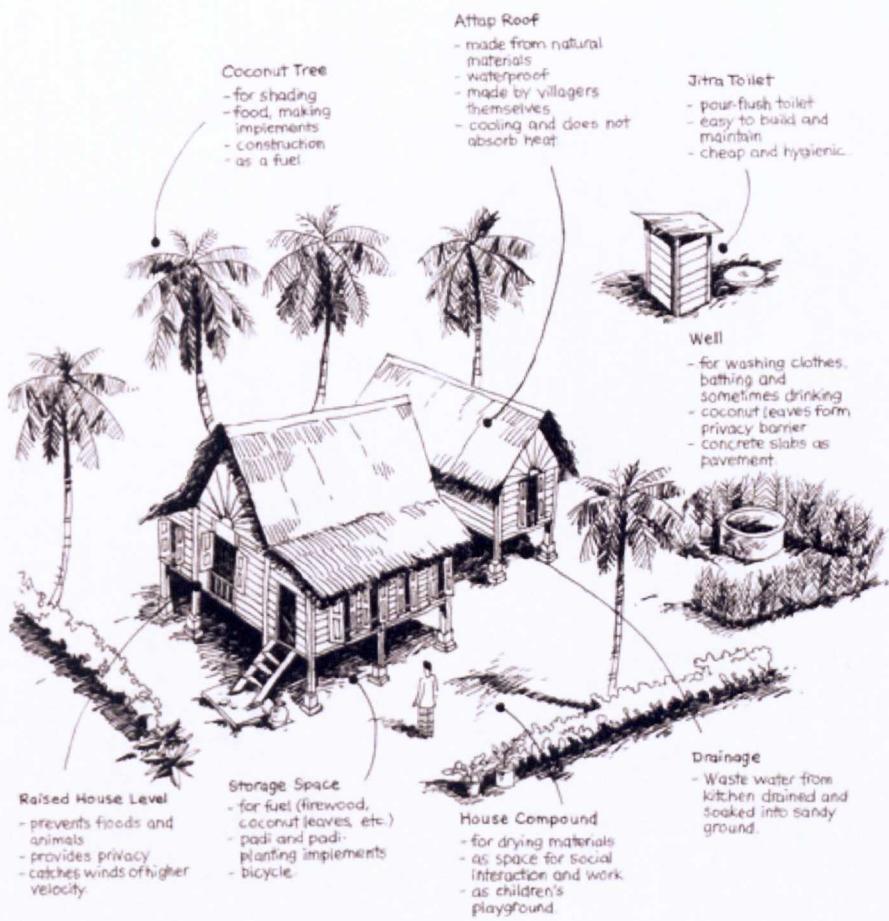
Fee (1998) further discussed that the comparatively random layout of a Malay kampung and the lack of physical barriers gives the kampung an informal and open atmosphere which is conducive to communal activities. These include such activities as *takbir* (visiting neighbours on Eid celebration) and *gotong-royong* (sharing work with others in community). In the kampung, no household exists as an isolated unit. For example during special occasions such as weddings, houses will become communal affairs with the whole village joining in to prepare food and celebrate the occasion. If one of the villagers passes away, everyone will come to help in the burial process and perform *tahlil* (reciting of Quran verses of remembrance of God).

Fee (1998) further disclosed that the concepts of sharing and cooperation are fundamental to the Malay culture and to the traditional Malay lifestyle, as well as the general preference for community intimacy over personal privacy, and these are partially encouraged by the design of the Malay house. Its wide, open *serambi* (veranda), large windows, minimal partitions and open spaces below the house foster neighbourliness and satisfy the communal needs of the residents.

### 3.4 Kelantan Malay house

The traditional Malay houses are located within the peninsula of Malaysia and form the local indigenous vernacular architecture from the pre-colonial era. The houses provided a glimpse of the life of the Malays in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and represent the local cultural heritage. The houses were built by master carpenters and builders. Due to wooden materials used in the construction of these houses, many are no longer usable and some have been left unattended. In Kelantan, most of the Malay traditional houses can be found in the rural areas. Traditional Malay architecture employs relatively sophisticated architectural processes ideally suited to the tropical conditions such as wide roof overhangs and high-pitched roofs.

Fee (1998) stated that the Malay house styles, particularly the design of the roof, vary from state to state in Peninsular Malaysia but the basic house form and construction methods are similar. In the tradition of vernacular houses, the Malay house is not professionally designed but has evolved over a period of time using readily available local materials, which suited the local climatic and environmental conditions. The design of the house has also been dictated by the social mores of the Malays, such as the provision of a private space for the womenfolk and the public space for the entertaining of male guests, because the Malay house is always considered a unit of a larger community in the village.



**Figure 3.2.** External environment of typical Malay traditional house.

Source: Lim Jee Yuan. (1997) The Malay House. Pulau Pinang: Institut Masyarakat.



**Figure 3.3.** Kelantan Malay traditional house. Source: photo by the author.

According to Lim (1997 cited in Watson & Bentley, 2007 p. 183) the indigenous Malay house is one of the richest components of Malaysia's cultural heritage, designed and built by ordinary villagers themselves, and manifesting the creative and aesthetic skills of the Malays. Fee (1998) showed that the traditional Malay house not only reflects the creative and aesthetic skills of the Malays, but also meets their socioeconomic, cultural and environmental needs. He further stated that the house is normally set in a compound with a small, open space in front skirted by plants, a variety of fruit trees planted around the sides and a well at the back for drawing water for drinking, bathing and washing. The house is distinguished by its roof form, raised floor construction, flexible addition of spaces and the materials from which it is built. The basic design of the Malay house and its construction methods give it great flexibility so that extensions to the house can be carried out whenever necessary.

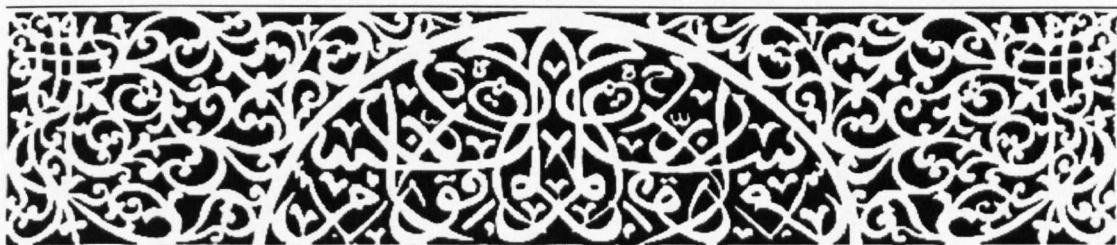
The principal distinguishing feature of the vernacular Malay house is its high, steeply sloping roof with gables at both ends. Another distinctive feature is the practice of raising the house on posts above the ground. This was the ideal solution for allowing for ample air circulation, protection from floods and wild animals as well as storage of livestock, boats and tools under the house.

Normally, the houses have at least two entrances by steps which were located at the front for visitors and males while the other one at the back is mostly for women and children. At the bottom of the steps is a slab stone or timber where people leave their footwear and a clay water vessel (*tempayan*) with water gourd (*gayong*) where they wash their feet before ascending the stairs to the house. This was done for hygienic and religious reasons.

Kelantan Malay houses were strongly influenced by the Thai style and have created what some consider to be the richest cultural heritage of the Peninsular Malay states. Fee (1998) stated that the evolution of the architectural styles of the east coast houses must have derived from several influences brought about by migration and trade. The evolution shows homogeneous features peculiar to Kelantan, Terengganu, Cambodia and Thailand. For example steep, tiered roofs with curved gable ends, which does not feature in the houses of

the west coast of Peninsular Malaysia. Additionally, they display the rhomboid-shaped terracotta roof tiles which are Thai in origin but have long been made locally, and also have walls made of timber panels which are slotted into grooved frames. The technique emphasizes the rectangular pattern of the panels which is popular in Thailand. Normally, the roofs of Kelantan houses are covered with *singhorra* tiles, named after the town, Songkhla in southern Thailand where the tiles originate.

Meanwhile, Said (2002) stated that Malay craftsmen applied five types of motif, namely, flora, fauna, calligraphy, geometric and cosmos onto the carved components, while flora dominated the scenes of Malay woodcarving, not only for house components but also on other crafts or equipment including weapons, boats and house utensils.



**Figure 3.4.** Example of wall panel carved in traditional calligraphy motif in a traditional Malay house.*Source:* Said (2002).

### 3.5 Conclusion

Kelantan is notable as an Islamic state in Malaysia. As a result of increasing influence from other Islamic countries, especially from Middle East countries, the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape has gradually changed. In addition, landscape evolution in Kelantan has transformed the Malay villages and vernacular architecture of the Kelantan Malay. The concept of the Islamic City, which focuses on Islamic values and traditional cultures of the Kelantan Malay, is now regarded as fundamental to the Malay culture and to the traditional Malay lifestyle.

Traditional influences in contemporary buildings can be traced through the use of timber as part of the structure of the new buildings for example at the pillar, floor, wall and decoration of the building. Plant selections have been based on the concept of the Flower Garden Land which was derived from the old 15<sup>th</sup> century royal garden of Kelantan. Even though there was limited information about the actual composition of the traditional Malay garden style, assumptions have been made which have enabled the concept to be continued in the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape, based upon fragrant plants, herbs, shrubs, fruit trees, palms and bamboos. At the same time, the concept of the Malay village or ‘*kampung*’ and traditional Kelantan Malay house styles possess an important distinctive character, through traditional elements particularly related to the roof design style.

In contrast, neo-traditional elements are based on the mixture of old and new. Some of modern elements have succeeded in being sympathetic and are helping to sustain a cultural landscape that is “continuing” without being pastiche/kitsch. For example some of the more successful new buildings are made from a mixture of concrete and timber to give a traditional appearance to the whole complex, such as the Islamic Office Complex near Kota Bharu.

Meanwhile, modern Islamic elements can be seen through the use of floral elements, geometrical designs and calligraphy especially applied to the wooden craft, textiles, ceramic and interior design. The mosque, as the focal point, becomes centre for the main activities. In addition, the use of water elements such as fountains and cascades are very important in the Islamic landscape. Furthermore, the uses of palm trees is generally significant as a representation of the Islamic identity.

The combination of Islamic City concept and the traditional Flower Garden Land (*Kota Serendah Sekebun Bunga*) concept demonstrate how the Islamic and traditional are the most prominent factors that the state government wants to develop in Kelantan especially in Kota Bharu city centre. Apart from the making of the Islamic city, the traditional and vernacular are still blended together to make sure that the regional identities of Kelantan can be

preserved as far as possible. The mixture of the concepts can be seen mainly in Kota Bharu city centre area, especially in the tourist attraction area in Sultan Ismail Petra Square.

Particularly, the driver of change linking globalisation and local identities is clearly witnessed in Kelantan as well as the strong impact of Islamisation on the Kelantan Malay people. Many new commercial buildings were designed in both Islamic and traditional identities that reflected the image of the Islamic city. Similarly, the landscape planning in Kota Bharu city centre were designed in Islamic and traditional ways in order to represent the image of Islamic city and Flower Garden Land concept.

Broadly speaking, the recent changes in the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape have been in accordance with the idea of Ideal Islamic City promoted by the architect Gulzar Haider (1984). The concept of the Islamic City was then blended with the local culture and regional identities of Kelantan Malay community. The making of the Islamic City has been one of the most prominent objectives of the Islamic Party of Malaysia since they came into office in Kelantan in 1990.

## **Chapter Four : METHODOLOGY**

### **4.0 Introduction**

This chapter describes the methodology used to gather data on the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape. The approaches included literature reviews, observation, semi-structured interviews, field mapping for case studies analysis, document analysis and content analysis. These methods are discussed in detail below.

### **4.1 The Research Methods**

This qualitative research sought to gather diverse information through multiple methods about the history, elements, characteristics, influences and current practices relating to the cultural landscape. Four principal methods were used. The first stage involved literature review, where both historical aspects and the development of the cultural landscape are appraised in order to identify key issues and recent evidence that are of significance to the research topic. This stage involved an extensive search of a range of journals, books, magazines, newspapers, articles, internet and archival sources. A key function of the literature review is to provide the foundation for contributing to the knowledge base. Merriam (2009) states that besides providing a foundation or a theoretical framework for the problem to be investigated, the literature review can demonstrate how the present study advances, refines, or revises what is already known. In this study, some of the issues that have been discussed in the literature review included the definition of cultural landscape, issues about regional identities, sense of place and the idea of authenticity. Meanwhile Malaysian issues in urban landscape planning have been studied, as have issues of developing Malaysian identity among urban and landscape designers. Further, the concept of Islamic city has been reviewed in order to explain issues of the Kota Bharu Islamic City concept in Kelantan.

Secondly, site survey analysis was carried out, where the major aims were to record physical and social use of environment, to prepare photographic records and to observe approaches to

landscape design. When undertaking physical and social observation, the mapping criteria concerned the overall vernacular element images, design concept, the existing characters, sense of place, vegetations, landscape maintenance, hardscape elements, open space, colour scheme, contrast/harmony with surroundings, design materials, use of building and public access. In conducting field mapping, consideration was given to gaining insight into qualities that might be deemed authentic or inauthentic, as discussed in previous chapters. Mapping therefore sought to identify particular features that might be described as traditional, non-traditional, modern Islamic, authentic, inauthentic, conflictual and sympathetic elements in a place. Photographs were taken as an additional way of reinforcing the case study evidence. The studies have also noted the past and current functions of the historical buildings which is an essential consideration in designing the overall cultural landscape.

The next stage involved semi-structured interviews with selected historians, academics, government officials, practitioners and local people at Kelantan, Malaysia. The interviews were very important sources in supplementing information from documentary sources and site visits, as well as obtaining personal insights. The aims of the interviews with the historians were to identify the critical historical phases, to understand Kelantan landscape design evolution, and to clarify the nature of the Royal garden, Malay settlement pattern and the use of certain trees in daily life. The objectives of the interviews with the academics were to obtain confirmation of understanding of the Malay traditional landscape, to seek ideas and suggestions for enhancing the Kelantan Malay landscape design, as well as obtaining ideas about promoting regional styles. Interviews with government officials and practitioners mainly focused on the current practices, statutes and guidelines and their effectiveness. Also, they touched on the development of the landscape in the past, current and future; the problems, failures, successes and challenges of past and current projects; and the criteria of design and their constraints in promoting traditional styles. Interviews with local people aimed to identify and explain relevant changes within their living memories. In this case, views from the local people have been analysed in order to get some input about their memories as well as their current perceptions of the regional identity of the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape. Together, the interviews help in acquiring a better understanding

for creating a regional/local identity for the future development of public realm, vernacular architecture and landscape for the Kelantan government, especially for the Kota Bharu Municipal Council.

Interviews may raise issues of research ethics, and these were addressed via a ‘light touch’ ethics review. It was decided that, in view of the fact that sensitive personal issues were not being raised, it would be sufficient to ensure that interviewees were aware of the voluntary nature of their participation, and that responses would be anonymised. Recordings of interviews were held securely and erased following transcription.

In addition, case studies were conducted in order to look into the current landscape approach in selected sites in the capital city of Kota Bharu, Kelantan. The sites focused on the heritage zone in Kota Bharu city centre where some of the most important historical buildings were concentrated, and a Kelantan Malay village where many Kelantan Malay traditional houses still remain. Consequently, the case studies explored the visual relations between city locations, residential uses, vernacular architecture and landscape architecture. This survey explored both the role that the combination of architecture and landscape play in the visual identity and character of Kelantan Malay, and the comparisons between the past and present landscape. The study examples of the present landscapes have been analysed and used as a basis for reflecting on possible future guidelines for creating a regional identity of the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape.

Finally document analysis and content analysis were carried out in order to ascertain current practices among architects, landscape architects, planners and designers in creating a regional identify for Kota Bharu through its vernacular architecture, public realm and landscape architecture. These studies sought evidence about the significance of current contemporary urban and landscape design for regional identity, the nature of current design approaches, the consequences of proclaiming Kota Bharu city centre as an Islamic city, and practices to respect the vernacular architecture and landscape architecture of the Kelantan Malay. The document analysis mainly sought information about the design guidelines currently applied by the state government in promoting regional identity both for the city

centre and new residential development as well as current landscape planning approaches in Kelantan especially by Kota Bharu Islamic City Municipal Council.

#### 4.2 Semi-structured Interviews

Interviewing is very important when we cannot observe behaviour, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them. It is also necessary to interview when we are interested in past events that are impossible to replicate. Interviewing is also the best technique to use when conducting intensive case studies of a few selected individuals. Further, interviewing can be used to collect data from a large number of people representing a broad range of ideas. De Marrais (2004) defines an interview as ‘a process in which a researcher and participant engage in a conversation focused on questions related to a research study’.

In this research, semi-structured interviews have been conducted using open-ended and flexibly worded questions so that the interview is a mix of more and less structured questions. Merriam (2009) states that, usually, specific information is desired from all the respondents, in which case there is a more structured section to the interview. However, the largest part of the interview is guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored, and neither the exact wording nor the order of the questions is determined ahead of time. Furthermore, this format allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic.

Thomas (2009) indicates that the semi-structured interview provides the best of both worlds as far as interviewing is concerned, combining the structure of a list of issues to be covered together with the freedom to follow up points as necessary.

Twenty respondents were involved in this study. They were drawn from different skills and backgrounds. The interviews were recorded to make sure that everything said was preserved for analysis, and the recordings were backed up by notes. Then, all the interviews were transcribed to enable a coding schedule to be conducted. The respondents were selected because of their specialities. The list of respondents included historians (three), academics

(three), government (three), practitioners (two) and village elders (nine). Semi-structured interviews of around one to two hours each were conducted between March and June 2008, and explored the main themes of this study including the principal elements in the Kelantan Malay landscape, especially regarding a traditional Malay village, traditional house and city centre. Secondly, the interviews covered possible factors affecting the declining popularity of the traditional Malay house among local people, as well as respondents' views about current landscape approaches in Kelantan and the prospects for the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape in the future. Moreover, the challenges in improving the quality of landscape planning, especially relating to the integration of vernacular and contemporary themes, have been explored.

#### 4.3 Case Study Analysis

Merriam (2009) sees a case study as an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system. Part of the confusion surrounding case studies is that the process of conducting a case study is conflated with both the unit of study (the case) and the product of this type of investigation. Meanwhile Yin (2008) sees a case study, in terms of the research process, as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. Further, Merriam (2009) explains that unlike experimental, survey, or historical research, case study research does not claim any particular methods of gathering data, and may include techniques that range from testing to interviewing. The decision to focus on qualitative case studies stems from the fact that this design is chosen precisely because researchers are interested in insight, discovery, and interpretation rather than hypothesis testing. Thomas (2009) illuminates that the aim to do case study analysis is to gain a rich, detailed understanding of the case by examining aspects of it in detail. Case study can include a range of as many different methods and procedures as necessary for understanding what is going on in a particular situation.

Yin (2008) suggests that for "how" and "why" questions the case study has a distinct advantage. Also, the less control an investigator has over "a contemporary set of events," or

if the variables are so embedded in the situation as to be impossible to identify ahead of time, case study is likely to be the best choice. Bodgan and Biklen (2007) differentiate among historical organizational case studies, observational case studies, and life histories. For an observational case study they state that “the major data gathering technique is participant observation (supplemented with formal and informal interviews and review of documents) and the focus of the study is on a particular organization or some aspect of the organization”. Merriam (2009) clarifies that observation is a major means of collecting data in qualitative research. It offers a first hand account of the situation under study and, when combined with interviewing and document analysis, allows for a holistic interpretation of the phenomenon being investigated. In addition, the fieldwork involves going to the site, programme, institution, or setting in the field to observe the phenomenon under study. On site, the researcher is absorbed by what to observe, what to remember, and what to record.

#### **4.4 Document Analysis**

Merriam (2009) explains that interviewing and observing are two data collection strategies designed to gather data that specifically address the research question. Documents, however, are usually produced for reasons other than the research at hand therefore are not subject to the same limitations. Documents are in fact, a ready-made source of data easily accessible to the imaginative and resourceful investigator. Most of the data pertaining to the state government planning and strategies were taken from the main documents, namely, the Landscape Master Plan of Kota Bharu (December 2002), Kota Bharu Islamic City Master Plan (2006- 2015) and Action Plan and Guidelines of Kota Bharu Islamic City Design (October 2005). The proposed landscape design and current urban planning in Kelantan can be obtained from these three documents in order to clarify current landscape design approaches in Kelantan.

#### **4.5 Interpretation of Data Sources**

Merriam (2009) stated that two less common data analysis techniques in qualitative research are content analysis and analytic induction. To some extent, both of these techniques are

used implicitly in any inductive analysis of qualitative data. In one sense, all qualitative data analysis is content analysis in that it is the content of interviews, field notes, and documents that is analysed. Although this content can be analysed quantitatively for themes and recurring patterns of meaning, content analysis historically has been qualitative in nature.

In this study, a manual approach has been taken to coding themes that have emerged from the various strands of evidence. Thus, a coding schedule has been prepared and all the relevant themes from the observations, interviews and document analysis have been evaluated. Then, a coding manual has been produced by listing all the codes and categories before extracting the relevant relationships and trends.

#### 4.6 Conclusion

The methodology used to gather data concerning issues on the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape has been discussed. In order to obtain a diverse set of results for data analysis, multiple methods have been used including literature review, observation, semi-structured interviews, field mapping of case studies, document analysis and content analysis. The objectives of this study have been pursued by undertaking all the above methods which yielded diverse information and appropriate data for the research.

These four principal methods have been used strategically in order to provide a concrete basis to inform a theoretical framework of the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape. The important issues concerning regional identities, sense of place and authenticity issues have been explored, as well as the concept of Islamic City promoted by the state government.

In addition, the observation process has recorded information about the physical and social aspects of the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape and its environment. In this case, the elements sought included the overall vernacular images, design concept, existing character, sense of place, vegetation, landscape maintenance, hardscape elements, open space, colour scheme, contrast/harmony with surrounding, design materials, use of building and public access. Subsequently, this analysis has enabled a justifiable evidence base on which to make

inferences about particular features that might be considered traditional, non-traditional, modern Islamic, authentic, inauthentic, conflictual and sympathetic. The characteristics and identities of the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape were then studied, especially the traditional and regional elements, influences from other sources and the current trends in places particularly in Kota Bharu city centre. This is important to learn how the landscape is being transformed and the nature of current drivers of change. The intention is to be able to use this data to inform improved approaches to the future planning of the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape.

In a complementary way, semi-structured interviews with selected historians, academics, government officials, practitioners and local people of Kelantan have been conducted to gather supplementary information about the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape. All the interviews were important in gaining supportive information for a better understanding in creating regional identity for the future development of the public realm, vernacular architecture and landscape development. Twenty respondents were involved in the study and covered the principal themes including essential elements in Kelantan Malay cultural landscape regarding the traditional Malay village, traditional house and landscape at the city centre. It also covered factors affecting the declining popularity of the Malay house among the local people and their views about the current landscape approaches in Kelantan and its future prospects.

Further, case studies were carried out in several selected sites in the heritage zone of Kota Bharu in order to witness the current landscape approaches in that particular area. In this case, the ideas of Lynch (1960) have influenced the interpretation of legibility in the visual analysis of case studies. As will be noted in the following chapter, particular attention has been given to two of Lynch's elements, namely, nodes and landmarks, in Kota Bharu city centre.

The next three chapters deal with the case studies and the significant evidences from the multiple methods of research inquiry.

## **Chapter Five: INTRODUCTION TO THE CASE STUDIES**

### **5.0 Introduction**

Case studies have been undertaken in order to explore current landscape approaches in the capital city of Kota Bharu, and adjacent rural area. Kota Bharu city is situated in the north eastern part of Peninsular Malaysia, and occupies a strategic location at the mouth of the Kelantan River. It has become a Royal City and an administrative centre for the state and has become an important place for trade and business as well as a cultural melting pot. Fee (1998) stated that early Malay towns usually evolved around the sultan's palace and the mosque because these were the two centres of cultural and religious activities. Traditionally, there were no fixed boundaries in a Malay town, although the distance up to which the prayer calls of the town mosque could be heard sometimes determined the town's limits. It is recorded that Sultan Muhammad II founded the city of Kota Bharu on the banks of the Kelantan River in 1844. Since then, Kota Bharu has remained the administrative centre for Kelantan. There are royal palaces, museums, mosques and historical buildings at the heart of the city centre. Various landmarks and commercial buildings also give a strong image to the city centre.

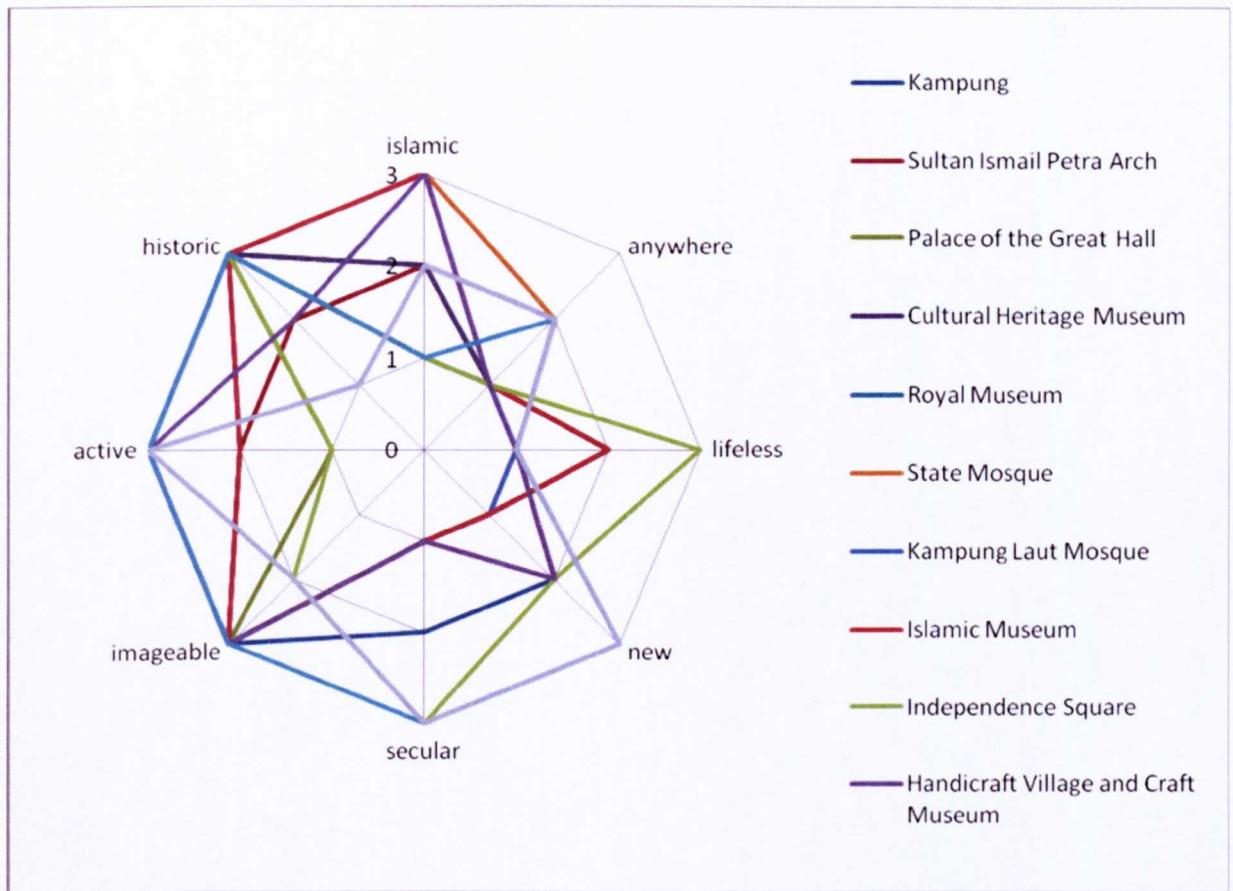
In the first instance, the case study sites were selected intuitively, on the basis of familiarity with the city and its cultural legacy. However, having identified suitable locations, these were then related back to the literature review to confirm that they were likely to yield evidence on an appropriate range of trends and issues. From the literature review, it appeared that certain key tensions were evident in the cultural landscape of Kelantan, namely:

- a tension between “Developing with Islam”, and the forces of secularism and folk religion;
- a tension between the retention/ creation of character and imageability, and the erosion of distinctiveness resulting in “anywhereness” and adoption of arbitrary fashions;

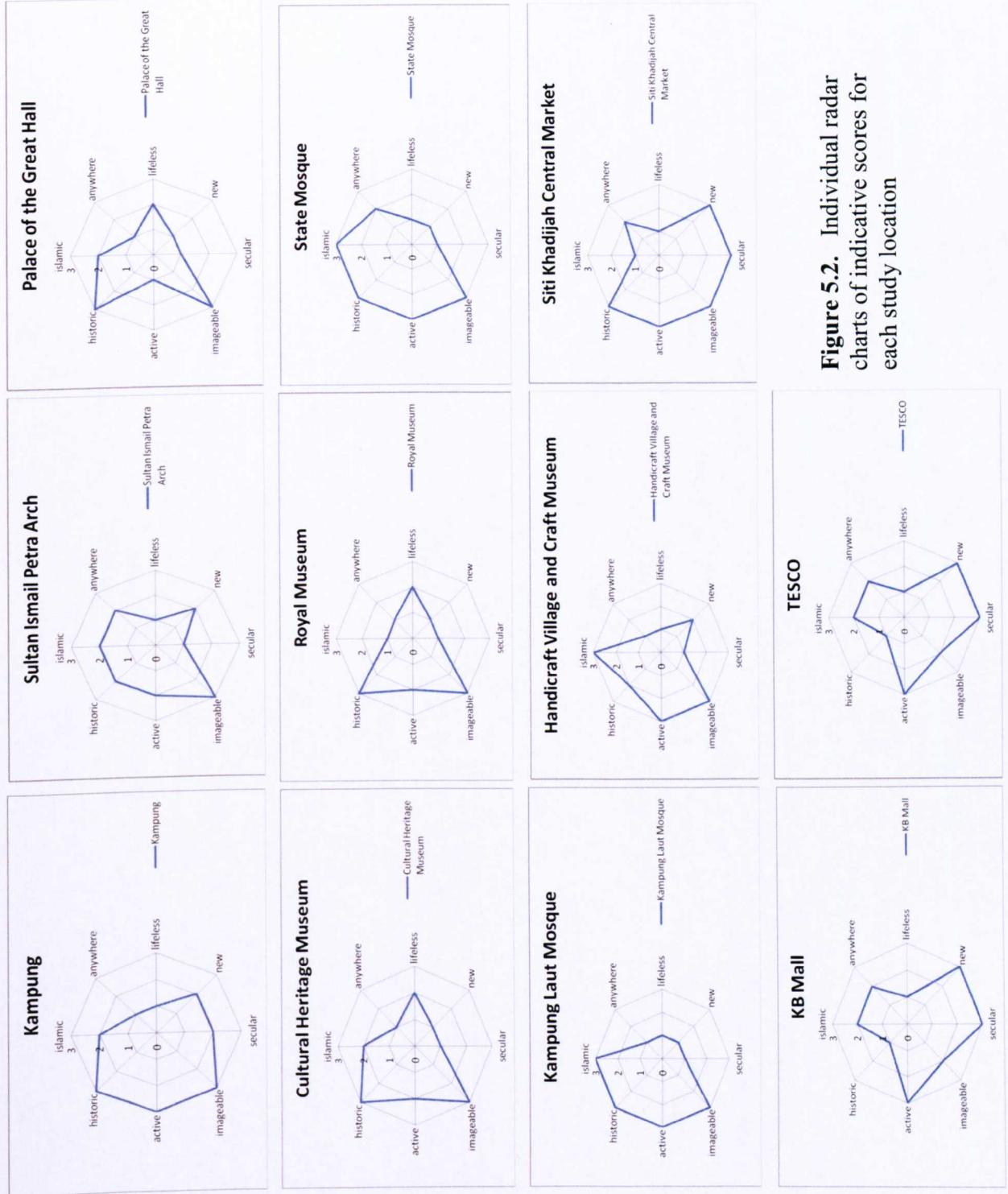
- a tension between styles that conserve/ respect the vernacular tradition and climatically appropriate, and those which are entirely new and unresponsive to “place”;
- a tension between the retention/ creation of purposeful activity, and those that are relatively lifeless even though they may sometimes be busy.

The proposed study locations were appraised in relation to these tensions and, in discussion with supervisors, were given an indicative score of 1-3 to reflect where they fell on each axis. This was not intended as a precise assessment but, rather, as a rapid check to confirm that the sites illustrated a range of important factors that had emerged from the literature review.

This appraisal is summarised in a radar chart (Figure 5.1), which reflects the scatter of scores on each axis. The value of this composite figure is that it shows how, collectively, the selected sites reflect the range of key trends. This confirms that the site assessments are likely to yield examples of many manifestations of sympathetic and authentic contributions to the cultural landscape, as well as less successful ones. For clarity, individual radar charts for each site are provided in Figure 5.2.



**Figure 5.1.** Composite radar chart of indicative scores of all case study locations



**Figure 5.2.** Individual radar charts of indicative scores for each study location

Hence, this preliminary reflection on case study locations confirms that, in broad terms, the selected sites are likely to contain diverse opportunities to study at first hand the range of issues affecting the urban and rural cultural landscape of Kelantan Malay.

Generally, the image of a city can be recognised through its historical features, vernacular architectural design, landscape, community and cultures. Lynch (1960) argued that the image of the city is formed through prolonged observations of the city's physical qualities. In a Lynchian perspective, the city consists of five physical elements - path, district, edge, node and landmark - all of which contribute to the formation of its image. In this study, the emphasis has been on the role of nodes and landmarks in Kota Bharu, which are identified as having contributed significantly to the making of the Islamic City. Nodes and landmarks serve to meet people's material and spiritual needs. The former include the provision of additional spaces for economic activity, in respect of which there are three important nodes: Siti Khadijah Central Market, KB Mall and TESCO at Sireh Valley. The latter include iconographic images from the Holy Quran such as the Sultan Ismail Petra Arch and Clock Tower round about that well known to promote the Islamic City.

The case studies mainly focused on the identities of places in the city centre, residential areas which contain both traditional and contemporary Kelantan Malay houses, vernacular architecture (historical buildings), civic centres, shopping areas, tourist sites and religious buildings, as well as public realm and landscape architecture. Site visits were carried out to survey the areas. Data were then collected through checklists and photographs. Lists of the buildings that have been selected for study were based on historical significance and known importance to the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape. Notably, these comprised the Sultan Ismail Petra Arch, the Palace with the Great Hall, Kelantan Cultural Heritage Museum, Royal Museum, World War II Memorial, State Mosque, Islamic Museum, Independence Square, Handicraft Village and Craft Museum and several shopping malls in Kelantan such as Siti Khadijah Central Market, KB Mall and TESCO at Sireh Valley. All these areas are very notable to the Kelantan community since they have become places of high levels of activity. Survey criteria included design concepts, existing character, vegetation, hardscape

elements, open space, colour, design pattern and building materials. In addition, the past and current uses of historical buildings, and the nature of changes, have been investigated.

The study also included the Kelantan Malay traditional house and curtilage which has been recorded separately as it makes a unique contribution to the distinctive identity of the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape. Omar (1979) stated that at present, no more traditional Malay houses are being built. Moreover, some of the existing Kelantan Malay houses have been demolished and replaced with new ones. The design of new housing is varied and depends on individual interests and economic factors.

### 5.1 The Capital City of Kota Bharu

Kota Bharu is a strategically located city close to the Kelantan River, which was previously used as a main transportation corridor for the Kelantan community. The location of the palace, mosque and the market were very close to the Malay settlement and have become amongst the major characteristics of the city. Fee (1998) reported that Kota Bharu and Kuala Terengganu on the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia and Alor Setar and Johor Bahru on the west coast are ‘royal towns’ representative of the Malay urban tradition. The two main foci of these early towns were the royal courts and the trading centres of the merchants. In the centre of the town was the palace, usually a complex of several buildings where the sultan lived and from which he ruled. The lifestyle of the sultan influenced and shaped the lives of the common people. He kept a feudal army to protect the populace who, in turn, had to pay rent and tribute taxes. Further, Fee (1998) noted that Kota Bharu became Kelantan’s principal port and the seat of the royal sultanate. Its strategic position on the coast facing the South China Sea and the Gulf of Thailand made it an ideal trading port, although the town remained uniquely Malay.



**Figure 5.3.** Case study area in Heritage Zone of Kota Bharu from above. *Source:* Kota Bharu Landscape Master Plan Report, 2002.

## 5.2 The Historical Buildings

Fee (1998) mentioned that Malaysia has always been open to ideas and influences from both East and West. It is thus blessed with an architectural heritage of great diversity, artistry and sophistication, showing many cross-cultural influences, and ranging from the simplest built shelters to mega projects. Although very few timber palaces over a hundred years old have survived in Malaysia, in feudal Malay society the palaces of the sultans were of paramount importance, not only as places of residence but also as centres of administration, learning and culture. In Kelantan, especially in the heritage zone of Kota Bharu, there still remain the vernacular traditional structures of Kelantan Malay architecture, namely palaces and mosques.

### 5.2.1 The Palaces

Fee (1998) stated that although the old palaces in Kelantan and Terengganu are no longer occupied, their structures and designs reveal much about the environmental conditions and the diverse cultural traditions of the region. The extreme climate as well as heavy rains in the monsoon season followed by a hot and dry period influenced their construction. In addition, social segregation between men and women and the observance of court behaviour

in respect to hierarchy dictated the spatial organization. He added that some of the features also provide evidence of past links with Patani, in southern Thailand, which was once a part of the east coast Malay kingdom.

In Kota Bharu, the Palace with the Great Hall, Jahar Palace (Kelantan Cultural Heritage Museum) and Istana Batu Palace (Royal Museum), are among the royal palaces that still remain in Kelantan but with changed functions and uses. The Palace of the Great Hall, built in 1840, is well known as the only extant east coast wooden palace in Malaysia. Currently, it is used solely for official royal ceremonies. Jahar Palace is renowned as the Kelantan Cultural Heritage Museum, while Istana Batu Palace is home to the Royal Museums which preserve the principal collection of Kelantan Malay cultural heritage.



**Figure 5.4.** The Palace of the Great Hall. *Source:* photo by the author.



**Figure 5.5.** Jahar Palace. *Source:* photo by the author.



**Figure 5.6.** Istana Batu Palace. *Source:* photo by the author.

### 5.2.2 The Mosques

Fee (1998) observed that the arrival of Islam in Southeast Asia in the 13<sup>th</sup> century was heralded by the appearance of a new mosque typology. Although the Southeast Asian Great Mosque that emerged retained the basic elements of its predecessors in the Middle East and the Indian subcontinent, it also differed in significant ways. By adapting to its new habitat, the local mosque became a striking symbol of the adaptability of Islam across cultural boundaries. He further discussed how, towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, geopolitical forces in Malaysia gave rise to a growing Islamic orthodoxy among the people, requiring greater and more authentic expression of Islamic symbolism by embracing architectural styles of the Middle East, Mogul India, Moorish and Western Neoclassical traditions. The mosques were constructed in a mixture of concrete, brick and plaster that completely overshadowed their local timber counterparts. Even the modest rural timber mosques, built in the style of the Southeast Asian mosque, were replaced by local interpretations of grand masonry structures.

In Kota Bharu, the State Mosque, known as Masjid Muhammadi, is an example of how the Moorish style has been adapted to the local mosque design especially through the domes and minaret. It was built by the British in 1925 to replace the traditional timber vernacular mosque style. Fee (1998) added that the British were the only colonial power to succeed in governing beyond the trading cities to the entire country. Despite wresting political power from the sultans and rajas, the British conceded the continuing cultural-religious leadership

by these rulers. On the other hand, the British did not interfere the Malay customs, religion and status of the Malay rulers.



**Figure 5.7.** Masjid Muhammadi. *Source:* photo by the author.

Now, the only traditional vernacular mosque which still remains is the Kampung Laut Mosque, renowned as the oldest surviving large wooden mosque in Malaysia. Salleh (2003) stated that the mosque was built during the 15<sup>th</sup> century after the arrival of Islam in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. This mosque remains significant as one of the distinctive traditional vernacular buildings in the Malay heritage.



**Figure 5.8.** The Kampung Laut Mosque. *Source:* photo by the author.

### 5.3 Commercial Areas

Fee (1998) stated that early designs of commercial complexes from the 1970s were dependent on imported Western models and showed little consideration to either the local, tropical climate (glass panels were exposed to the sun), or to the cultural context in which they were placed. However, he also noted that the 1980s witnessed more development in the search for an independent Malaysian Islamic architectural identity, particularly within high-rise buildings. Hence, architects in Malaysia began to express a greater confidence in experimenting with multi-use commercial buildings. Architects began to experiment with the visual aesthetic of the building, adopting a Post-Modern style of design, using mechanisms and ornamentation to draw attention to their projects.

#### 5.3.1 The Market

In Kota Bahru, there is a famous market where a majority of the traders are women. Built in 1986, it was formerly known as Buluh Kubu central market but since the opposition party gained a majority in the state government in 1990, it was changed to Siti Khadijah central market in deference to the first wife of the Prophet Muhammad, Siti Khadijah who was a successful businesswoman. The market is famous for traditional local foods and is very popular with photographers because of its unique character of women traders selling all the vegetables and foodstuffs.



**Figure 5.9.** Siti Khadijah Central Market. *Source:* photo by the author.

### 5.3.2 The Malls

There are many new shopping complexes and malls in Kota Bharu Islamic city. KB Mall and TESCO at Sireh Valley have become the two main malls that attract most people. They are among the main business centres and are well-known among the Kelantan community. The areas have become the centre of people's activities. KB Mall and TESCO are examples of how Islamic, traditional and contemporary design approaches can be combined – something which has been implemented in new buildings in Kelantan as a response to the state government policy of transforming Kota Bahru into an Islamic City.



**Figure 5.10.** KB Mall. *Source:* photo by the author.



**Figure 5.11.** TESCO at Sireh Valley. *Source:* photo by the author.

### 5.3.3 The Handicraft Village and Craft Museum

This is one of the most famous places for visitors in Kota Bharu. It is situated in the historical area which is in walking distance of the Palace of the Great Hall, *Jahar* Palace and just opposite the Royal Museum. It is home for many fine examples of Kelantan Malay craftsmanship, and many examples of traditional arts and culture may be seen, such as embroidery, batik painting, wood carving, *songket* weaving, traditional silverware making, and matting. It was built in 1991 and the building design is based on the traditional vernacular architecture of the Kelantan Malay timber house and the traditional landscape of Malay village. On the ground floor there is a notable restaurant serving traditional Kelantan Malay foods and meals.



**Figure 5.12.** The entrance and the open space area for cultural performing. *Source:* photo by the author.



**Figure 5.13.** The main building of the gallery and museum. *Source:* photo by the author.

#### 5.4 Documenting the Case Study Criteria

The case studies of rural Kelantan and Kota Bharu city centre create an opportunity to investigate a historic city that still boasts unique local cultures together with historical sites and heritage buildings of great significance, as well as more modest vernacular settlements. As Rasdi (2005) has confirmed, Kelantan is of peculiar importance because it is the only state of Malaysia where the full range of traditional Malay decorative arts may be found. For this research, case studies have focused on the identity of the city centre, traditional and contemporary houses, historical buildings, civic centres, shopping areas, tourist sites, religious buildings, public realm and landscape design. Site visits have been conducted and the data arising from these have been documented through checklists and photographs.

The criteria reflect the following considerations:

- a key factor in assessing authenticity is the continued use of characteristic materials, especially local types of timber. This is particularly apparent in the Palace with the Great Hall, Kelantan Cultural Heritage Museum, the Kampung Laut Mosque and Islamic museum. These buildings are noted for their significant contribution to vernacular architecture throughout the Malay Archipelago. However, where timber is

impractical, careful attention to the combination of neo-traditional and Islamic design elements can give an authentic feel to a structure, such as the concrete Sultan Ismail Petra Arch.

- lack of authenticity may be noted where a colonial style has no relation to precedence, or where new styles bear little relation to their context of time-depth. Examples here include the Royal Museum, State Mosque and Independence Square.
- the occurrence of “pastiche” is related to the self-conscious attempt to mimic vernacular buildings in a neo-traditional style, with only limited re-interpretation to the modern context. The key example here is the Handicraft Village and Craft Museum.
- in many new buildings it is also possible to identify attempts to blend contemporary design with traditional elements, and to relate the building to its setting, in a way that can be deemed sympathetic. Examples include the Siti Khadijah Central Market, KB Mall and TESCO.
- sense of place is related not just to physical aspects, but also to activities and meanings. Places will acquire a clear identity if they are spontaneously used for regular activities, and will be valued by people if they retain and generate distinct meanings and cultural associations. In the field survey, judgements concerning meaning and memory were related to the length of time that the traditional vernacular had existed. For example, the Palace of the Great Hall and Kampung Laut Mosque, possess strong meanings relating to their renowned vernacular architecture and symbolism of the Sultanate to the Malay people. Similarly, the Kampung Laut Mosque holds meaning as a centre for the Islamic development in Malaysia. Siti Khadijah Square and the Quran pillar in Sultan Ismail Arch are acquiring meaning as a commercial hub and a spiritual landmark, respectively.

More specifically, each site was documented on the basis of a number of field survey criteria, namely:

- Vernacular elements and imagery
- Design concept

- Existing character
- Vegetation
- Landscape maintenance
- Hardscape elements
- Open space
- Colour scheme
- Conflict/ Harmony with surroundings
- Design materials
- Use of building
- Public access
- Traditional/non traditional
- Authentic/ inauthentic
- Observed and documented activities
- Meanings and associations.

Notes were recorded in relation to these, reflecting Relph's interpretation of authentic and inauthentic responses: namely, the former is a direct and genuine experience of the overall identity of places, whereas the latter displays arbitrary social and intellectual fashions, following stereotyped conventions. In making notes about each case study, particular attention was given to the use of traditional decorative arts, traditional floral ornamentation, vernacular building styles, and timber construction materials. These are assumed to be related to an experience of Kelantan Malay. An example of this can be seen at the Palace of the Great Hall and the Kampung Laut Mosque. By contrast, modern Islamic design emphasises Islamic arts and decoration, and incorporates geometric, arabesque pattern and Arabic calligraphy.

The details recorded for each case study are summarised in the site criteria tables (Tables 5.1, 5.2). These have been adapted from the criteria which Francis (1999) has proposed and successfully applied in respect of systematic documentation for landscape design case studies. These tables also include an initial assessment as to whether the site can broadly be classed as: traditional, non-traditional or modern Islamic; authentic or inauthentic; and

conflictual or sympathetic. The basis on which this assessment has been reached is discussed in the following chapters.

In advance of the main case study analysis, it is helpful to indicate the kinds of evidence that will be discussed about the locations. For example, the Handicraft Village/ Craft Museum emerges as the single best venue to observe the variety of the Kelantan Malay traditional cultural landscape. Here, the neo-vernacular architecture is based on the Kelantan Malay traditional timber house. Its landscape design is influenced by the Kelantan Malay Flower Garden Land concept and is in an excellent state of maintenance. Even though the buildings are neo-traditional and may be described as pastiche in terms of mimicking previous styles and spatial composition, they have achieved significant success in their aim of representing the beauty of the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape. In contrast, the most authentic vernacular timber building is the Palace of the Great Hall, which has been officially acclaimed as outstanding heritage in terms of Malaysia's vernacular architecture. Other buildings, such as Siti Khadijah Central Market, KB Mall and TESCO, can be described as non-traditional but still sympathetic. Even though the buildings are inauthentic, contemporary and modern elements are fused with traditional elements in the overall design, as evidenced in the traditional floral and Islamic calligraphy craft motifs on their walls and in their decorative embellishments. Nevertheless, some buildings in the heritage zone such as the Royal Museum, State Mosque and Independence Square may be considered inauthentic, as they have been excessively adapted from other design concepts.

	Survey Criteria	Sultan Ismail Petra Arch	The Palace with the Great Hall	Kelantan Cultural Heritage Museum	Royal Museum	State Mosque	The Kampung Laut Mosque	Islamic Museum	Independence Square	Handicraft Village and Craft Museum	Siti Khadijah Central Market	KB Mall	TESCO
1	Vernacular elements and imagery	Islamic	Traditional	Colonial	Colonial	Traditional	Traditional	New	New	Traditional	New	New	New
2	Design concept	Islamic	Traditional	Colonial	Colonial	Traditional	Traditional	Contemporary	Traditional	Contemporary	Contemporary	Contemporary	Contemporary
3	Existing character	New	Old	Old	Old	Old	Old	New	New	New	New	New	New
4	Vegetation maintenance	Good	Good	Fair	Fair	Fair	Fair	Poor	Good	Fair	Poor	Poor	Good
5	Landscape maintenance	Good	Fair	Good	Fair	Fair	Fair	Fair	Good	Fair	Fair	Fair	Fair
6	Hardscape elements	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
7	Open space	Yes	Yes	Brown	Cream	Cream	Green	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
8	Colour scheme	Brown	Brown	Harmony	Conflict	Harmony	Harmony	Brown	Brown	Orange	Brown	Cream	Cream
9	Conflict/ Harmony with surroundings	Harmony	Harmony					Conflict	Conflict	Harmony	Harmony	Conflict	Conflict
10	Design materials	Concrete	Timber	Concrete	Concrete	Timber	Timber	Concrete	Timber	Concrete	Concrete	Concrete	Concrete
11	Use of building	Monument	Royal palace	Museum	Museum	Mosque	Mosque	Museum	Open park	Museum	Market	Market	Shopping mall
12	Public access	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
13	Traditional/non-traditional	Neo-traditional	Traditional	Non-traditional	Modern Islamic	Traditional	Traditional	Non-traditional	Traditional	Traditional	Neo-traditional	Non-traditional	Non-traditional
14	Authentic/inauthentic	Authentic	Authentic	In-authentic	In-authentic	Authentic	Inauthentic	Inauthentic	Inauthentic	Inauthentic	Pastiche	Sympathetic to traditional	Sympathetic to traditional

Table 5.1. Site Survey Summary (Kota Bharu case study sites)

	Sultan Ismail Petra Arch	The Palace with the Great Hall	Kelantan Cultural Heritage Museum	Royal Museum	State Mosque	The Kampung Laut Mosque	Islamic Museum	Independence Square	Handicraft Village and Craft Museum	Siti Khadijah Central Market	KB Mall	TESCO
Activities	Monument	Royal Office; official royal events and ceremonies	Curation and study of history; education; remembrance	Curation, study, education	Performance of daily prayer and Islamic programs	Performance of daily prayer and Islamic programs	museum	Open park; occasionally use for official royal program e.g. band show	Museum & traditional cultural performance	Daily market, trading	trading	trading
Meanings	To proclaim the power of Islam	Very strong vernacular traditional Malay associations	Very strong vernacular traditional Malay associations	Colonial building with regard to the royal family belongings	To perform worship to Allah	To perform worship to Allah	Very strong vernacular traditional Malay associations	Symbol of independence	Neo-traditional with respect to the vernacular traditional	Daily market with majority of the traders are women	Shopping mall with the building design is adapted from the traditional giant drum.	Totally new building in new urbanization area.
Authentic/ inauthentic	authentic	authentic	authentic	inauthentic	inauthentic	authentic	authentic	inauthentic	pastiche	sympathetic to traditional	sympathetic to traditional	sympathetic to traditional

**Table 5.2. Site Survey Summary (Kota Bharu case study sites) – Activities and Meanings**

## 5.5 The Village Case Study

The Malay village - *kampung* - is a place where many traditional timber houses can be found. They are found in close proximity to the capital city of Kota Bharu, as well as throughout the districts of Kelantan. Normally, the *kampung* is located near paddy fields and surrounded by fruits trees and coconut trees where most of the people, especially the elderly, work as farmers. Every village will have a mosque for the Malay people to perform daily prayers as well as other religious activities.

Although there is little documentation on the geography of Malay villages, the current research observed that they have not developed as organized settlements. Private spaces have evolved around houses, particularly as enclosed gardens. Usually, houses have a fence to surround the area to provide more privacy for the family members. Additionally, there are often also semi-public spaces comprising shared gardens among adjacent houses or within clusters of them. Public spaces are present in the form of open areas in the village. The mosque and the community hall become important public venues for the village community. The open fields will become places for children to play, and normally there is no specific playground.

Most of the area in the rural settlement is not in a proper plan, and it has been evolved in an organic way by the people of the village creating their own layouts. The planning of space is based on individual families' desires and interests. Landscape design is not a big issue for the villagers; nevertheless small-scale landscape is a part of their daily life.

In general, most of the Malay houses are very close to each other and most of their owners come from the same family roots. The lands are normally inherited from parents. There is widespread evidence of new houses being made from concrete, with varying designs depending on the owners' wealth and preferences. For reasons that will be noted later, the traditional timber house is slowly being replaced by new house designs, and this is the key challenge to the conservation of vernacular heritage. In general, there is little attention to sympathetic siting, materials, scale or design in respect of new structures.

## 5.6 Conclusion

The integration of contemporary new design with Islamic and traditional approaches in Kelantan has been central to the making of the Islamic City of Kota Bharu. New urbanism and town planning in Kota Bharu have gradually changed the image of the traditional cultural city into a more contemporary Islamic city. Slowly, the image of the city is transforming to a new paradigm which appears to be gaining popular acceptance. However, Fee (1998) revealed that since the building boom of the 1970s, many of Malaysia's historic buildings have been demolished. Concurrent changes are also occurring in rural areas, where traditional building forms and materials are being lost, with little sense of the potential role of conservation.

Kota Bharu is a fast growing city with traditional, contemporary and Islamic elements in a royal town that still represents the Malay urban tradition. The heritage zone, which includes several historical palaces and a mosque, are the main contributors to the uniqueness of the Kelantan Malay heritage. The Palace of the Great Hall is the outstanding classic example from which to appreciate the nature of traditional Kelantan Malay vernacular architecture. Similarly, the authentic Kelantan Malay can be seen in some of the places in the heritage zone namely, Sultan Ismail Petra Arch, Kelantan Cultural Heritage Museum and Islamic Museum. Additionally, the Kampung Laut Mosque, which is renowned as the oldest surviving large wooden mosque in Malaysia, is an excellent example of authentic vernacular building in Kelantan Malay heritage.

In contrast, most of the new buildings in Kota Bharu are a mixture of traditional elements and Malaysian Islamic architectural identity. Some of buildings can be described as non-traditional but still sympathetic, because of the ways that contemporary and modern elements have been mixed with traditional ones. Other buildings, more heavily copied from other design concepts, may be deemed inauthentic.

A preliminary assessment of the case study locations confirmed that they illustrated the key tensions identified in the literature review. Hence, the case studies afford the opportunity to study at first hand the range of issues affecting the urban and rural cultural landscape of Kelantan Malay. Forces of globalisation, Islamisation and vernacular persistence are all present. Design responses include conservation, sympathetic adaptation, pastiche and relatively uncritical adoption of external styles. Numerous activities – social, economic and

religious – are accommodated within landscaped spaces and public realm. The case studies include examples that are consciously intended to fulfil imageable roles in the city, such as nodes and landmarks. The next three chapters analyse the evidence about these case study locations from the three main sources, namely, the Master Planning process, the visual analysis, and the interviews.

## **Chapter Six: EVIDENCE FROM THE MASTER PLANNING PROCESS: DOCUMENTARY ANALYSIS**

### **6.0 Introduction**

This chapter will discuss the findings from an analytical desk study of landscape and planning documents in Kelantan. In this chapter, most of the data were compiled from three main resources obtained from the Planning and Building Department, Kota Bharu Municipal Council, namely:

1. Landscape Master Plan of Kota Bharu December 2002,
2. Kota Bharu Islamic City Master Plan 2006- 2015 and Action Plan and
3. Guidelines of Kota Bharu Islamic City Design October 2005

Furthermore some of the acts and guidelines pertaining to landscape issues in Kelantan have been included in the study, namely:

1. Local Government Act, 1976 (Act 1971) /*Akta Kerajaan Tempatan, 1976 (Akta 1971)*
2. Open Space and Recreation Area Guidelines /*Garis Panduan Kawasan Lapang dan Rekreasi*
3. National Landscape Guidelines by National Landscape Department 2008/ *Garis Panduan Landskap Negara 2008*
4. Town and Country Planning Act 1976 /*Akta Perintah Pemeliharaan Pokok mengikut Akta A933, Akta Perancangan Bandar dan Desa 1976 (Pindaan 1995)*
5. Building Bye Laws 1974/ *Akta Jalan, Parit dan Bangunan, 1974 (Akta 133 Meluluskan Pelan Bangunan.*
6. Kota Bharu Municipal Council Islamic City Laws / Undang-Undang Kecil Majlis Perbandaran Kota Bharu Bandar Raya Islam; incorporating the Kota Bharu Municipal Council Park Laws 1986 / Undang-Undang Kecil Taman Majlis Perbandaran Kota Bharu 1986

Firstly, the chapter will discuss the findings from the concept of the Kota Bharu Islamic City and the design approaches that have been implemented in Kelantan. Secondly, this chapter will look into landscape and urban planning measures, specifically in Kota Bharu and

Kelantan. Finally this chapter will include some of the relevant issues that are currently taking place in Kelantan particularly in Kota Bharu city centre.

## 6.1 Findings from the Document Analysis

### 6.1.1 The Concept of the Kota Bharu Islamic City

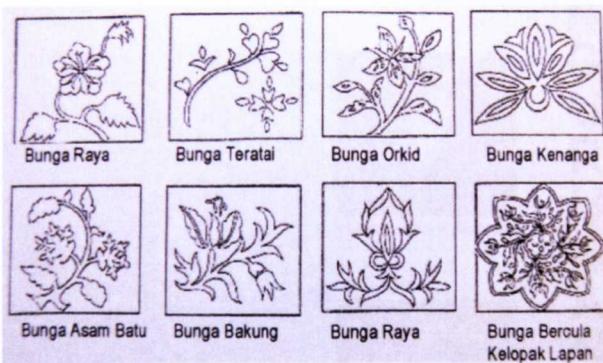
The documents revealed that most of the data pertaining to the making of the Kota Bharu Islamic City are based on Islamic City planning principles, adopted particularly from the Middle East countries. By referring to S. Gulzar Haider's Ideal Islamic City concept, the planning of the Kota Bharu Islamic City focuses on the development of the Islamic environment especially in generating Islamic characteristics and identities in the urban planning process. Equally, however, Kelantan traditional elements, mainly arts and culture, still prominently persist in conjunction with the Islamic and cultural city. The documents reveal that traditional Kelantan Malay arts, crafts and traditional games are among the elements that have been emphasized in the making of Kota Bharu Islamic City. Examples of the Kelantan Malay arts and culture are batik, songket, silver craft, shadow play/*wayang kulit*, kite/*wau*, giant drum/*rebana ubi* and spinning/*gasing*. Some of the main Kelantan Malay arts and culture suggested in the documents are illustrated in Figures 6.1 to 6.4. It is important to note the connection between art, culture and the physical landscape, as there is a strong association between the public realm and the performance of traditional culture – landscape design is important in creating activity spaces.



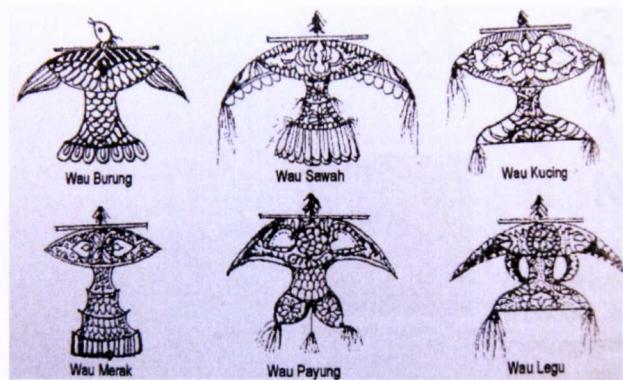
**Figure 6.1.** Kelantan Malay batik painting.  
*Source:* photo by the author.



**Figure 6.2.** Example of some of the roles in the shadow play. *Source:* photo by the author.



**Figure 6.3.** Example of the Malay crafts pattern. *Source:*Kota Bharu Municipal Council- Islamic City 2006-2015 Master Plan Report.



**Figure 6.4.** Traditional kite/wau. *Source:*Kota Bharu Municipal Council- Islamic City 2006-2015 Master Plan Report.

In creating the physical and Islamic environment, particularly in Kota Bharu, the municipal government has tried to balance the physical environment with the spiritual needs of local people. Furthermore, it is clear that the objectives of the Kota Bharu Islamic City are to provide safer and more conducive environments to the local people as well as to visitors. In addition, the correlation between humanity, environment and God are the main aspects that have been borne in mind in the planning issues.

In addition to overarching ideological concepts, detailed design guidelines have been produced for specific areas in Kota Bharu city centre for sites which are notable as nodal points in tourism areas and key activity areas. These areas comprise:

1. Kelantan River esplanade
2. Independence Square
3. Sultan Ismail Petra Square
4. Siti Khadijah Central Market area
5. MPKB Square
6. Cultural Square

The combination of traditional elements and Islamic design approaches are the main criteria in the particular areas that local government tries to influence in order to create the image of an Islamic City. In these areas, the design concept is based on Kelantan Malay vernacular architecture. The construction material is based on the mixture of new materials together with timber in order to reflect the vernacular image. Also, the use of traditional Kelantan Malay ornamentation, reflecting the arts and crafts tradition, has been required as part of the design specification in any new development. It appears that the combination of Islamic

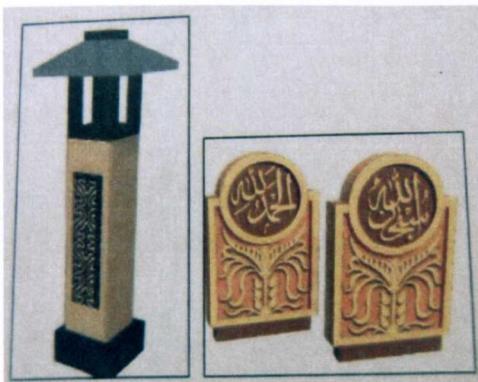
design pattern and the Kelantan Malay traditional element has become a new landscape design driver in developments in Kelantan. Examples of the design concepts that have been set as design guidelines for softscape and hardscape treatment can in Figure 6.5.



**Figure 6.5.** Example of design guidance. Here, the building structure is based on the design of Kelantan Malay vernacular architecture style especially related to the roof style. At the same time, the Islamic design element can be seen through the making of an arabesque geometry pattern design on the pavement area and the hardscape surroundings. *Source: Kota Bharu Municipal Council- Islamic City 2006-2015 Master Plan Report.*

#### 6.1.2 Islamic Design Concept

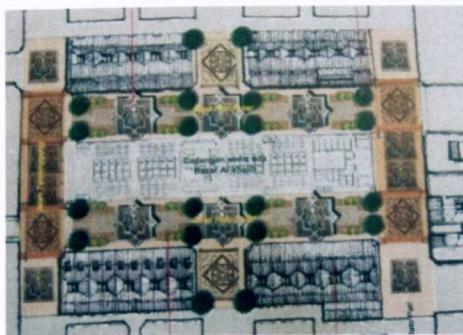
Islamic images and identities from other Islamic countries have been considered to enhance the Islamic identity of the cultural city of Kota Bharu. It was observed that the sources are not just from one particular country but are based on many Islamic design concepts generally from the Middle East. Some of the design approaches are varied especially in their hardscape design. Elements of the design approaches include signage design, bollards, arches, Islamic decoration on the walls of new buildings, floor pattern design on the pavement area and geometric fountain design. Some of the Islamic design elements that have been proposed as guidelines in the making of the Islamic City of Kota Bharu are illustrated in Figures 6.6-6.9.



**Figure 6.6.** Signage design.  
Source: Kota Bharu Municipal Council- Islamic City 2006-2015 Master Plan Report.



**Figure 6.7.** Bollard design. Source: Kota Bharu Municipal Council- Islamic City 2006-2015 Master Plan Report.



**Figure 6.8.** Floor pattern design.  
Source: Kota Bharu Municipal Council- Islamic City 2006-2015 Master Plan Report.



**Figure 6.9.** Islamic decoration to the building wall and structure. Source: Kota Bharu Municipal Council- Islamic City 2006-2015 Master Plan Report.

### 6.1.3 Traditional Design Concept

Meanwhile, the traditional design concepts are still important as part of the city's character and identity. The existing vernacular traditional architecture, especially in the historical and heritage area, is acknowledged as a highly noteworthy representation of Kelantan traditional styles. Examples of this design concept can be witnessed especially in Jahar Palace, Palace of the Great Hall and Kelantan Arts and Crafts Village. The roof design structure, construction materials, ornament and crafts all convey the rich symbols of Kelantan Malay architecture and design. Significantly, the traditional design concept from this area becomes a landscape driver in the making of contemporary designs in Kelantan. Examples of the traditional elements that have been set as guidelines for making new landscapes are illustrated in Figures 6.10 and 6.11.



**Figure 6.10.** Old traditional Kelantan Malay design at the entrance of the Palace of the Great Hall.  
*Source:* photo by the author.



**Figure 6.11.** New traditional design at Sultan Ismail Arch area adapted from the entrance of the Palace of the Great Hall which later became a landmark of Kelantan. *Source:* photo by the author.

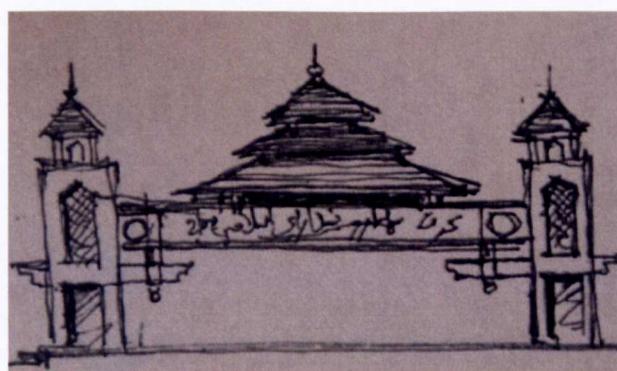
#### 6.1.4 Design Elements

It is clearly stated in all documents that every planning measure in Kota Bharu city centre has to be based on the objective of creating an Islamic city environment which is rich with Islamic identities and characteristics that contribute high quality design elements. It is stated in the documents that the priority in Kota Bharu city centre is on forging the Islamic image and associated identities. The proposals may be viewed in a Lynchian sense, as so much attention is being given to a powerful new imagery to the city. This is especially being

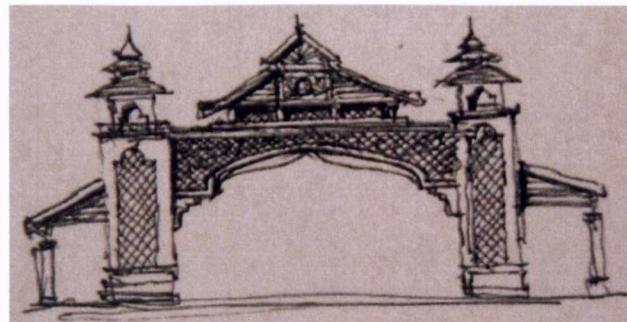
reflected in an urgent desire to re-image the entrance of the city centre, the key landmarks and the nodes of activity. Moreover, the documents revealed that some of new locations in Kota Bharu city centre have been identified as foci to integrate with the new development of Islamic City. Three existing main roads - Jalan Kuala Krai, Jalan Sultan Yahya Petra and Jalan Pengkalan Chepa - have been classified as the primary entrances to the city centre, where more Islamic identities can be added to the existing streetscape. The combination of Islamic and traditional design elements can be seen through the proposals for archway designs for each road. The use of Arabic letters and arabesque design patterns were among the widely used approaches to represent the image of the Islamic city (Figures 6.12-6.14).



**Figure 6.12.** Proposed archway design at Jalan Kuala Krai. *Source:* Kota Bharu Municipal Council- Islamic City 2006-2015 Master Plan Report.



**Figure 6.13.** Proposed archway design at Jalan Sultan Yahya Petra. *Source:* Kota Bharu Municipal Council- Islamic City 2006-2015 Master Plan Report.



**Figure 6.14.** Proposed archway design at Jalan Pengkalan Chepa. *Source:* Kota Bharu Municipal Council- Islamic City 2006-2015 Master Plan Report.

All the proposed archway designs showed the traditional elements being reflected in the roof design structure, while the Islamic designs elements have been incorporated in the wall decoration and arabesque patterns. At the same time, the use of Arabic calligraphy in the archways is employed to reflect the importance of Islamic values to the Kelantan people.

The plans also now propose that the state mosque of Masjid Muhammadi should become a new principal landmark of Kota Bharu Islamic City. The concept of Islamic Moorish style combined with traditional Malay design is the key principle underlying the design style. The strategic location in the heritage zone of Kota Bharu is critical to its contribution to the image of Kota Bharu Islamic City.



**Figure 6.15.** Masjid Muhammadi. *Source:* photo by the author.

In addition, the documents reveal how the Clock Tower area has been enhanced with Islamic ornamental concepts that can assert a first impression on the people who visit Kota Bharu city centre. The use of arabesque pattern design and water elements in the area represents the concept of the paradise garden in the Islamic world. It was found that in Kota Bharu Islamic City the paradise paradigm is imitated through a combination of both a material impression of beauty and a non-material allusion that contributes to the indigenous traditional and Islamic design style (Figure 6.16).



**Figure 6.16.** The use of an Islamic ornamental design at the Clock Tower area that symbolises a reflection of the paradise garden in the Islamic heritage world. *Source:* photo by the author.

Subsequently, the nodes of activity have been identified for some of the strategic areas which are readily accessible to most of the urban population. The concept underlying the design of open space areas like plazas, squares and esplanades is that of providing a focal point to people's activities. The documents state that the area along the Kelantan River has great potential to be enhanced as one of the main attractors in Kota Bharu city centre. As a result, the Kelantan Riverbank Esplanade has been proposed to ensure that it can become one of the principal images of Kota Bharu Islamic City.

#### 6.1.5 Landscape Planning

Being identified as an Islamic and cultural city, Kota Bharu Municipal Council has prepared practical planning guidelines, especially on landscape and urban planning, to ensure that the objectives of the Islamic City can be achieved. Based on the documents, the landscape development of Kota Bharu City Centre has been divided into three main zones which include:

1. Heritage Zone – The main tourism area in Kota Bharu which is surrounded by many historical buildings, palaces, museums and galleries. These include the

Palace of the Great Hall, Jahar Palace, Royal Museum, Kelantan Arts and Craft Village Gallery, Independence Square, War Museum and State Mosque.

2. Business Zone – The area includes the business area in Kota Bharu especially the Siti Khadijah Central Market and its surroundings.
3. Recreation and Cultural Zone.

#### 6.1.6 Islamic Design Guidelines

Based on the documents, it was stated that the design guidelines have to consider Islamic values in order to fulfil the concept of the Islamic City. Some of design principles that have been suggested include:

- i. Every design has to remind people about almighty God.
- ii. Every design has to assure a good quality of space.
- iii. Every design has to be at a human scale to promote comfort and safety.
- iv. Garden design should consider the human senses of feeling, smell and sight.
- v. Garden spaces should consider the flow and circulation in ways that provide privacy for people.

The reflection of the Islamic design approaches can be seen in many places in Kelantan particularly in Kota Bharu city centre, for example the Sultan Ismail Arch area in the Heritage Zone (Figure 6.17). A specific example is the use of the Holy Quran symbol on top of the traditional Kelantan Malay style of pillar, which in turn has become one of the key types of landmark contributing to the image of the new city.



**Figure 6.17.** Sultan Ismail Arch at the Sultan Ismail Petra Square. *Source:* photo by the author.

Additionally, the use of water elements in conjunction with the concept of the paradise garden has become another important type of landmark in the creation of the Islamic city. It can be seen in the Clock Tower area through its use of a water fountain and water cascade.

The pre-eminent message is that municipal government is pursuing the aim to assert the image of the “Mecca Corridor” as the most important element in the making of Kota Bharu Islamic City. The emphasis on Islamic images can be seen in many aspects of the design policies and guidelines in Kelantan.

## 6.2 Planning Policies

### 6.2.1 Kelantan Tourism Policy (*Dasar Pelancongan Negeri Kelantan*)

These documents expand upon the Kelantan Strategic Development Plan by promoting the development of tourism as a major objective for state economic development by utilizing local products in order to boost domestic and international tourism in Kelantan. They identify the three major foci of Kelantan Tourism Policy as:

1. To promote and enhance the concept of:
  - a. The image of Mecca Corridor
  - b. Kota Bharu as a Cultural City

- c. Cultural zone and Knowledge zone
- d. Islamic celebration days such as *Eid Fitri*, *Eid Adha* and *Ramadhan*
- 2. To upgrade and promote Islamic educational institution
- 3. To promote Kelantan local products, especially arts and culture.

#### 6.2.2 Kota Bharu Municipal Council Landscape Development Strategic Plan

The Kota Bharu Municipal Council landscape development strategic plan sets out four main action areas for overall landscape strategy, namely:

- i. To provide public realms

It is stated that Kota Bharu Municipal Council, in collaboration with other government bodies, will provide more public realms in Kota Bharu, and the plan identifies funding streams. The selection of areas of public realm will be based both on target groups and local socio-economic factors. At the same time, the participation of the local community will be encouraged in order to promote the cleanliness of areas of public realm.

- ii. To safeguard the green environment

In order to make sure that there is a balance between new development and the environment, it is important to retain protected areas like riverbank areas, wetland areas and village areas. Two key strategies are:

- a. To protect the areas above as green areas and to assure that only suitable recreation and tourism development occur. Some of these have been identified as protected recreation areas, especially potential lands along the Kelantan River such as Sireh Valley.
- b. To provide more effective planting schemes in Kota Bharu in order to make sure that the landscape environment is in good condition. Some of the actions involve undertaking plant inventory, and the aims include the use of tree preservation measures and provision of good landscape maintenance.

### iii. Landscape themes and design principles

The overall landscape theme is Flower Garden Land (*Taman Serendah Sekebun Bunga*) where the priorities are those of the Islamic city concept and the enhancement of local elements. In order to realize this concept, some of the areas in Kota Bharu have been divided into themes and concepts based on their existing landscape characteristics. New landscape designs have to have regard to vernacular traditional architecture as well as climatic factors, socio-cultural issues and the Islamic way of life. The use of local plants is part of a consideration to ensure that culture and heritage are central to landscape development.

### iv. Landscape management

The documents reveal that in order to achieve the effective development of landscape, there is a need to provide comprehensive and frequent landscape management. Some of the strategies aim:

- a. To make sure that local people follow suitable design landscape guidelines in each development zone.
- b. To improve the ability, proficiency and professionalism of the landscape planning department of Kota Bharu Municipal Council.
- c. To make a partnership between other sectors including private, non-governmental and government bodies.
- d. To make sure that the planning of the landscape and recreation areas are established especially in terms of planning and design.
- e. To organize the landscape and public realm with more systematic approaches.

## 6.3 The Acts and Guidelines

Acts and guidelines in Kelantan have been implemented in order to ensure conformity to regulations, including in landscape planning. The documents highlight that any new landscape feature should be sympathetic to existing character and identity. For example in the areas where there is a strong sense of place or an existing high quality landscape, it would be appropriate to emulate the elements to enhance the visual environment and achieve sensitive integration. The use of planting in maintaining and framing desirable views and restricting poor views can reinforce landscape character.

The National Landscape Guidelines set out by the National Landscape Department (2008 edition) have been used as the main reference in order to deal with the general issues of landscape planning. The guidelines are regarded as a main source for every municipal council in Malaysia to manage landscape planning issues in their local authority area. It was first published in 1995 in conjunction with the national government with the intention of providing comprehensive landscape guidance to local authorities. The second edition (2008) has expanded guidelines to reflect the national government's desire to move towards the Beautiful Garden City by 2020. Moreover the guideline is based on various government decisions on landscape planning issues, especially:

- i. Landscaping The Nation – 24 Mei 1995
- ii. Planting: Flowers and Trees with Changing Leaf Colour– Mai 2002
- iii. Planting: Very Large Flower Trees– 7 Mei 2003
- iv. Relevant soils for Landscaping Works – 21 Mei 2003
- v. Hibiscus Flower Planting – 3 Mac 2005
- vi. Planting: Trees for Shade– 30 Mei 2007

Meanwhile, due to the Islamic laws that are currently enforced by the state government, the Kota Bharu Municipal Council Islamic City Laws have been reviewed and some amendments have been made to ensure the robustness of the decisions relative to Islamic requirements. For example, a new dress code has been introduced to the local Muslims in the private and governmental sectors.

Under the National Heritage Act 2005, heritage buildings are recognized as important elements of the tangible heritage, and may be gazetted accordingly. However, landscape features are not included. Under this Act, over 30 heritage buildings in Malaysia have been gazetted as heritage buildings, although none of these are in Kelantan.

#### 6.4 Discussion

The Kota Bharu Islamic City plan has been based on political and cultural agendas that raise many interesting contextual issues for an exploration of contemporary landscape practice. The adaptation from the concept of Ideal Islamic City by S. Gulzar Haider as a role model in the making of Kota Bharu Islamic City is a pivotal feature of planning strategy, but its implementation has also required sensitivity to other local aspects because of regional differences in culture and environment. The model of the Islamic City has to fit with local

sentiments and different cultures and traditions among the Kelantan people, compared with other Muslim communities in the world. In order to make sure that all the people benefit from the implementation of the Kota Bharu Islamic City, it is not simply a case of creating a catalogue based on other Islamic Cities. Local government has to be more aware about the needs of local people rather than merely to fulfil party agendas. The effectiveness of the Kota Bharu Islamic City is not merely to be judged for a short period, but needs to be considered over the long term.

The making of the Kota Bharu Islamic City requires the municipal council and the state government to make sure that all the local people are fully aware about the concept of the Islamic City. The authenticity of Kota Bharu Islamic City needs to be affirmed so that it becomes well known in the other Islamic countries and does not just become another Cairo or Isfahan, for example. People's acceptance of the Islamic City has to be considered and awareness needs to be raised about the concept and its effectuation through the imagery of the Mecca Corridor and its reflection in lifestyles. Moreover, feedback from local people has to be gathered to improve the effectiveness of the concept and improve planning in the future.

From the documents, it was clear that landscape planning strategy and practice in the Kota Bharu Islamic City is well developed in order to confer Islamic images upon civic and state identities. However, too many adaptations from other design concepts may change the authenticity of the traditional and vernacular design that has made Kelantan famous. New approaches should tackle the balance between traditional and Islamic designs and other contemporary designs, so that the essence of the Kelantan vernacular landscape is not overridden.

A principal reason for using a mixed methods research design is that findings from one line of enquiry can feed into the methodology for another stage. In this regard, the document analysis revealed a number of design elements that assisted in the field mapping of case study sites. These are particularly helpful in making preliminary inferences about the kinds of factors that might exemplify traditional, neo-traditional and modern Islamic influences. These elements and indicators are summarised in Table 6.1.

	Design elements	Traditional	Neo-traditional	Modern Islamic
1	Decorative arts	Use of Kelantan Malay arts, crafts and traditional games e.g. batik, <i>songket</i> , silver craft, shadow play, kite, giant drum and spinning	Mixture of traditional and modern Islamic	Islamic arts and identities from other Islamic countries
2	Ornament	Traditional floral pattern motifs	Mixture of traditional and modern	Islamic decoration motifs
3	Building styles	Use of Kelantan Malay vernacular architecture e.g. roof design	Mixture of traditional and modern	Islamic decoration to the wall and building structure
4	Construction materials	The use of timber materials	Mixture of timber and concrete	Concrete
5	Water element	Traditional ceramic, terracotta pot	Mixture	Geometric fountain as reflection of paradise garden
6	Floor Design	Made by timber	Mixture	Arabesque floor pattern design
7	Calligraphy design	Floral motifs	Mixture	Use of Arabic calligraphy and Arabesque design motifs
8	Planting strategies	Tropical plants based on the Flower Garden Land concept	Mixture	Palm trees as dominant and creation of Paradise garden
9	Example of the palace	-Palace of the Great Hall -Kelantan Cultural Heritage Museum (also known as Jahar Palace)	Sultan Ismail Arch	-State Mosque which is influenced by Islamic Moorish style - Clock Tower roundabout

**Table 6.1.** Design elements drawn from the document analysis stage

## 6.5 Conclusion

The document analysis has shown how the planning of the Kota Bharu Islamic City represents a classic example of how religious, traditional and contemporary urban planning concepts have been applied in creating new imagery. Political and cultural issues are among the considerations that have been taken into account to try to ensure that implementation ties in with local characteristics and identities. The making of the Islamic City of Kota Bharu is based on the Islamic City concept from other Middle East countries with some adaptation to local cultures and styles. The application of the Islamic City through traditional identities combined with contemporary design is transforming the character of the Kelantan Malay

cultural landscape. The landscape is becoming more varied and reflects the concept of *Developing with Islam* that the municipal government is trying to achieve. Ultimately, Islamisation is one of the strong drivers in the making of new urban realm in Kelantan particularly in Kota Bharu city centre. Islamic approaches, especially in urban and landscape planning in Kelantan, have contributed a new cultural face that appears to have popular acceptance.

From the analysis, it emerged clearly in all the three main categories of documents that the concept of Ideal Islamic City by S. Gulzar Haider has become a model for the planning of the Kota Bharu Islamic City. Here, the focus is on the development of the Islamic environment with Islamic characteristics and identities through the urban planning process. Furthermore, the traditional elements are still prominent, and fused with the elements of Islamic design. The connection between Kelantan Malay art, culture and the physical landscape are still important to promote a traditional culture and Islamic design in the public realm.

As adapted in Islamic design, landscape is an important material expression of the concept of showing respect to God, as well as being a symbol of the beauty of the paradise garden derived from the Holy Quran. Examples of landscape design approaches can be seen in many places particularly in Kota Bharu city centre for example in the Clock Tower roundabout area where the concept of Paradise Garden is being implemented by the use of water elements together with the Islamic structures. Apart from that, many Islamic images and identities from the other Islamic countries have been planned in order to enhance Kota Bharu – for instance, the use of signage, bollards, arches, Islamic decoration on walls, arabesque floor patterns and geometric water fountains.

From the documents, it is clearly stated that the priority in the shaping of the future City is to create Islamic images and identities. Meanwhile, the state mosque of Masjid Muhammadi in the heritage zone has been proposed to become a new landmark of Kota Bharu Islamic City. In addition, the Clock Tower area has been enhanced with Islamic ornamental concepts especially the Quran structure to represent the concept of the paradise garden in the Islamic world.

This chapter has further clarified the effort that is necessary to safeguard the rich cultural heritage in order to make sure that traditional values can contribute alternative approaches to

contemporary design planning. By making the cultural heritage a priority in every aspect of planning design, the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape may be enriched. Islamic approaches can add new values by contributing to the variety of design concepts in Kelantan Malay styles. The Kelantan Tourism Policy shows support for the three major aims of promoting and enhancing the concept of the image of Mecca Corridor and Kota Bharu as a Cultural City, upgrading and promoting Islamic educational institutions, and promoting Kelantan local products especially arts and culture. At the same time, the landscape theme of Kota Bharu has been based on the Flower Garden Land in reference to the traditional royal garden concepts developed in Kelantan during the 15<sup>th</sup> century. There is a natural connection between Islamic conceptions of the paradise garden and the tradition of Flower Garden Land. Through this tradition, a more authentic Kelantan Malay cultural landscape expression might evolve, rather than importing a design principle from the Middle East. In addition, there are significant traditional floral and Islamic calligraphy motifs that could be used instead of adopting the styles of Islamic calligraphy from Middle East countries. For example, the Islamic decorative panel wall from Arab countries could be replaced with the more indigenous Islamic decorative motifs.

In order to corroborate the finding from the document analysis, it was important to undertake visual analysis in order to confirm the actual situation in Kota Bharu. Hence, the next chapter will deal with the evidence from the visual analysis in order to assess the extent and success of plan implementation, and the actual nature of urban imagery.

## **Chapter Seven: EVIDENCE FROM THE VISUAL ANALYSIS**

### **7.0 Introduction**

This chapter reports on the findings from field survey and visual analysis. The main purpose of this chapter is that, to date, there has been no clear documentation of the nature of the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape, so this chapter provides a survey and interpretation of the basic resource. It also provides an opportunity to assess the municipal and state governments' intentions to respect the traditional legacy, whilst creating a coherent new image. Cultural landscape is taken to include the exterior spaces that make up the public realm, as well as the materials, ornaments, gardens and enclosed spaces of vernacular buildings as these often bear a close relationship to the external landscape. Initially, this chapter describes the methods, and then presents findings from the documents. A discussion and conclusion will then be provided.

### **7.1 Methods: Observation and the Case Study Areas**

This chapter describes the case studies, and evaluates existing sites and their surroundings. When doing the physical and social observations, some of the criteria concern the overall appearance of vernacular elements, existing characteristics, sense of place, vegetation, hardscape elements, open space, and heritage architecture. In addition, the field survey analysis considers the design approach in relation to current changes.

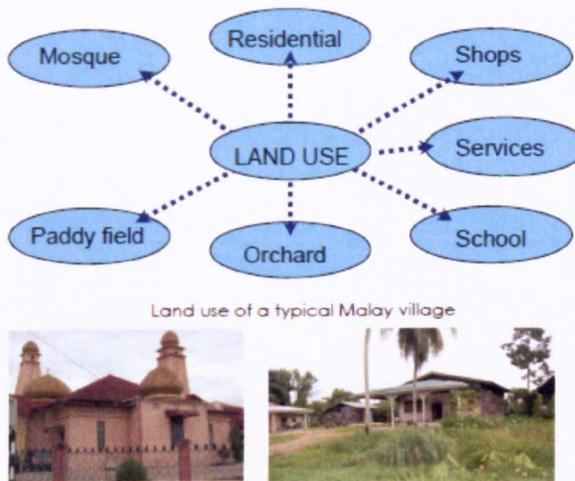
The sites have been chosen in order to enable a historical perspective to be documented. They therefore included areas with historical vernacular architecture, especially in the historic zone of Kota Bharu and the traditional Malay villages. The survey included townscape analysis and visual analysis. The site analyses included recent changes to urban structure where planned new developments have occurred. Records taken during the field survey have been made using a survey proforma and photographic records.

The research involved both deductive and inductive reasoning processes. Since the observations were conducted at the same time as the interviews and study of documents, some ideas arising from field survey were informed by interviewees' comments as well as document content. Further, the surveys have been related to theories explored during the literature review, in order that field evidence can support theoretically informed views. As

noted in Section 6.4, for example, the document analysis helped to identify specific design elements that can be sought in the field.

## 7.2 Findings

### 7.2.1 The traditional Kelantan Malay rural settlement (Refer to Figures 7.1, 7.2,7.3)



The mosque is very important to the Malay community and normally situated at the centre of the village.



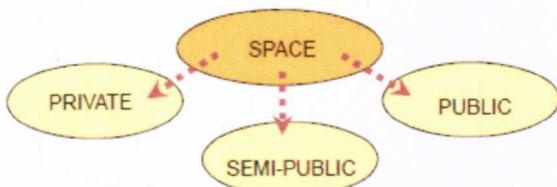
The orchard normally produces a variety of local fruits. A small number of farm animals, such as cows, goats, chicken and ducks are normally kept together.



A very typical Kelantan Malay house which can still be found in the rural settlement area. Nowadays, more and more people prefer to build concrete houses. Hence, the traditional timber house is slowly being supplanted.

New house design - made from concrete - is in quite common use nowadays. Concrete is used in preference to timber because of cost and ease of supply. Due to climatic factors, the concrete house is stronger and longer lasting compared to the timber house.

**Figure 7.1. ANALYSIS 7.1 : The Traditional Kelantan Malay Rural Settlement -Land Use**



Types of space in a typical Malay village



Private space



Main road where normally there will be shops and other services.

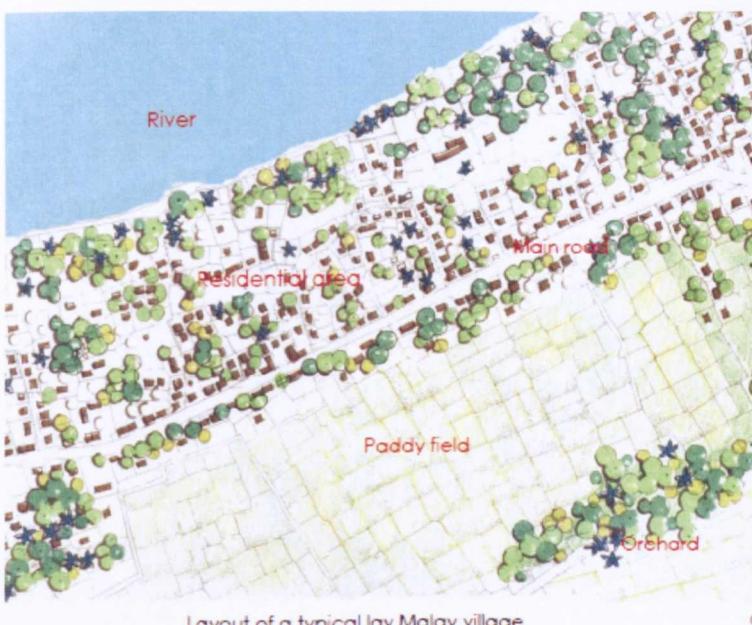


Secondary road that connects people to local areas.

The images here show how the space becomes private, semi-public or public. Most of the area in the rural settlement is not in a proper plan. Instead, the people of the village create the layouts themselves. The planning of space is based on individual families' desires and interests. Some of the spaces evolve naturally. Landscape design is not a big issue for the villagers; nevertheless small-scale landscape is a part of their daily life.



**Figure 7.2. ANALYSIS 7.1 : The Traditional Kelantan Malay Rural Settlement - Types of Space**



Layout of a typical Malay village



In general, a Malay village is not developed as an organized settlement area. Before the main road existed most of the people relied on the river for transportation and the use of water. When the road was introduced, the people started to build their houses near it. The village became wider and more facilities were provided for the villagers.



Coconut tree is very popular amongst the people



The paddy field - a common scene in a Malay village



Traditional Malay house showing the characteristic roof design.

**Figure 7.3. ANALYSIS 7.1 : The Traditional Kelantan Malay Rural Settlement - Layout**

Field survey has confirmed the centrality in a typical Malay village of a mosque for the Malay people to do prayer and perform any religious activities. The design of the mosques is varied and normally will have a minaret and a high tower (Figures 7.4, 7.5).



**Figure 7.4.** Example of new mosque design in suburban area in Kelantan. *Source:* photos by the author.

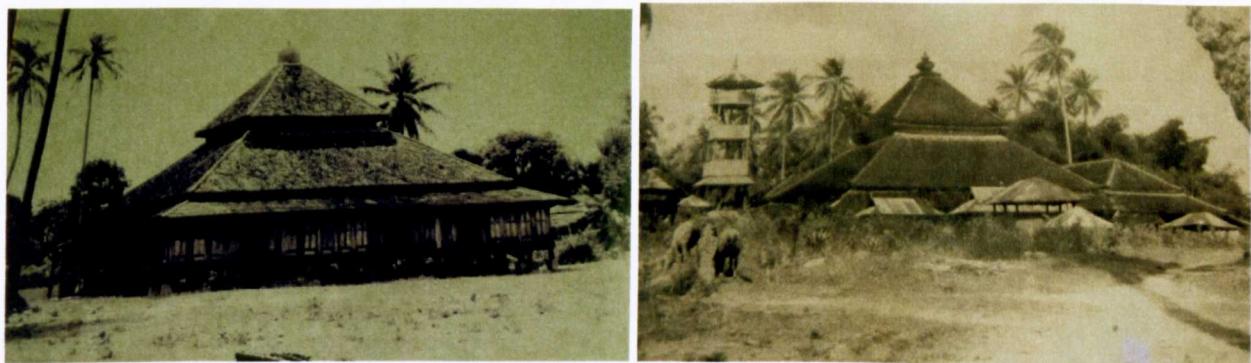


**Figure 7.5.** Example of new mosque design in Kota Bharu city centre, Kelantan. *Source:* photo by the author.

The survey also incorporated a traditional Kelantan Malay mosque that has been preserved as an example of vernacular Kelantan Malay style (Figures 7.6, 7.7). Kampung Laut Mosque is symbolic of traditional architecture, rich with authentic design of the Kelantan Malay. This example remains as the oldest mosque in Malaysia. It was believed that the mosque has been built during 15<sup>th</sup> century after the arrival of Islam during 13<sup>th</sup> century and became a renowned mosque to learn about the spread of Islam in South East Asia. In 1966 there was a severe flood in Kelantan that demolished some of the structures of Kampung Laut. Therefore the municipal government removed the building to a safer location in Nilam Puri, Kota Bharu about 32 km away from the original location.



**Figure 7.6.** Kampung Laut Mosque is well-known as one of the earliest mosques in Kelantan which has been constructed according to the authentic Kelantan Malay vernacular architecture design. The location has been removed to Nilam Puri, Kota Bharu but still remains for performing prayer. The original location was based on Kampung Laut, 32 km away from the current location. *Source:* photos by the author.



**Figure 7.7.** Old photographs of the Kampung Laut Mosque at the actual location. *Source:* Museum of Kelantan.

Generally, most of the Malay houses in rural settlements can be seen to lie very close to each other (Figure 7.8). Most of them remain in the same family, the lands normally having been inherited from parents. The traditional Malay house, which is made from timber, can readily be found in the village area. In the Malay traditional houses, the most distinctive vernacular attributes appear to be the raised floor construction, the flexibility of spaces and the use of readily available rain forest materials in the best possible way to counter the hot-humid climate. The basic planning of the traditional Kelantan Malay house is a manifestation of the two complementary factors of sitting and doing things on the floor and the provision of ventilation at this level. The second defining feature of the interior space is consideration of the Islamic way of life. The zoning design normally will consider the privacy of the women from the non-family members.



**Figure 7.8.** Some of the traditional timber Kelantan Malay houses that are still occupied in the rural settlement area. Normally the house is not painted and left as natural timber colour. *Source:* photos by the author.

Timber forms the major component of the traditional houses. For example, they can be seen to use *cengal* and *merbau* so that they are strong, hard, heavy and relatively durable under severe local conditions. The Kelantan traditional Malay house can be seen to be distinguished by its sharp, elaborate exterior profiles, its elaborate decorative works, and the variety of materials used. The external walls of the main house are typically decorated with moulded timber panels and carvings of a very high quality in workmanship and design. The design used on buildings must be derived from, or inspired by, patterns of leaves and branches of local trees and plants and occasionally by native wild flowers found in rural areas. Decorative bamboo panels are also used to give variety and to emphasize the utilitarian parts of the house, such as the enclosure of wells and kitchen units at the rear side (Figure 7.9).



**Figure 7.9.** Examples of some of the decorative works that are applied on the wall, roof and door of the traditional Kelantan Malay house found in Kampung Laut rural settlement area. *Source:* photos by the author.

In contrast, it was found that most of the new houses are treated as a symbol of family status. They are made from concrete and the designs are varied, depending on the owner's budget and interests. The house is built on the ground level without raising the floor. The materials have completely changed from the vernacular buildings. The use of concrete is common for the new houses as timber has become relatively much more expensive. The layout design has totally changed and new designs have adopted various concepts. Furthermore, some of the traditional houses have been demolished to be replaced with new concrete houses. Normally, the new houses are painted in a variety of colours depending on the owner's taste, typically seeking to contrast the natural timber colours with the traditional ones (Figure 7.10).



**Figure 7.10.** Example of new concrete houses in rural settlement area in Kelantan. The design and the structure are totally different with the traditional timber house. *Source:* photos by the author.

Most of the village area is typically planted with paddy fields. Also, the Malay people normally have their own orchards and varieties of local fruits, planted here for their own needs as well as to sell in the nearest town. In the Malay village, private space refers to the enclosed garden in a private house. Normally some of the houses have a fence to surround the area to provide more privacy for the family members. Semi-public space may refer to a shared garden among the nearest houses or among the same cluster. Public space refers to the open area in the village. The mosque and the community hall normally become the public space for the village community. Open fields will become a place for children to play among themselves; normally, there is no provision of specific play areas.

Most of the areas in the rural settlement are not in a proper plan. Instead, the people of the village plan the space themselves, and this is based on individual families' desires and interests. In general, a Malay village is not developed as an organized settlement area. Before the main road was introduced, most of the people relied on the river for

transportation and daily usage. When a road was constructed, people started to build their houses close to this. Also, the village tended to spread out as more facilities were provided for the villagers.

Finally, it may be noted that “memory” in the kampungs is often associated with activities rather than structures. For example during Eid celebration, a majority of city people will return to their village. It is a notable in Malaysia, during Eid, that the city empties as thousands of people move to their village area. This is an aspect of intangible culture that contributes to the continuing authenticity of even rapidly changing villages, and might be considered to be an expression of the “glocal”.

#### 7.2.2 The Urban and the City Centre Areas (Refer to Figures 7.12 -7.16)

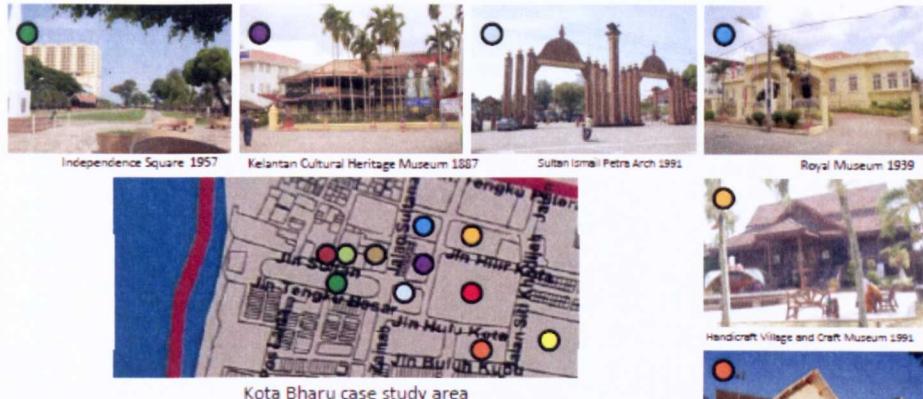
Kota Bharu city centre has three major nodes, namely, Siti Khadijah Central Market, KB Mall and Sireh Valley. The historical and commercial area blends together in ways that help to make Kota Bharu city centre both an Islamic and a more traditional entity. The survey found that only a few public open spaces are provided in the city centre. However, some of the key landmarks in the city centre do possess a well maintained landscape, for example, at the Clock Tower roundabout (Figure 7.11). The design is based on a combination of the Islamic garden and the Malay garden style.



**Figure 7.11.** The Clock Tower roundabout in the heart of Kota Bharu city centre has become one of the significant landmarks of Kota Bharu whereby Islamic design concepts have been applied as one of the political Islamic power in Kelantan. *Source:* photo by the author.

## Introduction

Kelantan is well known as a cradle of Malay cultures as most of the traditional Malay cultures can still be found there. These traditional arts and cultural practices are instilled with the essence of the regional identity. Significantly the traditional 'vernacular' also plays a vital role in creating the beauty of the cultural landscape. There is a recognisable architecture and landscape that could be identified as distinctive within the Malay Archipelago. Further, Kelantan regional styles were among the most important trademarks to the making of the national identity of Malaysia. These have led to Kelantan becoming popular as a cultural tourism destination in Malaysia.



Kota Bharu case study area

### The focus of the case study

Since Kota Bharu is presently in a state of rapid change, there is a need to assess how the new development is affecting the unique values of the Kelantan Malay landscape. By understanding these values, it is hoped to better respect heritage in contemporary landscape design. The investigation highlights the authentic traditional elements that the former cultural landscape can offer to contemporary planners, landscape architects, and municipal administrators in order to preserve the integrity and the beauty of the Kelantan Malay landscape. Conservation and better planning will ensure that the survival of the Kelantan Malay landscape will endure for the next generation.



Areal view of the study case area

Islamic Museum 1920

State Mosque 1925

World War Museum 1912

The Palace with the Great Wall 1840

Figure 7.12. ANALYSIS 7.2 : The Urban and City Centre of Kota Bharu Area

## The Kota Bharu case study area

Studies of the following areas are presented:

1. Heritage zone
2. Open space area
3. Market area : Siti Khadijah Central Market & KB Mall
4. New urbanisation area: Sireh Valley

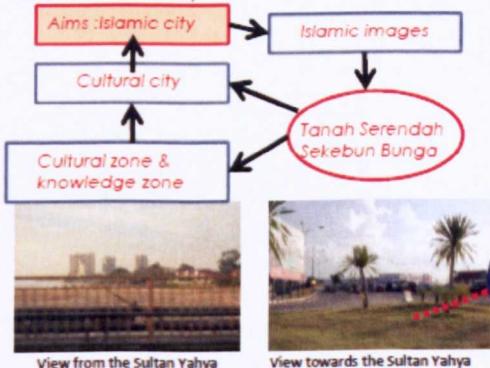
## The concept of the Islamic City

The idea of the Islamic city was based on the state government concept i.e. Development with Islam. It was concerned with the relationship between human, environment and God.



## The landscape design of Kota Bharu

In conjunction with the Islamic city concept, the aims for landscape development were based on the combination of Islamic values and the aesthetic elements of the Kelantan region. The concepts were known as Tanah Serendah Sekebun Bunga (Valley of the Flower Garden Land).



View from the Sultan Yahya Petra Bridge

View towards the Sultan Yahya Petra Bridge

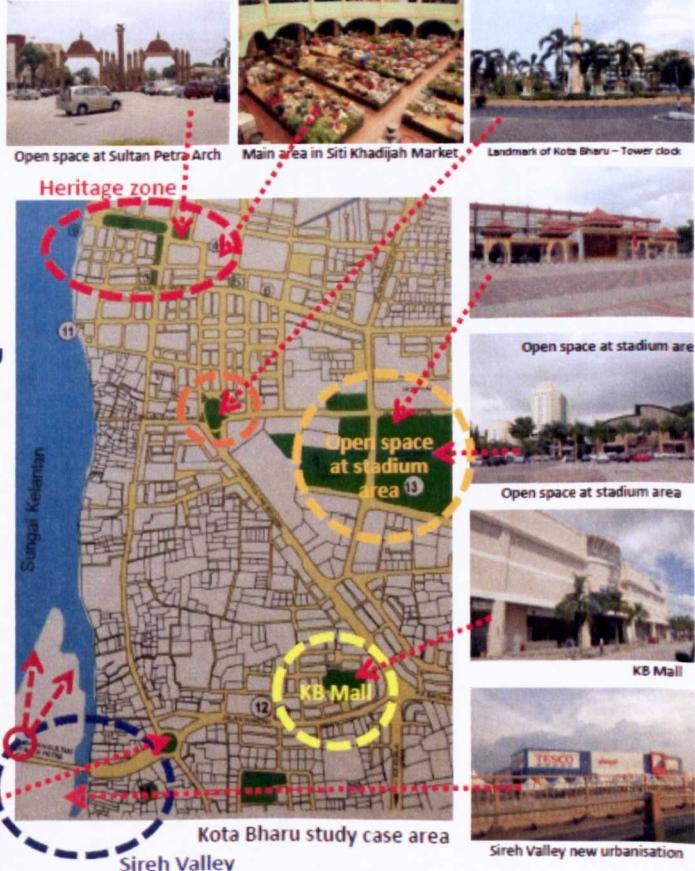
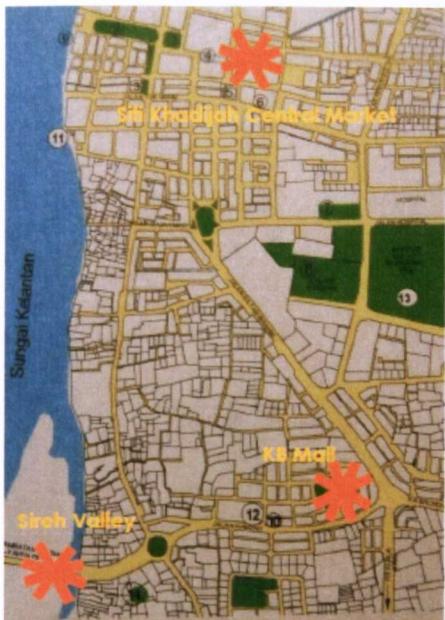


Figure 7.13. ANALYSIS 7.2 - The Urban and City Centre of Kota Bharu Area



Map 1: Nodes of Kota Bharu city centre



#### Signage

The street is lack of signage. Some of them are totally out of place. Some of the signage is a bit confusing especially for the foreigners and first timers.

#### Nodes

In Kota Bharu city centre there are three main nodes that serve to attract large numbers of people - Siti Khadijah Central Market, KB Mall and the Sireh Valley. These are the principal business centres.



#### Street planting

Trees are planted in linear fashion along the streets. All trees come close to corners and line the street. Some of them are clustered in specific places, especially in parking areas. There also have trees which not follow a special pattern and some of them are planted above the walkway. Palms give a special effect to the street. They are planted in linear and in group base on the character and suitability.



#### Planters

Concrete planters are placed around street lights. These add interest to the street scene.

#### Street lighting

Three types of lighting which are used on the street. Lights are spaced about 5 meters apart, and are effective. The material used is steel. One of street lighting in particular has combines the usage of illumination with being a landscape feature.

Figure 7.14. ANALYSIS 7.2 : The Urban and City Centre of Kota Bharu Area - Nodes



Central reservation planting along the way to the Clock Tower roundabout.



Some mature trees remain along the main road. Problems include root damage to the pavement area branches falling to the ground during the rainy season.



Another archway near the Clock Tower roundabout. This temporary archway is celebrating the anniversary of the Sultan Kelantan.



The archway has become a trademark to the Kelantan image. This archway is located near the Kota Bharu airport. It reflects a sense of welcoming visitors.



The public open space near the heritage zone provide some shelters and benches but because the location is not in a strategic place, this garden does not attract people to come and relax.



The landscape design at the Clock Tower roundabout is an example of good landscape maintenance. The design is based on the combination of the Islamic garden and the Malay garden style.

Figure 7.15. ANALYSIS 7.2 : The Urban and City Centre of Kota Bharu Area - Streetscape



Palm trees dominate here as a reflection of Islamic garden and become one of the landmarks in Kota Bharu city centre.



Some of the landscape structures situated at the centre of the roundabout. They represent a reminder of the Holy Quran for the Kelantan Malay people.



The billboard at one of the junctions at the city centre. The use of Arabic writing is compulsory in order to represent the Islamic city.



The billboard specially built for the Sultan Kelantan in conjunction with the anniversary. The design approach is combination of traditional and contemporary design.



The row of planting along the walkway in front of the Kota Bharu Municipal building. Other walkways in Kota Bharu city centre area are generally deficient in tree planting.



Landscape design at the busiest road in Kota Bharu near Sireh Valley. Palm trees are used in order to represent the Islamic city.

**Figure 7.16. ANALYSIS 7.2 : The Urban and City Centre of Kota Bharu Area - Streetscape**

Islamic symbolism is widely used in landscape ornaments and decorations. Often, the use of Arabic writing especially on billboards is compulsory in order to represent the Islamic city. It was found that a variety of palm trees dominate as a reflection of the Islamic garden and have become one of the landmarks in the city centre.

#### 7.2.2.1 Landscape of the Historical Areas

The landscape of the historic areas is represented in the following interpretive surveys:

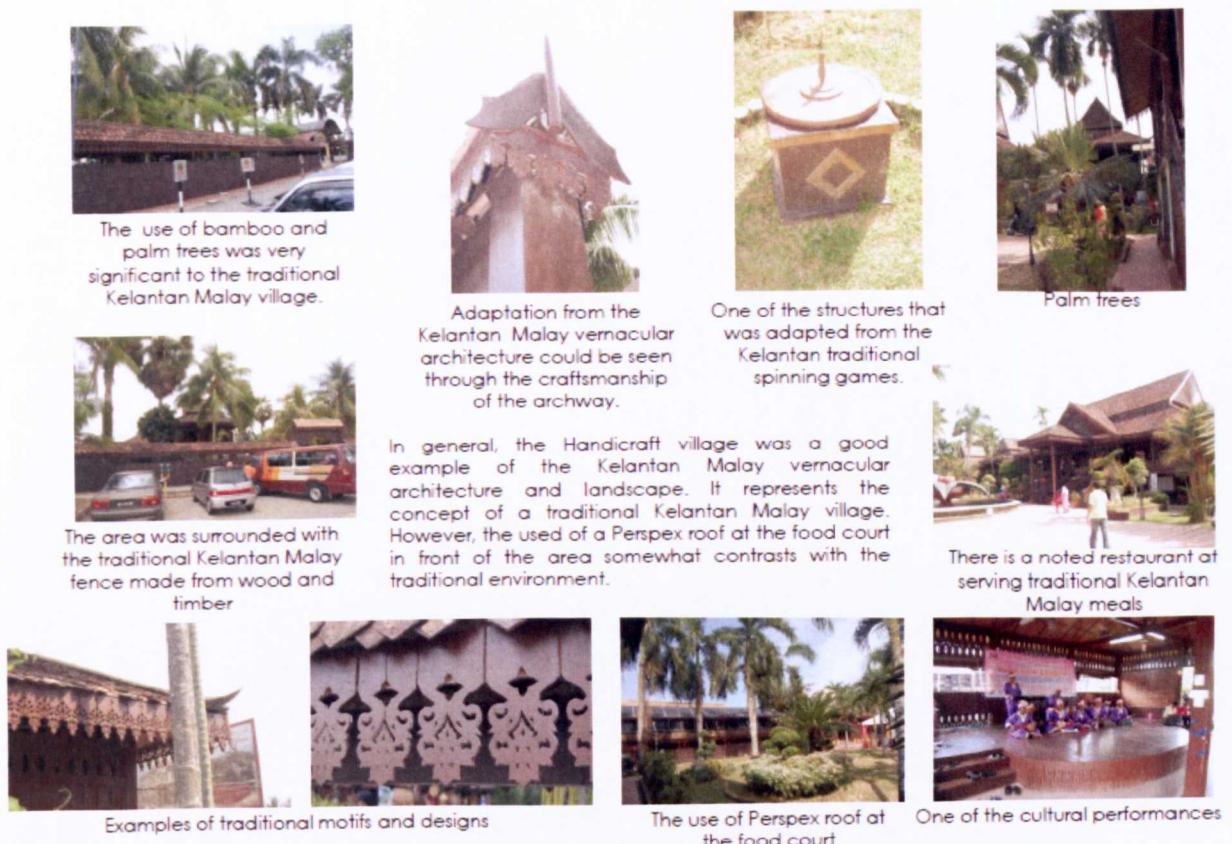
- Handicraft Village and Craft Museum (Refer to Figures 7.17, 7.18)
- Palace of the Great Hall (Refer to Figures 7.19, 7.20, 7.21, 7.22)
- Royal Museum (Refer to Figures 7.23, 7.24)
- Independence Square (Refer to Figures 7.25, 7.26, 7.27)

The historical area in Kota Bharu city centre consists of several palaces, mosques and museums. The central point is the Sultan Ismail Petra Arch and Independence Square. The traditional Malay vernacular architecture design concept was encountered most strikingly at the Palace of the Great Hall, Handicraft Village and Craft Museum and the Jahar Palace, all

of which are made from timber. Colour variation is derived from the natural timber colours and the combination of pastel surface treatments. In contrast, the landscape design at the Palace of the Great Hall can be categorized as a formal garden in relation to the main function of the palace, that is, for official Royal ceremonies. The formality can be seen from the use of border plants and a row of palm trees at the entrance area. The selection of vegetation is varied with different colours, sizes and species. Topiary planting is dominant in the palace grounds. Big palms are used as main trees, whilst shrub trees are used as border planting.



**Figure 7.17. ANALYSIS 7.3 : Handicraft Village and Craft Museum**



**Figure 7.18. ANALYSIS 7.3 : Handicraft Village and Craft Museum**



**Figure 7.19. ANALYSIS 7.4 : Palace of the Great Hall**

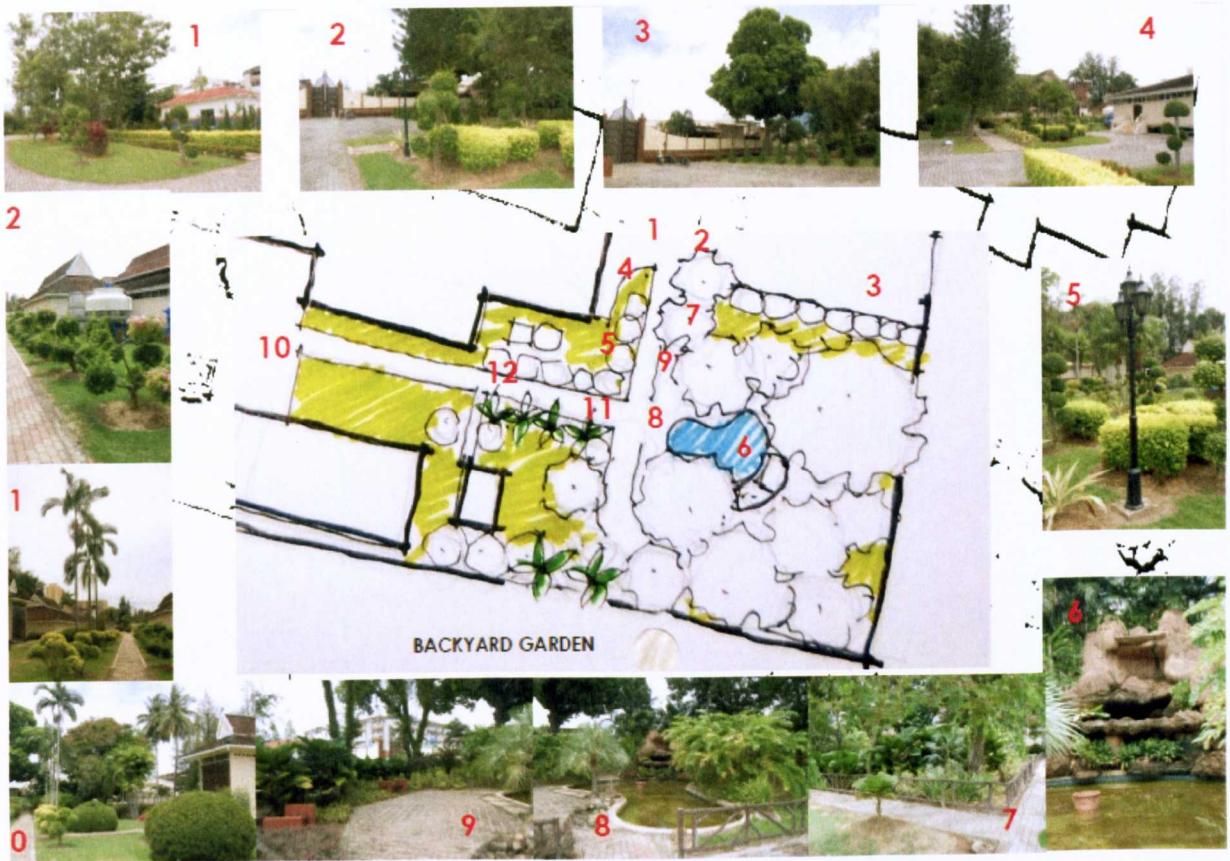


Figure 7.20. ANALYSIS 7.4 : Palace of the Great Hall - Backyard Garden

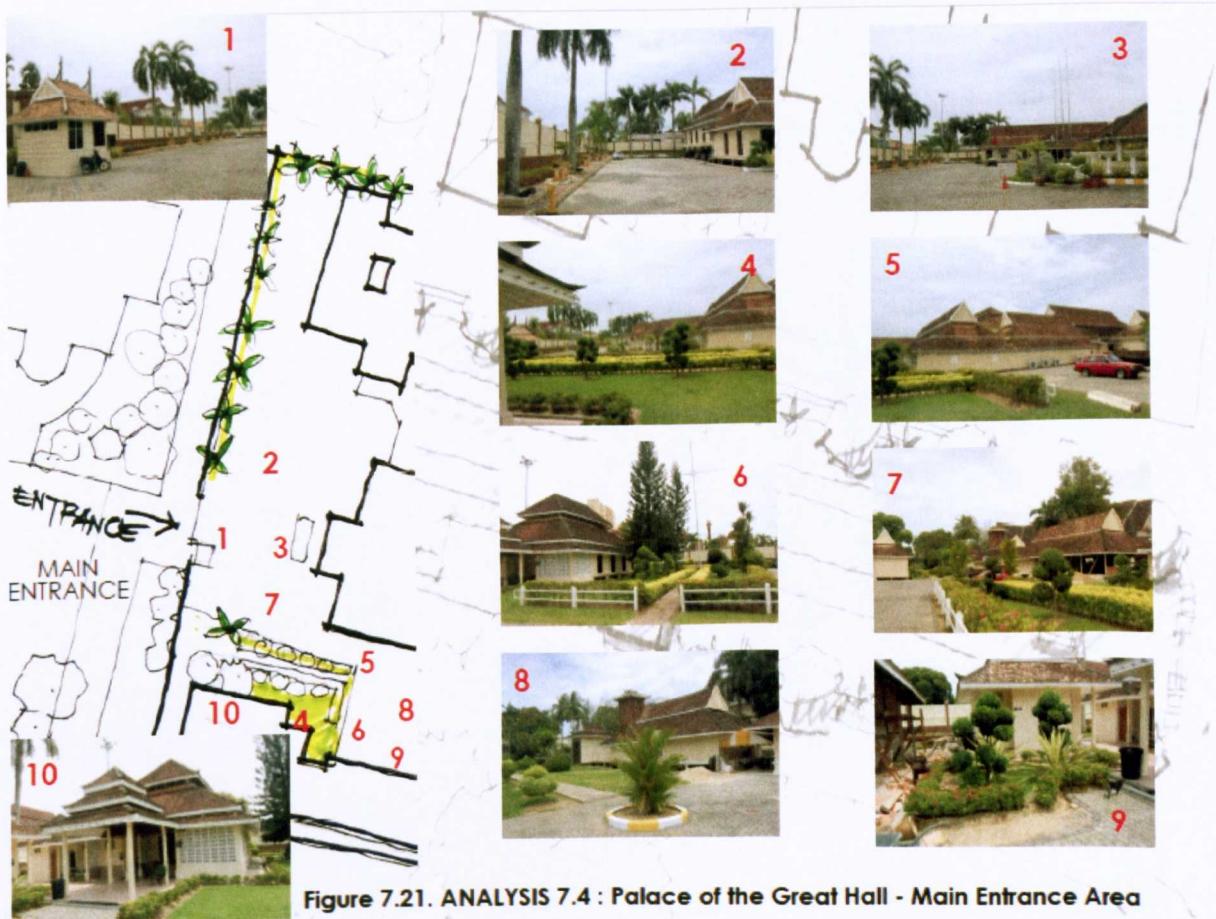


Figure 7.21. ANALYSIS 7.4 : Palace of the Great Hall - Main Entrance Area

## Formal garden

In general, the landscape can be categorized as a formal garden serving a main function of the palace, namely for official Royal ceremonies. This can be seen in the use of border plants and a row of palm trees at the entrance area.



## Semi-formal space

To the rear of the palace there is a pond surrounded with tropical plants and existing big trees. It looks semi-formal and is used as a relaxation area for the Royal family and their guests. The space is surrounded with a concrete rail. Its artificial looks are in contrast with the surrounding soft landscape. The use of Heliconia makes this area look more tropical, and contrasts with the formal garden at the front area.



## Conclusion

The formal garden here is not truly representative of the real Kelantan Malay landscape. The design has little regard to the traditional Malay landscape, instead a contemporary formal garden has been created for this remarkable palace.

## Selection of plants



Topiary planting is dominant in the palace. It is quite common in Kelantan to use topiary as part of the formal garden in government offices and formal institutions. Palm trees are used as a main tree. The existing big trees still remain here. Shrub trees are used for border planting.

## Pavement

Nearly 2/3 of the palace is covered with interlocking pavement for the driveway, pathway and the pond area.



## Royal colour

Yellow is significant as the Royal colour and can be witnessed in the flowerbox and the planting border. The use of yellow tea tree as a border plant reflects the royal colour.



## Lighting

The use of Victorian lamp posts contrasts with the traditional vernacular architecture. It is a symbol of royal status, which is grand and wealthy.



Figure 7.22. ANALYSIS 7.4 : Palace of the Great Hall - Visual Analysis

In contrast, it was found that a western design approach can be seen at the Royal Museum that was built in 1939, which had formerly been used as venue for royal weddings and as a royal guest house. The building was built from concrete materials, and is an adaptation from western design. Colonial influences can be seen from the building structures especially to the pillar and the wall design. It was found that planting design was based on a formal garden with border planting and the use of topiary plants. The landscape is in a good condition but the maintenance is not properly done.

#### INTRODUCTION

The Royal Museum was built in 1939 and had formerly been used as venue for royal wedding and as a royal guest house. It was converted into a royal museum where all the regalia and former sultan's belongings were displayed. The design concept was adapted from western design. During that time the use of concrete was a symbol of privilege to the royal and the rich people. It was known as Concrete Palace (Istana Batu) by the local people because of the concrete material.



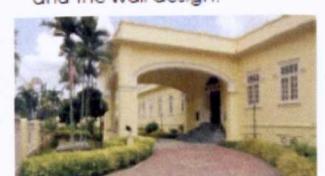
The landscaped layout design has some merit but the maintenance of the whole area has resulted in a lack of variety in the selection of plants.



The location of the public toilet at the main entrance. Previously it was used as a guard house.



The building was an adaptation from western design. Colonial influences can be seen from the building structures especially to the pillar and the wall design.



The yellow colour scheme at the building represents the official royal colour. The building and landscape looked in harmony with the surrounding areas even though different materials have been used to the other palaces nearby. The building was a symbol of royal status and wealth. The garden is fully accessible to the public.

**Figure 7.23. ANALYSIS 7.5 : Royal Museum**



Border planting and palm trees were used in the garden area. This reflects a standard formal garden especially for the government office and building.



The use of an eagle monument in this garden was very contradictory with the state government policy which has prohibited the use of humans and animals as symbol of statues and monuments. In this case, maybe because of the building was a royal family, the restriction was annulled.



Existing cycads trees were among the plants in the garden. However the plants were not fully supported with a good combination of other plantings..



The lighting design that reflects the royal status and is painted in gold colours as a symbol of wealth.



The use of wooden benches to the area does not reflect the symbols of the wealthy or royalty. These benches can be seen everywhere in the public garden in Kelantan.



The use of the border plants and topiary has been copied from other government buildings.



There was no link between the driveway with the reflexology garden. Visitors have to step on the grass to go to the reflexology area. The plants here appear to be undermaintained and the area has an air of neglect.

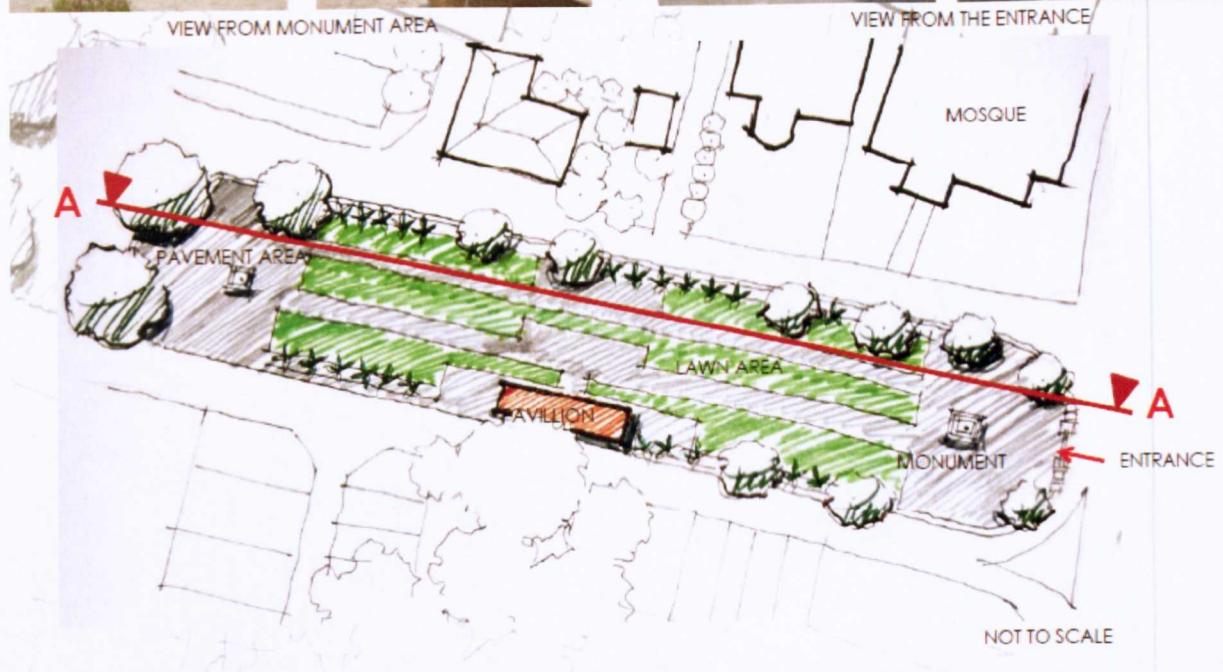
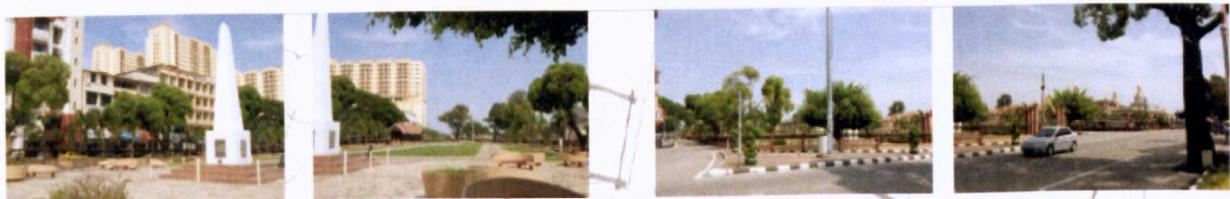


The reflexology area was the attraction at the garden but the reflexology area was not fully utilized by the visitors. The area will look more attractive if there is a variety of plants with a proper maintenance.

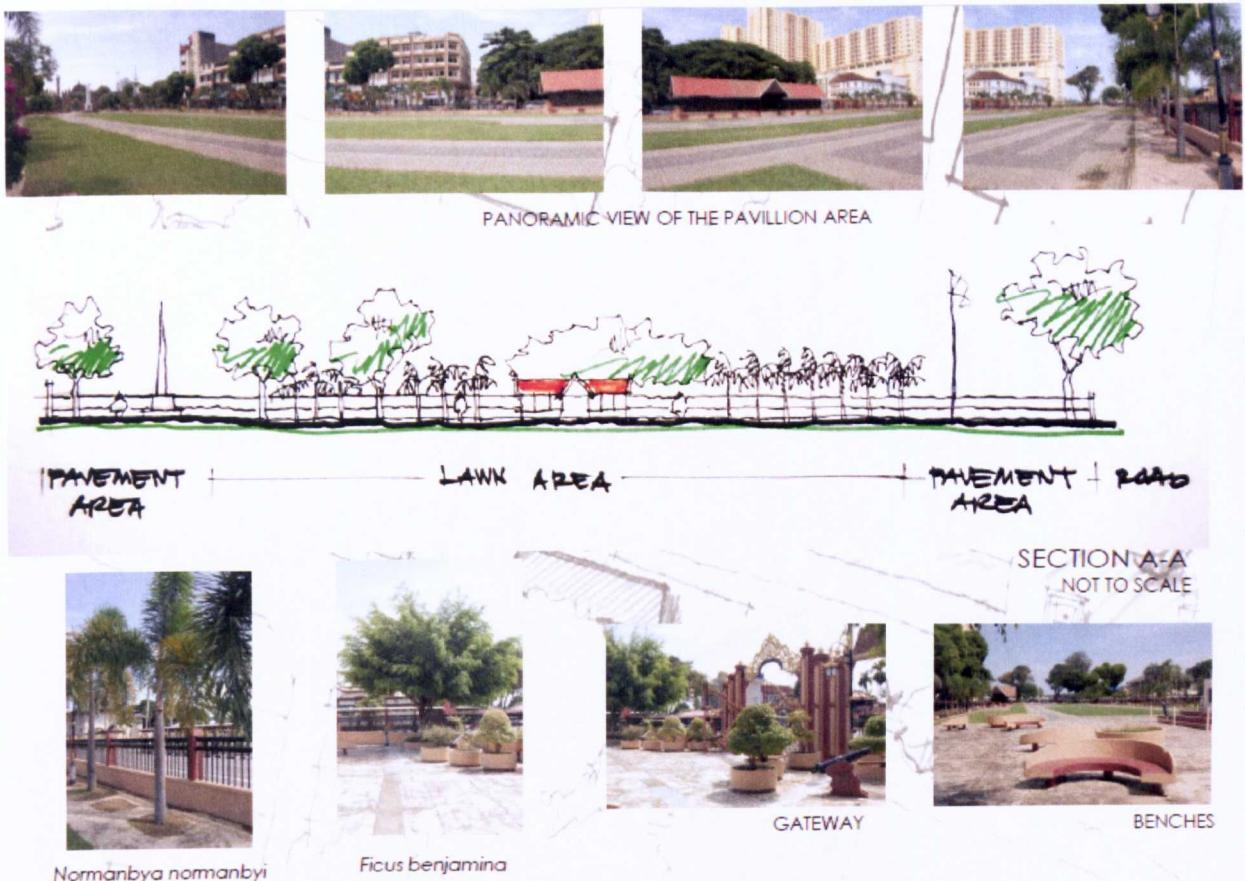


Along the walkway from the parking area to the museum there was a row of planter boxes full of Ixora plants. Ixora is one of the official flowers of Kota Bharu.

**Figure 7.24. ANALYSIS 7.5 : Royal Museum**



**Figure 7.25. ANALYSIS 7.6 : Independence Square**



**Figure 7.26. ANALYSIS 7.6 : Independence Square**

### General view

The overall impression is that the current landscape does not have a big impact on the whole area. Instead of being remarkable as a historical square marking independence from the British in 1957, the space is not fully utilized. The main planting here is limited to a row of palm trees along the fence. At the end of the square there are existing big trees that are preserved as a historical element. By looking at the current situation, the square does not attract people to come and use it as a public open space. The main function of the square is for Royal ceremonies.

### Arch

The arch is designed parallel to the Sultan Ismail Petra Arch which is situated opposite to the square. The design is based on the Malay craft that can be found at the Palace of the Great Hall. The traditional approaches can be seen to the arch and the pillar at the entrance.



### Conclusion

Independence Square is one of the potential areas to be developed as one of the main attractions in this heritage zone. Its strategic location relative to the other tourist attractions creates major opportunities for creating a distinctive area. There is scope for the landscape to be upgraded together with the hardscape and the pavilion without changing the historical function of the square.



### Benches and Planter box

The benches and the planter box provided here are not very reminiscent of the traditional Kelantan Malay style. The design is out of date and does not attract people to come. There is scope for design to be more traditional, whilst still being ergonomic.



### The Pavilion

The pavilion does not reflect the real traditional Malay vernacular architecture. It should represent the richness of the Kelantan Malay traditional architecture and craftsmanship. The design is too simple compared to this historical area.

### Monument

The monument is the focal point of this square. Even though it is regarded as a landmark, the structure does not stand out as a major landmark of Kelantan.

**Figure 7.27. ANALYSIS 7.6 : Independence Square - Visual Analysis**

Meanwhile, the clearest example of a pastiche representation of traditional Kelantan Malay vernacular architecture is in the Handicraft Village and Craft Museum. The layout design is based on the concept of the Kelantan Malay village while the building design is adapted from the traditional Kelantan Malay house (Figure 7.28). Whilst this has been executed very successfully, it is in essence no more than an attempt to mimic traditional styles.



**Figure 7.28.** Handicraft Village and Craft Museum area. *Source:* photos by the author.

As might be expected, the material used for construction is of local timbers, reminiscent of the traditional Malay house. The area is surrounded with a timber fence which is one of the main characteristics of the traditional Malay house. The other adaptation from Kelantan Malay vernacular architecture could be seen through the craftsmanship of the archway, roof design and the panel wall design. Further, the colour palette is based on natural browns in order to create a sense of natural environment. The selections of plants are varied with the predominant use of palm trees. In addition, the use of bamboo and other shrubs is very reminiscent of the traditional Kelantan Malay village. In former times, bamboo was a useful tree for the Malay community, especially to make their daily equipment.

### 7.2.3 Landscape of the Commercial Areas

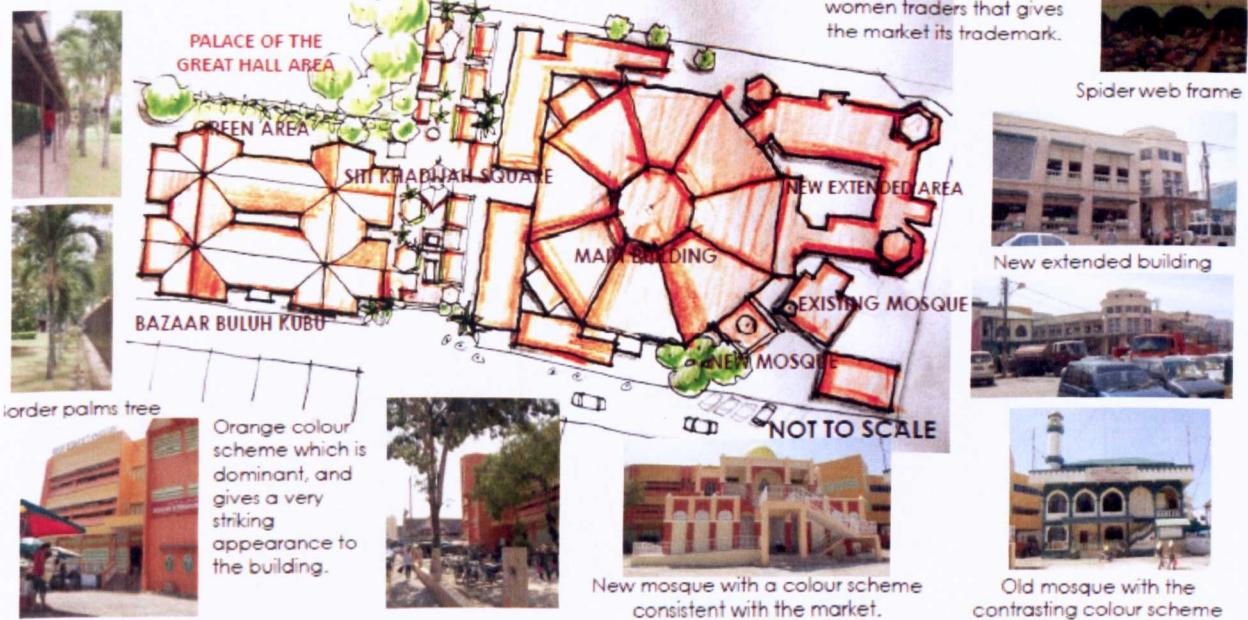
#### 7.2.3.1 Siti Khadijah Central Market (Refer to Figures 7.29, 7.30)

The commercial area comprises the market, the malls and business area. For instance, Siti Khadijah central market is one of the landmarks of Kota Bharu. It was found that Siti Khadijah Square is one of the public open spaces that intensely combines indigenous motifs with contemporary design. The design concept of the square is a combination of traditional, contemporary and Islamic design. In general, the hardscape elements in the square are visually attractive with an arch structure that has been symbolically adapted from the

traditional Kelantan boat. The colours of the building, however, contrast somewhat with the surrounding area. Orange is dominant on the external wall while green is chosen for the interior wall. Nevertheless, the building has a striking appearance compared to the surrounding ones. Most of the design materials used for the building and hardscape structures are from concrete.

## INTRODUCTION

The building was completed in 1986. Its design concept is unique in Malaysia with its octagonal dome and 3 storey buildings. The roof is translucent and has been designed with spider web frame that allows sunlight to penetrate and illuminate the central area on the ground floor where the fresh produce market is full of women traders. Formerly known as Buluh Kubu central market, since the opposition party took over the state government in 1990, it was changed to Siti Khadijah central market to respect the first wife of the Prophet Muhammad, Siti Khadijah who was a successful businesswoman. It was in recognition of the Kelantane ladies who occupied most of the stalls and shops at the market.



**Figure 7.29. ANALYSIS 7.7 : Siti Khadijah Central Market**



The selection of various type of palms tree have made the square looks more Islamic and contemporary traditional.



The design concept of the square is a combination of traditional, contemporary and Islamic design. The square is among the key public open spaces in Kota Bharu city centre.



The tower clock is the focal point at the square. The traditional design can be seen at the roof design while the wall has been designed with Islamic patterns.



Food stalls are the core business at the square and became famous places to hang around and enjoy local meals. In addition, there are stalls selling jewellery and antique goods.



**SITI KHADIJAH SQUARE**  
NOT TO SCALE



The main entrance to the square



The hardscape elements at the square are well designed and high quality. The arch structure has been adapted from the traditional Kelantan boat as an important symbol.

**Figure 7.30. ANALYSIS 7.7 : Siti Khadijah Central Market - the Square**

### 7.2.3.2

### Kota Bharu Mall (KB Mall) (Refer to Figures 7.31, 7.32)

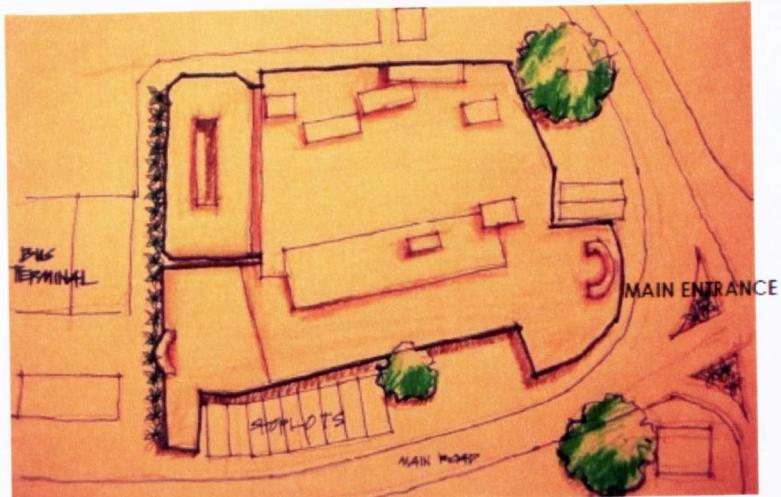
Another important example is the KB Mall, the biggest shopping mall in Kelantan, and now a renowned place to for shopping and ‘hanging around’, especially for youngsters. In general, KB Mall represents a new shopping area that applies a combination of Islamic design and local approaches as metaphors in the design structure. The ornamentation of the building, with well-known traditional local images like Kelantan Malay traditional drums and kites, is very significant to Kelantan people. Pastel colours are used and these are very harmonious with the other new buildings in Kota Bharu city centre. The influence of the Islamic motif and design can be seen in the exterior wall pattern. The arch and the geometric design are adapted from Middle East countries. These accord with the Islamic city concept that the state government has tried to create through the buildings and their surroundings. However, the survey indicates that landscape planning is very poor here. Along the building, just a row of palm trees has been planted and, in general, most of the landscape at the commercial area is poorly designed and under-maintained.



The design is a combination of Islamic and contemporary design with the use of traditional structural elements as a metaphor. Meanwhile, the planting here is not strong enough to cater for all the area. From observation, it seemed that just a row of palm trees had been planted.



There is a bus terminal that provides local and inter-city services within west Malaysia adjacent to the KB Mall. This makes it easier for the locals and visitors to reach here.



NOT TO SCALE



Front view of KB Mall. The structure on the top of the roof is adapted from the Kelantan Malay traditional drum, Rebana Ubi, while the logo was created from the traditional Malay kites.

Metaphoric icon of Rebana Ubi.

**Figure 7.31. ANALYSIS 7.8 : KB Mall**



The focal point of the building was from the structure design that represented Kelantan Malay traditional drums.



Different views from the rooftop of the KB Mall. Heavy traffic occurs especially during peak office hours and weekend. The location at the main junction of the Kota Bharu city centre made KB Mall easier to access.



The use of palm trees at the main junction in front of the KB Mall is to represent the Islamic city.

In general, KB Mall comprises contemporary buildings that used a combination of Islamic design and local approaches in the design structure. The use of familiar local symbols (traditional drums and kites) in the building is very significant to the Kelantan people. However, it appears that the landscape is very weak. Possibly this is due to space constraints but it is insufficient reason not to provide better landscape design. The colour scheme is drawn from a pastel palette and is very harmonious with the other new building in Kota Bharu city centre.



The influence of the Islamic motif and design could be seen at the exterior wall pattern. The arch and the geometric design were adapted from middle eastern countries. It reflects the Islamic city that the state government is trying to create through new building.



It is common in Kelantan for women models to appear on billboards, but wearing a scarf as one of the restrictions from the state government. This has become a trademark of Kelantan.

**Figure 7.32. ANALYSIS 7.8 : KB Mall**

## **7.3 Key Components of the Kelantan Cultural Landscape**

The field survey analysis found a range of components that characterise the Kelantan cultural landscape. The concept of the Islamic city is the main focus of the state government in developing and planning Kelantan. The Islamic city concept is based on the state government doctrine known as ‘Developing with Islam’. Notwithstanding the potential tensions between religious and folk practices, however, the use of traditional ornament and decoration is still being used. This reflects the continuing desire of the municipal government and its planners to promote Kota Bahru city centre as a cultural city. The implications of the tension between promotion of both the “Islamic city” and “cultural city”, compounded by external globalising trends, are discussed below.

### **7.3.1 Islamic Design Approaches**

From observation, it was witnessed that Kelantan is a religious region compared to the other states in Malaysia. Kelantan is well known as a Mecca Corridor, as a way of fulfilling Islamic law. Concerning the making of the Islamic city, substantial changes have occurred in many ways, including through urban planning. Some of the images that proclaim the Islamic influence are noted below.

#### **7.3.1.1 Palm Trees**

In the Holy Quran, it was stated that date palm is one of the trees of paradise, and so this is used ubiquitously (Figure 7.33). Most of the Islamic gardens, especially in Middle Eastern countries used date palm as an important element of planting design. Another example is Alhambra in Spain which is known as the primary location to study Islamic garden design.



**Figure 7.33.** Some of the various palm trees that have been used to create an Islamic city of Kota Bharu. Source: photos by the author.

It was recorded that palms trees are dominant in the main area in Kota Bharu city centre especially for border planting and at junctions or roundabouts to create as a focal point. The survey identified several varieties of palms trees that have been used in the Kota Bharu area (Table 7.1).

	Botanical name	Common/Local name
1.	<i>Archontophoenix alexandrae</i>	Palma Iskandar
2.	<i>Areca catechu</i>	Pinang sirih
3.	<i>Bismarkia nobilis</i>	Palma Bismark
4.	<i>Borassus falbellifer</i>	Lontar
5.	<i>Caryota maxima</i>	Rabuk gunung
6.	<i>Caryota mitis</i>	Tukas
7.	<i>Chrysolidocarpus lutescens</i>	Pinang kuning
8.	<i>Chrysalidocarpus madagascariensis</i>	Palma Madagascar

9.	<i>Cocos nucifera</i>	Kelapa
10.	<i>Corypha umbraculifera</i>	Talipot
11.	<i>Cyrtostachys lacca</i>	Pinang raja
12.	<i>Elaeis guineensis</i>	Kelapa sawit
13.	<i>Latania loddigesii</i>	Latan biru
14.	<i>Licuala grandis</i>	Palas kipas
15.	<i>Livistona chinensis</i>	Serdang Cina
16.	<i>Livistona rotundifolia</i>	Serdang daun bulat
17.	<i>Mascarena lagernicaulis</i>	Palma botol
18.	<i>Neodypsis decaryi</i>	Palma segi tiga
19.	<i>Normanbya normanbyi</i>	Normanbia
20.	<i>Phoenix canariensis</i>	Kurma Canary
21.	<i>Phoenix roebelinii</i>	Kurma rubelini
22.	<i>Ptychosperma macarthurii</i>	Palma Macarthur
23.	<i>Rhapis excelsa</i>	Rapis besar
24.	<i>Roystonea oleracea</i>	Palma kubis
25.	<i>Roystonea regia</i>	Palma raja
26.	<i>Veitchia merrillii</i>	Palma Manilla

**Table 7.1.** List of palms trees in Kota Bharu, Kelantan

In order to reflect an Islamic image, the use of palms trees is highly appropriate, but the implications for traditional design might require a more diverse planting palette. Rather more immediately, the selection of palms trees and the location should be suitable to prevent problematic conditions such as blocking drivers' views or other safety reasons.

### 7.3.1.2 Arabesque Geometry Pattern

Geometric pattern is widely used in Islamic design especially on mosaics, tiles, plaster and wooden patterns in the buildings. In Kelantan, geometric patterning can be seen in the landscape design and building structure (Figure 7.34). It is utilized in conjunction with these to create an identity of the Islamic city. The transfer from other Islamic countries' designs has been of high quality but equally it is important to consider the use of traditional Malay craft patterns as a way of conferring greater authenticity.



**Figure 7.34.** Some of the Arabesque geometry patterns that can be seen in the new building and hardscape structure in Kota Bharu. *Source:* photos by the author.

#### 7.3.1.3 The Use of Arabic Words

Arabic words have been introduced in Kelantan as part of the making of the Islamic city: for example, all road names in Kota Bharu have been written in Arabic script. At the same time, the billboard, signage and the building in Kota Bharu have been labelled with Arabic words as required by the Municipal Council (Figure 7.35).



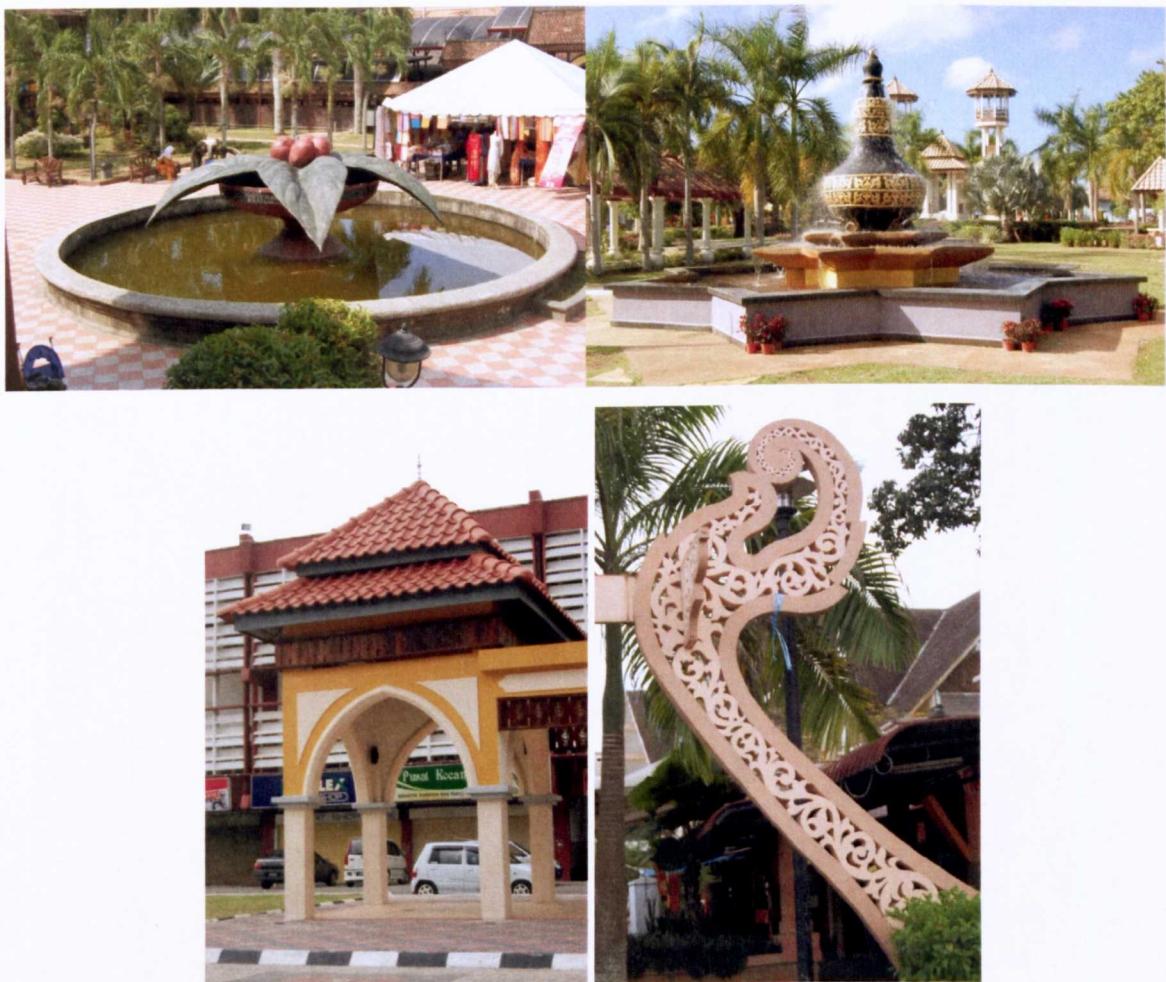
**Figure 7.35.** Examples of the Arabic words and verses from the Holy Quran that have been used at the billboard, archway and signage in Kota Bharu. *Source:* photos by the author.

### 7.3.2 Indigenous Design Approaches

Kelantan is famed for its varied and characteristic contribution to Malay traditions and cultures. Traditional arts and crafts play an important role in the uniqueness of Kelantan. The survey identified many traditional elements that have been preserved. Notably, traditional ornaments and decorations have been widely used to reflect the local image.

### 7.3.2.1 Traditional Ornament and Decoration

Traditional ornament and decoration have been used to create regional identity especially in the city centre. The usage of various traditional elements is intended to help create a strong sense of place. The attempt to capture a *genius loci* is reflected in traditional designs, materials and elements used especially in the Siti Khadijah Square and the Handicraft Village and Craft Museum area (Figure 7.36).



**Figure 7.36.** Some of the traditional ornaments that have been used to give a traditional look to the Kota Bharu area. *Source:* photos by the author.

### 7.3.2.2 The Use of Local Plants

A variety of local plants has been used in order to create the beauty of the Flower Garden Land. A range of local shrub plants have been used in order to emphasise the richness of the

Malay garden (Table 7.2), whilst tree planting in “indigenous designs” is based on many species other than the ubiquitous palm (Table 7.3).

	Botanical name	Common/Local name
1.	<i>Aglaia odorata</i>	Telur belangkas
2.	<i>Bougainvillea spp.</i>	Bunga kertas
3.	<i>Brunfelsia calycina</i>	Yesterday, today and tomorrow
4.	<i>Canangium odorata</i>	Kenanga
5.	<i>Catharanthus roseus</i>	Kemunting Cina
6.	<i>Cestrum nocturnum</i>	Santalia/Sundal malam
7.	<i>Gardenia jasminoides</i>	Bunga Cina
8.	<i>Cassia biflora</i>	Kasia kuning
9.	<i>Ixora coccinea</i>	Jarum-jarum merah
10.	<i>Ixora javanica</i>	Iksora jawa
11.	<i>Jasminum sambac</i>	Melur/Melati
12.	<i>Hibiscus rosasinensis</i>	Bunga raya
13.	<i>Lagerstroemia indica</i>	Inai merah
14.	<i>Lantana camara</i>	Tahi ayam
15.	<i>Magnolia spp.</i>	Cempaka telur
16.	<i>Michelia figo</i>	Cempaka Ambon
17.	<i>Melastoma malabatrichum</i>	Senduduk
18.	<i>Murraya paniculata</i>	Kemuning
19.	<i>Pachystachys lutea</i>	Bunga lilin
20.	<i>Randia macrantha</i>	Angel’s trumpet
21.	<i>Rosa spp.</i>	Ros
22.	<i>Rhodomyrtus tomentosa</i>	Kemunting
23.	<i>Tabernaemontana corymbosa</i>	Susun kelapa
24.	<i>Turnera ulmifolia</i>	Lidah kucing/Pukul lapan
25.	<i>Wrightia religiosa</i>	Melati/Jeliti

**Table 7.2.** List of Characteristic Shrubs Recorded in Kota Bharu

	Botanical name	Common/Local name
1.	<i>Alstonia angustifolia</i>	Pulai
2.	<i>Bauhinia purpurea</i>	Tapak kuda/Orchird tree
3.	<i>Canangium odoratum</i>	Kenanga
4.	<i>Cassia fistula</i>	Golden shower
5.	<i>Cassuarina equisetifolia</i>	Ru pantai
6.	<i>Calophyllum inophyllum</i>	Penaga laut/Bintangor laut
7.	<i>Callistemom splendens</i>	Bottle brush
8.	<i>Dalbergia olliveri</i>	Tamalan tree
9.	<i>Delonix regia</i>	Semarak api
10.	<i>Entrobium saman</i>	Hujan-hujan
11.	<i>Fagraea fragrans</i>	Tembusu
12.	<i>Ficus benjamina</i>	Beringin
13.	<i>Gardenia carinata</i>	Cempaka hutan
14.	<i>Lagerstroemia flos-reginae</i>	Bungor
15.	<i>Melia indica</i>	Mambu
16.	<i>Michelia champaca</i>	Cempaka kuning
17.	<i>Michelia alba</i>	Cempaka putih
18.	<i>Mesua ferrea</i>	Penaga lilin
19.	<i>Mimusops elengi</i>	Tanjung
20.	<i>Polyalthia longifolia</i>	Mempisang/Asoka
21.	<i>Peltophorum pterocarpum</i>	Batai laut
22.	<i>Plumeria obtusa</i>	Kemboja
23.	<i>Pterocarpus indicus</i>	Angsana/Sena
24.	<i>Salix babylonica</i>	Janda merana
25.	<i>Tabebuia spectabilis</i>	Tekoma
26.	<i>Tamarandus indica</i>	Asam jawa

**Table 7.3.** List of Characteristic Trees Recorded in Kota Bharu

### 7.3.3 Formal Garden Design Approaches

Apart from the Islamic and traditional approaches, some of the areas in Kota Bharu use a more formal garden design, especially the longstanding convention of topiary. This can be seen at the palace and certain street planting areas.

### 7.3.3.1 Topiary

It was found that parts of the case study area used topiary in the planting design. Even though topiary is not originally from Malaysia, nowadays it has become prominent especially at the institutions and government buildings. It is believed that the practice was introduced by the British during 19<sup>th</sup> century. The use of topiary plants represents the formal nature of the garden area (Figure 7.37).



**Figure 7.37.** Example of topiary plants in the Palace of the Great Hall. *Source:* photos by the author.

### 7.3.4 Character of Townscapes

In Kelantan, both heritage and new building are very prevalent, and their combination can add value and interest to the environment.

#### 7.3.4.1 Heritage buildings

The existence of heritage buildings in Kota Bharu is very important to the concept of “cultural city” in Malaysia. Based on the National Heritage Malaysia register, 247 shop lots and 11 single buildings are considered to be pre-2<sup>nd</sup> World War in Kota Bharu. All of these have been listed as heritage buildings. Most of the buildings are combination of various design concepts such as English, Malay, Chinese and Thai. It was found that every heritage building in the case study area has its own landscape design and that the design approach is varied (Figure 7.38).



**Figure 7.38.** Some of the historic buildings in the Heritage Zone of Kota Bharu. *Source:* photos by the author.

It was observed that Thai style bears strong similarities to the Kelantan Malay vernacular architecture especially regarding the roof and the wall design, although there are also characteristic differences. Moreover, the decoration pattern, especially in the craftsmanship of the building, is slightly different: The Kelantan Malay style uses plant and flower motifs while the Thai style emphasises animal or dragon objects. Figure 7.39 shows Thai vernacular architecture that can be found in Thai community area in rural settlements in Tumpat, Kelantan.



**Figure 7.39.** Some of the Thai traditional houses and gazebo designs that influence the vernacular Kelantan styles. *Source:* photos by the author.

#### 7.3.4.2 New Buildings

Contemporary buildings in Kota Bharu are based on the mixture of traditional and Islamic elements. Aesthetic design elements have often made the new building ensembles meld with the traditional and Islamic environment. There are many new constructions at the city centre which use combinations of contemporary, Islamic and traditional designs (Figure 7.40).



**Figure 7.40.** Some of the new buildings in Kota Bharu that represent various design concepts. *Source:* photos by the author.

### 7.3.5 Rural and Urban Dimensions

#### 7.3.5.1 Characteristics of the City Centre

The city centre is remarkable as both an Islamic and a historical city. The combination of Islamic design and traditional Malay design brings splendour to the city centre. Even though

the city has been influenced by various design concepts, still the traditional and Islamic approaches are the dominant features.

#### 7.3.5.2 Characteristics of the Malay Village

Generally, the Kelantan Malay village is composed of vernacular timber houses laid in a garden of fruit trees and edible shrubs and herbs. Most of the plant species are planted in a random layout with simple applications of site planning. Tall palms and other large trees are planted to provide some shade. Rather than provide foods, the trees and herbs are a source of medicine and used as material in ritual ceremonies. Nowadays, the village has gradually changed, especially the timber house. New concrete houses have replaced timber ones. More contemporary houses are built in the village areas and these have transformed the visual qualities of Malay villages.

#### 7.3.6 The Importance of Royal Kelantan

The role of Sultan Kelantan is very important to the Kelantan community. Kelantan people are very loyal to the royal family and show a high level of respect accordingly, as they are a symbol of the Islamic state and the Kelantan Malay community. The municipal council has made many significant efforts to support the royal family – for example, as can be seen through the gateway and the iconography purposely built to show respect to the Royal Highnesses (Figure 7.41).



**Figure 7.41.** Some of the iconography billboards in Kota Bharu that have been built with the purpose of show respecting to the Royal Kelantan. *Source:* photos by the author.

### 7.3.7 The Decline of the Traditional Malay House

From the survey, it was found that the trend to building a traditional house has gradually changed. It was rare to find traditional houses especially near the city centre. Most people prefer to build a new concrete house, because of the cost and the lack of skilled workers. Evidently, the traditional Malay house still can be found at the village area but in limited numbers.

## 7.4 Conclusion

From the field survey, it was found that Kota Bharu city centre is gradually experiencing a transformation of its image. Concurrent changes have also occurred in village areas whereas the alteration to the land uses and the traditional timber houses is slowly taking place.

Clearly, in the creation of public realm in Kelantan, issues about architectural form and landscape form are very important. For example, it was noticed that the indigenous Kelantan Malay vernacular architecture can be seen in the Palace of the Great Hall and the Kampung Laut Mosque. Further, both of these traditional buildings have attracted attention as the most important wooden structures for the study of traditional Malay vernacular architecture. The Palace of the Great Hall is well known as the only extant wooden palace in Malaysia while the Kampung Laut Mosque is famous as the oldest surviving wooden mosque in Malaysia. Consequently, the roof design from the Palace of the Great Hall has become a signature in the re-making of the Kelantan Malay traditional identity. Inspired by this heritage, new designs can be authentic whilst at the same time still being sympathetic to the traditional vernacular.

Meanwhile, the Handicraft Village and Craft Museum is the clearest example of a pastiche design drawn from traditional Kelantan Malay vernacular architecture. The landscape design is based on the Kelantan Malay village concept while the building structure is adapted from the traditional Kelantan Malay house. The use of timber for the whole area has reflected the image of the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape. In addition, the beauty of the Kelantan Malay traditional craftsmanship can be seen in many places here including archway, roof design and panel wall design. Furthermore, the selection of natural timber colour scheme has imitated the image of traditional Malay environment. From the analysis, the Handicraft

Village and Crafts Museum emerged as a genuine attempt to convey the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape. Although the overall approach was one of pastiche, the thoughtful use of materials, especially timber, was a factor in helping to achieve a sense of authenticity.

In parallel, the symbolism of traditional arts and combined with Islamic features in new buildings and landscapes is one of the key factors in the making of the Islamic City. The symbol of Quran and other traditional arts and culture have been widely used in current development. For example, the KB Mall is considered an important rebranding of the Kelantan Malay cultural identity, using a regionally traditional giant drum called the “*rebana*” as its symbolism. On the exterior of the building, the Islamic motif combines with traditional designs. Another leading example is in the Sultan Ismail Arch and Clock Tower, whose surroundings are dominated by the use of Quran pillars in the hardscape.

The findings have confirmed the importance attached to Islamic images and identities in the Kelantan Malay landscape development nowadays. The making of the Islamic City of Kota Bharu has been developed by the state government and Kota Bharu Municipal Council in different ways. It was observed that both the Islamic and traditional design approaches have been blended together to make sure that contemporary planning respects the traditional elements. To some extent, in some of the new development in Kota Bharu Islamic City the traditional elements are still valued, designed and retained instead of being made to comply with Islamic contemporary design in order to reinforce the Mecca Corridor.

Equally, it is clear that landscape planning has to become more aware about preservation and conservation issues, especially with regard to the heritage buildings and vernacular landscape, in order to ensure that these are not damaged by new development and urbanisation schemes. In order to enhance the visual image of the urban realm and rural area, architects, planners and municipal administrators need to preserve prominent elements of the traditional built environments and adapt them to suit contemporary and modern lifestyles.

## **Chapter Eight: EVIDENCE FROM INTERVIEWS**

### **8.0 Introduction**

The previous chapters discussed the findings from the document analysis and visual observation. This chapter complements this empirical evidence with analysis of interviews conducted with a range of key informants. This chapter begins with a review of the methodology, followed by analysis of the interview transcripts in terms of key emergent themes. Finally, it discusses the significance of themes in relation to the issues emerging from other parts of the research.

### **8.1 Methodology**

The evidence so far points to widespread recent changes in the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape. In order to study perceptions and unpublished evidence about cultural landscape issues, qualitative interviews have been carried out. Qualitative interviewing, also known as narrative inquiry, is a method used to give insight into another person's knowledge, experiences, viewpoints and interpretations connected with particular subjects and events. It provides insight into a range of problems that otherwise are likely to lie in the shadow (Swensen & Jerpasen, 2008). Both qualitative and quantitative researchers are concerned with exploring the individual's point of view. However, qualitative investigators think they can get closer to the actor's perspective through detailed interviewing (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p.10). In the current study, qualitative interviews have been conducted among selected respondents in Kelantan, Malaysia. Further, the results of this interview analysis were explored in order to raise the main issues and key points in the development of the regional landscape design in Kelantan. In addition, the interviews sought to look into the prospects for the Kelantan Malay landscape in the future.

In total, qualitative data were collected from semi-structured interviews with 20 respondents, conducted between March and June 2008. Initially the respondents were selected because of their specialities. Groups of respondents included historians (three), academics (three), government (three), practitioners (two) and elders (nine). Each interview lasted around one to two hours and explored certain common themes:

- i. Essential elements in the Kelantan Malay landscape, especially in a traditional Malay village, traditional house and city centre.
- ii. Possible factors affecting the declining popularity of the traditional Malay house among local people.
- iii. Respondents' views about current landscape approaches in Kelantan.
- iv. The prospects for the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape in the future.
- v. The challenges associated with improving the quality of landscape planning.

The main aim of the interviews with historians was to identify the critical historical phases, as these are not well documented in written sources and so can sometimes only be ascertained directly from experts. The main objective of interviews with the academics was to obtain confirmation of understanding of the Malay traditional landscape, to get ideas and suggestions about enhancing the Kelantan Malay landscape design, and to get ideas about promoting regional styles. The interviews with government officers and practitioners mainly focused on current practices, acts and guidelines and their effectiveness. In addition, these interviews addressed: the development of the past, current and future landscape; the problems, failures, successes and challenges of past and current projects; and the design criteria, and their suitability for promoting traditional styles. Interviews with elders have been used to identify and explain relevant changes within their living memories, as well as their feelings about current trends. This will help in obtaining a better understanding of the issues in creating a regional identity for the future development of the public realm, vernacular architecture and landscape.

Questions were open ended, allowing follow-up prompts to encourage a deeper exploration of topics raised by the respondents. The interviews were mainly performed as unstructured conservations but were based on an interview guide prepared in advance. The interviews were recorded, transcribed and subjected to coding analysis based on the emergent themes from the data.

## 8.2 Description of Interview Respondents

As noted, a total of 20 respondents were interviewed comprising historians (three), academics (three), government (three), practitioners (two) and elders (nine). All of the

respondents are Kelantanese and live either in the village or in the city centre of Kota Bharu, Kelantan. The interview respondents for this study were identified through three different means i.e. directly by the researcher, introduced by the key respondents, and ‘snowballing’ where one respondent leads the interviewer to another respondent. Anonymised details of the respondents are summarised in Table 8.1.

	List of Respondents	Position	Interview code	Means of Identification
1. Historians		Senior official, Kelantan State Museum	H1	Introduced by G1
		Senior official engaged with Research, Kelantan State Museum	H2	Identified by Researcher
		Research Officer, Kelantan State Museum	H3	Introduced by H2
2. Academics		Senior official of the Faculty of Creative Technology and Heritage, University of Kelantan Malaysia	A1	Identified by Researcher
		Academic member of the Landscape Department, University of Technology MARA Malaysia	A2	Identified by Researcher
		Senior manager of Kandis Resources Centre and academic member of the University of Technology MARA Malaysia	A3	Introduced by E4
3. Government		Senior manager of the Town Planning Department, Municipal Council of Kota Bharu	G1	Identified by Researcher
		Senior official of the Kelantan Arts and Culture Department	G2	Introduced by H1
		Public Relations official, Palace of the Great Hall	G3	Introduced by H2
4. Practitioners		Landscape Designer, Municipal Council of Kota Bharu	P1	Introduced by G1
		Senior manager/ landscape architect of Hijau Alam Nursery and Tanjung Chap Beach Resort	P2	Identified by Researcher
5. Elders		Retired teacher, 71	E1	Identified by Researcher
		Retired teacher, 78	E2	Identified by Researcher
		Head of the village, 57	E3	Introduced by E1
		Retired teacher, 60	E4	Identified by Researcher
		Villager, 70	E5	Introduced by E1
		Villager, 61	E6	Identified by Researcher
		Villager, 83	E7	Introduced by E2
		Villager, 88	E8	Identified by Researcher
		Villager, 80	E9	Identified by Researcher

**Table 8.1.** Details of the Interview Respondents

As indicated in Table 8.1, eleven respondents were identified by the researcher, six were introduced by the key respondents, and three were identified by “snowball”. All of the respondents were selected because of their ability to provide relevant data and useful information regarding the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape as well as their ability to contribute to the research study.

### 8.3 Themes and Findings from the Interview Analysis

From the interviews, a number of principal categories and issues emerged, through a process of repeated reflection and discussion with supervisors. An indication of the range of themes and sub-themes is given in Table 8.2.

Quotes are used in describing the themes, and these have not been translated into perfect English, in order to keep as close as possible to the original sentiment of the interviewee.

**TEXT BOUND INTO  
THE SPINE**

Themes	Respondents																			
	Academics			Practitioners		Government			Historians			Elders								
	A1	A2	A3	P1	P2	G1	G2	G3	H1	H2	H3	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9
Traditional Malay house																				
Diminished	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Changed			X				X		X				X						X	X
Distinctive design					X						X									
Good ventilation											X									
Well as clean water source	X	X	X	X	X				X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X	X	
Variety of fruit trees	X	X					X									X			X	
Traditional Malay village	A1	A2	A3	P1	P2	G1	G2	G3	H1	H2	H3	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9
Changed	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Mosque	X	X													X				X	
Migration of young people to the city				X					X			X	X		X	X		X	X	
Factors that contribute to the lack of traditional timber houses	A1	A2	A3	P1	P2	G1	G2	G3	H1	H2	H3	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9
Lack of skilled workers	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	
Cost of materials	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X			X	
New lifestyles			X									X	X	X					X	
Ability to build					X	X						X			X		X		X	
High maintenance	X			X		X	X	X	X		X			X		X				
Respondent's view about the current landscape	A1	A2	A3	P1	P2	G1	G2	G3	H1	H2	H3	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9
Good			X			X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	
Bad	X													X						
Lacking identity	X			X	X									X						
Possessing a specific identity		X				X	X	X	X		X	X			X	X		X	X	
Derivative		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X		X		X		X		X	
Respondent's view about the future landscape	A1	A2	A3	P1	P2	G1	G2	G3	H1	H2	H3	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9
Scope for conservation	X	X			X	X	X		X											
Combining of Islamic, traditional with new design	X	X				X		X		X		X		X	X		X			
Potential loss									X							X	X			
Retention as museums	X		X			X	X									X		X	X	
Challenges in preserving vernacular landscape	A1	A2	A3	P1	P2	G1	G2	G3	H1	H2	H3	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9
Political issues	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X		X		X	
Change of lifestyle	X	X	X	X	X				X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
How to create Islamic City without mimicking from others	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X				X	
Suggestions	A1	A2	A3	P1	P2	G1	G2	G3	H1	H2	H3	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9
Educate people	X			X					X		X			X						
Learn from others	X	X	X	X		X			X			X			X			X	X	
Promote own identity	X				X				X		X		X	X						
Preservation	X	X	X	X	X		X		X											
Issues:	A1	A2	A3	P1	P2	G1	G2	G3	H1	H2	H3	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9
The issues of creating the national identity	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X						
The conflict between religion and cultural										X		X			X					
Mix of traditional, Islamic and contemporary design	X	X				X		X		X		X		X	X		X			
The political issues among the state and the central government	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X		X		X	X	
The crisis in creating an Islamic City identity	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X			X	

Table 8.2. Themes Arising from the Interview Analysis.

### 8.3.1 Basic Elements in Kelantan Malay Cultural Landscape.

There are many significant elements that contribute to the regional identity of the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape. Reflecting the content of interviewees' responses, the following summary focuses on the traditional Malay house and the Malay village.

#### 8.3.1.1 Traditional Malay House and Associated Vegetation

Currently, the traditional Malay house is one of the heritages that can be seen in Kelantan especially the rural areas. Due to the changes over time, some of the houses have been refurbished and many more have been demolished or rebuilt in a more modern and contemporary style. During the interviews, I witnessed how houses have been transformed. One of the respondents stated:

“It was very sad to see all these happen while you are still here. It was like your memories with your family and kids during yesteryears were burnt together.” (E5)

Common views shared with other respondents confirmed that the traditional house is gradually disappearing nowadays.

Seven respondents (A1, A3, G2, H1, E1, E8 and E9) confirmed that the design of the traditional timber house has changed drastically especially its structure and roof design.

“Previously, the house is built by raising the floor to prevent flood during monsoon season and animals but now most of the house is built on the ground level.” (G2)

“Nowadays we can see new roof design and structure of new house. Most of them are beautiful and very versatile...a bit different from the traditional design. By the way, the structure is still considerate to the traditional style.” (E1)

Equally, it was recognised that the traditional house is one of the proud trademarks of the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape, and has been noted as critical to the heritage of Kelantan Malay. One of the respondents mentioned:

“The house is very beautiful with its craftsmanship from wall to roof as a symbol of our culture. It is not an easy job to do all the crafts. That’s why to build a traditional timber house there needs to be very dedicated and talented people.”  
(P2)

In addition, the respondents highlighted the sensual qualities of the design of traditional houses. The design is based on the local climate and allows good ventilation. One of the respondents pointed out:

“I really like to stay in a timber house compared to a concrete house because of its good ventilation. The timber house is cooler than a concrete house especially during a hot and sunny day.” (H2)

In addition, most of the respondents stated that most of the traditional houses are surrounded with fruit trees, herbs, and flower trees. Normally local fruits like rambutan, guava, mangoesteen, jackfruit and starfruit are planted near the house, while coconut trees normally are planted in front or behind the house. A common feature associated with the traditional house is the need to have a well behind or beside the house for daily use as acknowledged by most of the respondents (A1, A2, A3, P1, P2, G3, H1, H2, H3, E1, E4, E6, E7 and E9). Two of the respondents stated that:

“I can still remember when I was young; children really enjoy having a bath at the well. It was a nostalgic moment since now people use a shower. But now I don’t think people dig a well for their houses as a clean water source. Most of them have their own water tank.” (E7)

“During past times, to have a well was a must for every traditional Malay house as a source of clean water and for daily use. The location varied but most of them were situated at the back of the house to give more privacy especially for the women family members.” (A3)

### 8.3.1.2 Malay Village

Based on the interviews, all of the respondents admitted that the Malay village has changed steadily especially in its landscape and the vernacular buildings. In a Malay village, the mosque is very essential since all Malays are Muslims. A mosque not only serves as a house of worship, accommodating the required five daily prayers, but also as a centre of socialization and a symbol of faith and permanence (Eben Saleh, 1998). One of the respondents put it:

“In the village, the mosque has become a place for all the community to perform daily prayer five times a day. Besides, people will meet together here to do religious activities especially for men. They will meet every Friday to perform Friday prayer. Any information will be announced during this time.” (E8)

Basically, the location of the mosque is situated at the centre of the village or close to the main area to make sure that people can easily access the mosque. Normally, the paddy field is synonymous with the village area. Hitherto, most of the people worked as a farmer but now it has totally changed and people work in all sectors. Most of them work outside from the village, especially younger people. One of the respondents mentioned:

“Now, everyone wants to go to the big city to find work. Our son doesn’t want to work as a farmer. What else can we expect?” (E7)

Now, the traditions have changed. Younger people are excited to move from the village to find better jobs in the city centre especially in Kuala Lumpur, or to go on to higher education. During the interview, I could observe this situation happening at first hand, as it was common to see only older people and small children in the village area. It was confirmed by one of the respondents that only he and his wife live in their house while all their six children work and live outside from Kelantan. One of the respondents stated that:

“Sometimes, I feel very lonely. All my kids are away from here. They got good jobs and have their own life in the city centre. Most of them live in Kuala Lumpur. I always bless all of them and pray for their success. During *Eid* we will have a big

family gathering. It makes me feel so happy to see all of them here. It always reminds me about their childhood..." (E6)

### 8.3.2 Factors Contributing to the Decline in Popularity of the Traditional Malay with Local People.

#### 8.3.2.1 Lack of Skilled Workers

Most of the respondents agreed that currently there is a lack of the skilled workers to build a traditional Malay house. Some of the respondents mentioned:

"It is hard to find someone who really knows how to build a traditional house. What we have now is only those who can build a new concrete house." (A3)

"No more skilled workers can be found here nowadays to build traditional Malay houses. Normally the traditional house is full with the decorative arts and crafts that make it more complicated to build." (E3)

Compounding these problems, most of the big developers hire foreign workers, especially from neighbouring Indonesia, to build new concrete houses. This situation has had a big impact on the development of the traditional timber house. The trend of hiring foreign workers in housing construction had not only becomes a state dilemma but has also become a national issue in Malaysia. One of the respondents stated that:

"Now, most of Indonesian people work in the housing development sectors besides working as housemaids. There are many reasons why this is happening. Personally, this is not a good solution to the development of the traditional Malay house." (P2)

Furthermore, due to changing local interests and customs, more and more contemporary houses are being built to fulfil a new range of currently perceived needs.

#### 8.3.2.2 Cost of Materials

It was noticed that the cost to build a traditional timber house is more expensive compared to a new concrete house. One of the respondents stated:

“Due to the cheaper cost it’s better to build a concrete house rather than a timber house. Even though I like traditional house more but I go for the concrete house for its beauty and status.” (G2)

Currently the price of timber and wood is more expensive than concrete materials. Obviously this factor has reflected a big impact to the making of a traditional house instead. It also appears that new designs are associated with greater prestige.

#### 8.3.2.3 New Lifestyles

The taste of the local people has slightly changed due to new lifestyles and new urbanisation. People have readily accepted the new trends which lead to easier and more convenient lifestyles. Some of the respondents stated that:

“If we compare now and earlier times, they were absolutely different. We still share the same culture but now the lifestyles become easier and simpler.” (E2)

“Hitherto, the lifestyle was easy even though we do not have enough facilities like today. In those days, the villagers lived in harmony and very close to each other. There was no social problem like today.” (E3)

#### 8.3.2.4 Ability to Build

Building a traditional timber house needs more work and is time consuming, especially related to the craftsmanship and the structure. Some of the respondents mentioned that to build a traditional timber house is not a priority any more since the cost is greater (G1, P2, E1, E4, E6, E8 and E9). They said that it was only for those who really admired the beauty of the traditional timber house. Some of respondents said that:

“It is hard to realize the traditional house now. Everything is expensive...I do believe that many of us still like the traditional house but the problem is...it is so expensive to build such house...” (E8)

“I still remember this house was so beautiful forty to thirty years ago with the crafts and carving, but now it was totally changed. I can’t manage to maintain the beauty of the house any longer. As you can see now most of this house has been replaced with new materials. I can’t afford to buy quality timber.” (E9)

“Timber is more expensive than concrete. To find good timber like *cengal* and *merbau* is difficult now. For that reason, it is better to use concrete which is longer lasting compare to types of timber that are easily damaged by weather, climate and insects.” (E6)

#### 8.3.2.5 High Maintenance

The maintenance of a timber house is slightly higher than a concrete house, as confirmed by the statements below:

“Nowadays, timber is more expensive than concrete. No more *merbau*, *cengal* and *penaga* now. Even in the villages, more and more concrete houses are built.” (E3)

“It was more difficult to maintain a timber house compared to a concrete house. The most common problems are to survive from the climate and termites. In some of the cases, the traditional timber house has been abandoned by the younger generation after their parents passed away because they lived outside from the village...normally at the city centre. Then, the houses are more likely to fall into ruin.” (E5)

#### 8.3.3 Respondents’ Views about the Current Landscape.

##### 8.3.3.1 Bad

Two respondents stated that the current landscape is bad due to the conflation of designs and concepts. Examples of the comments that illustrate this view are:

“In my opinion, the current landscape design is not strong enough. Even though they have changed some of the negative elements, still they have destroyed some of the spiritual elements. For example it is really bad to have a symbol of Holy Quran as an Islamic monument.” (A1)

“If we look at the current landscape here, it is not a real Kelantan Malay authentic one. They have changed a lot especially in Kota Bharu city centre. More or less the traditional landscape has slowly changed with new elements which is sometimes totally different from the local traditions that we have.” (E3)

#### 8.3.3.2 Good

Fourteen respondents (A3, G1, G2, G3, H2, H3, E1, E2, E4, E5, E6, E7, E8 and E9) think that the current landscape is good and very distinctively represents the richness of the Kelantan Malay culture. Some of the points raised by respondents include:

“...a lot of changes have been done to the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape especially in the city centre. The landscape looks more Islamic now. This might be because of the political factor as well. Sometimes, it looks more Islamic than the other Islamic countries. It is good to make it such ways but on the other hand the traditional elements should not be neglected. Don’t be too passionate towards the others and being prejudiced against what we have. This is not good for our future prospects.” (G1)

“...we still can use the other landscape influences but we need to consider our own identity too. Personally, I think it is good to have a variety of concepts as long as it can enhance our local identities. In this case, priority should be given to our own identity. I know it will involve many people and not only be something for the authorities.” (G2)

“Basically I would say that the current condition is quite good and has its own identity. I might say nowadays the landscape has been enhanced with its variety.” (H2)

### 8.3.3.3 Lacking Identity

Four of the respondents (A1, P1, P2 and E3) think that the current landscape lacks regional identity that can be highlighted as genuine Kelantan Malay cultural landscape. One of the respondents stated:

“As I said earlier these are not the real Kelantan Malay cultural landscape. Some of the concepts are not so clear and look strange. What we have now is just like a combination of various concepts that make our landscape looks like it has no specific identity. For example we can see that some of the landmarks at the city centre are just mimicking from the other places all over the world. Some of them look very awkward to be honest.” (P1)

### 8.3.3.4 Possessing a Specific Identity

Eleven of the respondents (A2, G1, G2, G3, H1, H3, E1, E4, E5, E7 and E9) stated that the current landscape possessed specific identities that made the landscape highly recognisable to the locals. Two of the respondents stated that:

“The Malay people are very unique with their lifestyles, customs, arts and cultures that have reflected the soul of the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape. For example, during previous times they built arches and fences to their palace, single houses and the city areas and until today they still doing that in different approaches and concepts.” (H1)

“The design trend of the cultural landscape in Kelantan has become a very special identity to the state. Apart from the Islamic design approach the cultural landscape is remarkable with its regional traditional identity.” (G1)

### 8.3.3.5 Derivative

Meanwhile, thirteen respondents (A2, A3, P1, P2, G1, G2, G3, H2, H3, E2, E4, E6 and E9) commented that the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape is intrinsically derivative, but in a positive way. The fact that it has derived from multiple influences helps to

account for its several of its beautiful characteristics. Some of the respondents mentioned that:

“I think the landscape looks like a mixture of various concepts and a bit contemporary while the traditional becomes fewer. I would like to stress here that the Kelantan people are very proud to be Kelantanese but at the same time they are very open in accepting new influences as long as it is not against their Islamic way of life. They will blend it with their own taste and make it look more local. For instance, in the city centre, they use palm trees to make it looks more Islamic probably.” (P1)

“Kelantan has many sources in arts and cultures that can be considered as valuable heritage of traditional Malay people. I am very delighted because of the traditional Kelantan Malay design has been highlighted as one of the Malaysian heritages.” (A3)

#### 8.3.4 Respondents’ Views about the Future Prospects.

##### 8.3.4.1 Scope for Conservation

Six respondents (A1, A2, P2, G1, G2 and H1) felt that the vernacular landscape should be subject to conservation in the face of current trends. Since there were no more new traditional house being built, it was hoped that the existing traditional houses can be preserved for conservation purposes. Examples of some of the statements made are:

“I think in the next twenty years or more, people will be more aware of conservation issues of the Malay landscape. If not, they may vanish as trends change.” (H1)

“It is essential to start conserving the existing Malay vernacular landscape and vernacular architecture from now onwards because it has a tendency to disappear from the state.” (P2)

#### **8.3.4.2 Combining Islamic, Traditional and New Designs**

Nine respondents (A1, A2, G1, G3, H2, E1, E3, E4 and E6) believed that the future landscape trend of the Kelantan Malay will be a combination of traditional and new designs. Some of their statements include:

“By looking at the current scenario that we have, I think we will have more variety of the cultural landscape in the future. Definitely Islamic and local approaches will be practised in the future but it might be that some other new element at that period that will be used to suit the trends.” (H2)

“Traditional elements in Kelantan landscape still can be seen here but it will unite with more Islamic and new concepts of design. The mixture of designs will render the Kelantan Malay landscape more beautiful and versatile.” (E6)

#### **8.3.4.3 Potential Loss**

In contrast, three respondents (H1, E3 and E5) believed that the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape is potentially being lost. One of the respondents mentioned that:

“Traditional and cultural landscape may be destroyed one day and will be replaced by other designs. I say this because there is a potential to become extinct one day. For example what has been happening to our traditional Kelantan Malay games lately? They are almost vanished because children no longer know how to play the traditional games. By looking at the current local people’s interests they prefer topical, contemporary and modern designs that are more aesthetic rather than functional compared to traditional and cultural design.” (H1)

#### **8.3.4.4 Retention as Museums**

At the same time, seven respondents (A2, P1, G2, G3, E5, E7 and E8) think that the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape will be retained as ‘museums’. Some of respondents stated that:

“Landscape will keep changing depending on the trends as long as the people do not appreciate the old ones. While the vernacular architecture especially the Kelantan Malay traditional house will not survive for much longer perhaps. Maybe it will only remain as a museum or gallery one day. On the other hand, young people look more comfortable to adapt new lifestyles and urban life nowadays. To make it worse some of the old people didn’t give enough exposure to the young people about the cultural landscape.” (P1)

“I realise that some of our traditional landscape elements have been wiped out slowly but I do hope that all the valuable heritage that we have can still be preserved and retain in the museums and gallery for our young generations.” (E7)

In some ways, the development of museums would be important to preserve artefacts. However, other aspects need to be continued as a “living heritage” in order to avoid the “museumisation” of the landscape.

### 8.3.5 The Challenges in Creating Traditional Malay Approaches.

Currently, there are a lot of challenges in creating the traditional Kelantan Malay approaches. From the interviews, it appeared that the following challenges are the key ones.

#### 8.3.5.1 Political Issues

The political issues are the most important subjects that influence every aspect of landscape change in Kelantan. Polemics within politics have been seen as one of the critical factors in Kelantan development. Since the Islamic Party has ruled the state government, most of the implementation has been based on Islamic approaches. The introduction of the state motto ‘*Developing with Islam*’ has transformed the Kelantan environment in every aspect of daily life. Most of the respondents mentioned how political issues have influenced the local environment. Among their comments are:

“Political issues in Kelantan are highly unique. There are so many controversial issues that happen here. They want to change everything to look more Islamic

especially in Kota Bharu. They build monuments of Holy *Quran* everywhere in Kelantan in order to show how serious they are to promote *Developing with Islam* slogan.” (A2)

“Look at the new building, landscape and Kota Bharu area. It is full with the Islamic images everywhere. *Arabesque* patterns, Arabic alphabet and variety of Islamic design has been adapted here to make it more Islamic. In certain cases, there is a political issue in implementing this kind of design. More or less it become acceptable and suits the traditional design.” (A3)

#### 8.3.5.2 New lifestyle

Nowadays, people are easily exposed to other cultures from all over the world through massive telecommunication influences, especially from the internet and television. More imported lifestyles have been introduced to the local people and have become acceptable, especially to the young generation. The view is strongly expressed by respondents P1 and E7 as follows:

“The big challenge is global modernism and urban styles that have changed people’s attitudes and lifestyles. Now we can easily refer to many concepts all over the world just in a second. Internet and TV are important tools to refer about the other design and concepts. We need to educate our people from the early ages in order to respect the cultural landscape and preserve it for the next generation.” (P1)

“The trends change so fast nowadays and are absolutely different from what our generation faced before. There are a lot of challenges that we have to handle compared to previous years. I don’t have any idea whether our tradition can survive or not in the face of globalisation.” (E7)

The conflict between the elders and younger people in term of changing lifestyles can be witnessed everywhere in Kelantan. Elder people voice their concern especially about the traditional lifestyles that have been preserved while some of the youngsters are more flexible towards simpler and urban lifestyles. Moreover, Kelantan is facing

new swift urbanisation especially in the city centre, whilst more new culture and new lifestyles have been introduced to the local people.

### 8.3.5.3 How to Create an Islamic City Without Mimicking from other Islamic Countries.

Creating an Islamic city according to a local model is not an easy task. On the other hand, to mimic from other Islamic countries is not the best solution due to differences in environment, climate and culture. Some of the respondents acknowledged this issue as a crisis in local character and identity that has to be tackled in positive ways without losing the authenticity of the local character. Six respondents (A2, A3, P2, H1, H2 and H3) have stressed their concern about the Islamic City identities:

“Sometimes, I feel like I am staying in a Middle East country. More and more Islamic features have been imported here. Personally, I think it is not faithful to the local character. I know that to realize an Islamic image is a good idea but the thing is that if there are too many imported features here, something has to be done to benefit to the local characters as well.” (P2)

“I think that is not a brilliant idea to bring all the Islamic identities from the other countries here. Some of the concepts are a bit strange and contrast with the local identities. For example the date palm trees that you can find everywhere in Kota Bharu. Why don’t we use our local palm trees instead of bringing date palm trees to mimic other Islamic countries?” (H3)

On the other hand, some of respondents see these imported Islamic identities as being well adapted to local landscape character. Eight respondents (A1, G1, G2, G3, P1, E3, E4 and E8) also believed that it is not a big problem to bring Islamic designs from the other Islamic countries as long as it is not against the social culture of the people. Three of the comments that illustrate this view are:

“I really like the concept of Islamic city that currently they are doing. It is very applicable to state government and noteworthy as the *Mecca Corridor* image that people now associate with Kelantan. At least the combination of traditional and

Islamic design that they did in Kelantan have given more values to the local identities.” (A1)

“It is a subjective issue to discuss about this matter. Some people might like it but some people might dislike the way they did. Personally, I believe that it is really good to mix traditional and Islamic concepts together. We share the common things in the religious matter so why not the entire good thing we share as well? I see this as a part of globalisation in Islamic world.” (E4)

“The people’s opinion should be considered as well instead of the decisions just being made by the municipal council. The participation of the local community is needed in giving more comments and feedback to create better planning. Sometimes they just ignore the community’s needs and inspirations.” (E3)

### 8.3.6 Some Suggestions by Respondents.

Based on the interviews, some of the suggestions by the respondents have been compiled into four groups which can inform the further study of the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape in the future.

#### 8.3.6.1 Educate People about the Importance of Cultural Landscape Issues

Six of the respondents (A1, P1, H1, H2, E1 and E4) think that local people have to be educated especially regarding the essence of the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape. Three of the comments that illustrate this view are:

“We need to train our people to appreciate the cultural landscape. We recognise that we need modernism no matter what but don’t let them kill our roots. The most important thing is the awareness among the individual itself.” (P1)

“The education about the cultural landscape has to be started from the early ages in order to make sure that our generation are fully aware about the importance of the cultural landscape that we have. The best way to do this is to have a syllabus about an introduction to the cultural landscape for educational sectors especially in the primary school.” (E1)

“We have to appreciate what currently we have. I noticed that the assimilation of culture is widely been accepted here but we have to know our authentic identities as well rather than just easily adapt from the others. That’s why education about the cultural landscape is very important indeed.” (A1)

#### 8.3.6.2 Learn from Others

In addition, ten of the respondents (A1, A2, A3, P1, G1, H1, E1, E4, E7 and E8) have raised the issue that it is important to learn from the others in order to study relevant aspects of the cultural landscape especially about management, implementation, design and planning. Some of the statements include:

“Everyone needs to play their part. This is our heritage that always needs to be cared for and conserved all the time. We need to learn from the others as well to make sure that our culture will remain longer. The government and local council should play their vital roles in developing urban and cultural landscape design. They should place a priority on the cultural landscape identity instead.” (P1)

“Previously, there was a moment when we experienced a bad value in our society. But then when we realize about it, we have to change that value. We have to face adaptations as well as evolutions in our cultural landscape in order to ensure that we have a better value in our culture. Personally, I think that it is a common thing for someone to learn from their difficulties and come out with a better idea.” (A1)

#### 8.3.6.3 Promote Own Identities

Six respondents (A1, P2, H1, H2, E1 and E2) were very positive in promoting their own identities. Some of the statements been stressed by respondents H1 and H2 are:

“I hope to see our own cultural landscape stay longer and be accepted by our local people. If there has to be any modification to the cultural landscape, we need to preserve and make sure that our identities are not erased by the new development. I do hope one day we could have our own guidelines and templates for our own identities.” (H1)

“We need to have our own regional trademarks and identities and not only rely on the others. Referring to the others is sometimes good. However we shouldn’t just ‘copy and paste’ from what they have. To understand the cultural landscape better, the local designers need to affiliate with the historian together with the local people to make sure that the designs are truly authentic and representative of the Kelantan Malay.” (H2)

#### 8.3.6.4 Preservation and Conservation Issues

On the other hand, eight respondents (A1, A2, A3, P1, P2, G2, H1 and E4) have highlighted the issues of preservation and conservation of the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape. Examples of their remarks are:

“Compared to other countries, we are a bit far behind concerning preservation and conservation our cultural landscape. There are many issues to be highlighted here but the most important thing is the ability to maintain and sustain all the characteristics that we have. I personally notice that sometimes because of the budget and lack of funding has contributed to the unsuccessful of conservation and preservation programmes in our country. It was really sad to know this is happening to our country, right?” (A2)

“We need to study what other countries do in terms of preservation and conservation to their cultural landscape as well. Our research and development need to be more sufficient to support any issues regarding the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape. Most of the cases, we just take for granted without any serious action against them. We need more efforts and efficient team work from various bodies among personal, government and privates sectors too.” (H1)

### 8.4 Discussion

#### 8.4.1 The Issues of Creating the National Identity.

The search for a national identity is still ongoing and is a long-term process in Malaysia. Since Malaysia is a multi-cultural nation the task is even more complicated and difficult.

Similar to many postcolonial societies, Malaysia is currently experiencing a collective identity crisis. Thus, today the Malaysian cultural identity is increasingly defined in terms of an understanding of Malay identity. Many efforts have been put into the search for the Malay identity. The annual Malaysian Landscape Festival or LAMAN is among the platforms to affirm its essence. One of the sources in the making of the Malay landscape arises from the uniqueness of the Kelantan vernacular. In order to make sure that the authenticity of the regional identity of the Kelantan Malay is being conserved, it is important to recognise all its characteristics and elements, both past and present.

Kelantan is known as a melting pot of various Malay arts and crafts. As present, there are a lot of arts and crafts that still survive and are being preserved. All of these are very valuable in order to give character to the beauty of Malay arts and culture. The potential of Kelantan Malay arts and culture was attested by the interviewees. One of the respondents stated:

“Kelantan is very rich with the Malay arts and cultures. The traditional Kelantan vernacular architecture is among the best examples of the Malay architecture. For that reason, Kelantan design is chosen as one of the trademarks of the Malay design.” (A1)

Moreover, the variety of designs can be noticed from some of the statements below:

“Malay people are very unique...their lifestyles, customs, arts and cultures have reflected the soul of the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape.”(A1)

“Kelantan is very unique and have their specific identities. There were a lot of potential elements that can be highlighted and fully utilized.”(H2)

“Kelantan Malay people are very rich with their lifestyles, arts and cultures that made them famous in Malaysia as a cradle of Malay culture.”(A3)

“There were a lot of traditional Kelantan arts and crafts that potentially can be used in contemporary landscape.”(A2)

It was clear that most of the interviewees were very positive about the potential of the Kelantan Malay arts, crafts and cultures to contribute to the distinctiveness of the landscape.

Thus, adaptation from the Kelantan Malay arts and crafts is potentially a major contributor to the challenge of “making” the Malaysian national identity.

Kelantan Malay vernacular architecture is very significant within the traditional Malay architecture in Malaysia. The detailing and craftsmanship are highly distinctive and stand out as one of the icons in Malay architecture. This can be discerned from some of the statements:

“The design in Kelantan Malay buildings is very detailed and a bit different from the others...” (P1)

“The Kelantan Malay house has a very beautiful craftsmanship especially their flower and plants motifs.”(P2)

“We can see their different designs with other traditional Malay houses in Malaysia especially the structure of the roof and the decorated wall crafts.”(E3)

Kelantan vernacular architecture is highly distinctive and versatile especially its design and detailing. The beauty of craftsmanship and detailing has contributed a significant trademark in traditional Malaysian architecture. Presently, religious, traditional and political factors are among the criteria that have influenced the pattern of the Kelantan Malay landscape. All of these elements have combined to form a unique cultural landscape.

#### 8.4.2 The Conflict between Religious and Traditional Cultural Influences.

During previous times, some traditional Malay culture was assimilated from the Hindu culture for example during wedding ceremonies and some of the traditional games and arts performances. In order to create an Islamic City, the local government has made drastic changes to the state’s socio-cultural practices which were contrary to Islamic laws. Some of these have included the development of landscape planning in Kelantan. For instance Respondent H1 commented:

“The local government should be realistic in doing the planning agenda especially concerning Kelantan Malay cultural and arts. For example why did the local government ban ‘wayang kulit’ (*Kelantan Malay shadow play*) and ‘makyong’

*(Kelantan Malay traditional dance drama)? I don't think that the decisions against the arts and cultures should be made for political expediency. In fact, that is not the best way, to prohibit all these living cultures. It just to deny the catalytic effect of the fusion between Islamic, Kelantan Malay and indigenous cultures.”* (H1)

Similarly, two other respondents (H3 and E3) drew attention to some of the actions taken by the municipal government to prevent any inappropriate elements and behaviour under Islamic law.

“When PAS won the election in 1990, they demolished all the human and animal statues and replaced them with Islamic structures.”(H3)

“Sometimes, they are very strict. That day I saw a lady has been fined because of not wearing proper dress in shopping mall.”(E3)

#### 8.4.3 The Mixed Elements of Traditional, Islamic and Contemporary Design.

The combination of traditional, Islamic and contemporary design in Kelantan has led to a lot of changes in the vernacular landscape. Without doubt, the mixed trends have become synonymous with the Kelantan landscape and these find some support amongst the respondents. Thus:

“For me, basically it is not treating the cultural landscape but enhancing the landscape to be more interesting and more aesthetic. The traditional elements still remain and are maintained as well as additional Islamic and contemporary elements that contribute more values to the cultural landscape. It is just not a ‘copy paste’ work but adaptation to reflect Islam as a way of life in the Kelantan Malay community.” (E4)

#### 8.4.4 The Political Issues among the State and the Central Government.

Since the Islamic Party took office in the state government, many controversial changes have occurred in Kelantan, some of them apparently against the national government's views and agendas. Naturally, the gap between them is very familiar to the Malaysian community. Some of the respondents mentioned that political issues

among the state and the national government have influenced the landscape of Kelantan in general. Remarks include:

“They always have issues to prevent the national government from interfering in their party. The problem is because of their different ideology...absolutely different. Sometimes they want to show off to the national government that they got power here...no one can interfere with them.” (A2)

“Who cares, the power is in their hands now. They can do everything they want...”  
(E9)

#### 8.4.5 Crisis in Creating an Islamic City Identity

Even though Kota Bharu was proclaimed as an Islamic City, there are difficult questions about the kind of Islamic approach that the government wants to implement in Kelantan. Initially, they proposed that Islamic law should be used in Kelantan and used *Hudud* as one of the approaches. But then, because there were so many objections and political influences by the national government, the law has still not yet been approved. Most of the respondents perceived some issues regarding the Islamic city identity. Examples of their remarks are:

“What kind of Islamic identity they want to do here? The thing is that, they just copy paste from the other Islamic countries especially from the Middle East.”(E5)

“It was so sad to see this kind of foreign identities together with the traditional elements.”(E6)

“We have our own traditional characters, why all these new characters were bringing here. Isn’t enough yet what currently we have?”(E9)

“When we talk about the Islamic design that currently we have here, I would like to put a question mark here. Is it truly Islamic or just a pastiche from the others? Did we duplicate the Moorish style to be put here? That is their culture and why should we want to make their culture to be declared as our culture? Personally it sounds weird to me.” (H1)

Some of the respondents also think that adaptation from other countries is a common thing that we have to face now, and it is happening everywhere as part of globalisation.

“It is good. At least we can adapt the good values of other designs to our local designs. We can see this everywhere in Kelantan especially in Kota Bharu. I noticed that now they are building a new oriental mosque like Chinese Mosque in Rantau Panjang (one of the districts in Kelantan) which is totally different to the local traditional. I am eager to see what it will look like.”(E4)

“I think it should not be a big problem to adapt other design to the local as long as it doesn’t change all of the traditional characteristics. I might say this should be done in a positive ways. There should have a reason why other concepts need to be put here. At least they can be blended together to give more aesthetic to the design.”(P2)

## 8.5 Conclusion

From the interviews conducted, it emerged that both in the rural settlement and in the city centre, the cultural landscape was gradually being changed. At the same time, social and community lifestyles have changed dramatically due to rapid modernisation and urbanisation in Kelantan. The results show that the decline of the traditional timber Kelantan Malay house is one of the principal losses of valuable vernacular elements that is continuously occurring in Kelantan. The interviews also revealed several reasons contributing to this trend, notably, lack of skilled workers, cost of materials, maintenance factors and new lifestyles. Additionally, all the respondents admitted that the Malay village has changed steadily especially in its landscape and the vernacular buildings. The interviews strongly corroborated the evidence from documents and site surveys in this regard.

Further, it was confirmed that the mosque is integral to the lifestyle of Malay people and to the spatial structure of settlements. Similar evidence from the documents and visual analysis confirmed the central role of the mosque in the community, as well as a striking symbol of

the adaptability of Islam in Malay people. The mosque has evolved into a centre for community activity in addition to its main role as a space to perform daily prayers.

Similar to the trends that emerged in the literature review, the interviews supported the strength of particular drivers of change, namely, globalisation, Islamisation and regionalism. It was suggested that the impact of Islamisation and globalisation in Kelantan have transformed local character and identity. The evidence showed the powerful drivers of change affecting the urban and rural cultural landscape of Kelantan Malay – both the immediate physical impacts of “international” materials and designs, but also of wider cultural and migration trends among younger people. This parallels what has been discussed in the observation and visual analysis chapter. The adaptation of Islamic elements to the local landscape has transformed the imagery of Kelantan, especially in Kota Bharu. Obviously, there is a challenge to the state government to make sure that any new development will be compatible with the local traditional identities. Meanwhile, the challenges in creating traditional Malay approaches have been raised by several respondents. Political issues have become a very important factor in influencing the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape as well as creating a big impact on the practice of landscape planning.

Despite there being pros and cons in the making of Islamic designs in the Kelantan landscape, their adaptations to the traditional design have raised controversial issues. It seems that the creation of an Islamic city without mimicking from other Islamic countries is the biggest challenge to be handled. The problems have been raised by respondents concerned with the crisis in local character and identity. Most of them acknowledged that it was essential to make sure that the traditional characteristics of the Kelantan Malay should be preserved and recorded for the future generation without losing the authenticity of the regional identity. Similar to the observation and visual analysis, interviews have attested to the use of palms trees, arabesque geometry pattern and Arabic calligraphy in most of the public realm.

In conclusion, in order to make sure that all the issues concerning Kelantan Malay cultural landscape are tackled in positive ways, it is crucial to look into the nature and consequences of drivers of change. Since there is a conflict between religious and traditional cultures as well as a crisis in creating an Islamic city identity, the municipal government of Kota Bharu should deal with this matter as a fundamental consideration in the future “making of the Islamic City”. To summarise, dealing with globalisation, Islamisation and regionalism is the

key factor to achieve better landscape planning and public realm in the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape. The respondents' viewpoints attest to a widespread concern about losing the authenticity of the local character because of the passion to create an Islamic City of Kota Bharu.

## **Chapter Nine: INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION**

### **9.0 Introduction**

This chapter gathers the findings from the preceding analyses and provides a commentary on the key issues arising. The study revealed that the elements and characteristics of the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape are still important to contemporary landscape design. Even though some of the authentic traditional design has gradually changed, there are continuing elements of the traditional landscape that still survive today. The study also revealed that how the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape has evolved and been transformed since the arrival of Islam during 13<sup>th</sup> century through to the “change drivers” of the present day. The influences have been identified as key drivers that influence the authenticity of the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape. Current approaches to landscape design and planning in Kelantan reflect the ways that urban planning has evolved, and has itself become a driver of landscape change. The study also considered the future prospects for the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape, and how these will face significant evolution for many years.

### **9.1 Emergent Themes**

The research has identified a number of key themes associated with the issues that impinge on the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape, and the policy and educational responses that may be needed in the future.

#### **9.1.1 Improved Understanding and Appreciation of the Kelantan Malay Cultural Landscape**

The thesis has led to an improved understanding and appreciation of the cultural landscape by uncovering the principal characteristics and identities of the “Kelantan Malay”. In terms of the physical characteristics of built and planted environments, there are some pre-eminent properties. For example, one highly distinctive feature is the use of a vernacular roof design adapted from the Palace of the Great Hall for use in many new buildings. By identifying the many comparable elements that the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape has acquired through to the present day, the thesis has illustrated the richness of its regional identities. By comparing the Kelantan Malay traditional timber house to the recent buildings, the thesis

has shown that traditional design still retain significance. Moreover, guidelines published by the Kota Bharu Municipal Council which require that major new buildings in the urban area should have a Kelantan Malay vernacular identity affirm the official value that is attached to traditional and local properties in current development.

Furthermore, the thesis highlighted the existing Malay cultural practices that are still prevalent today. The thesis illustrated that there are many existing cultural qualities that can potentially be promoted to enhance the richness of contemporary design within the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape. The thesis has shown how the landscape in Kelantan faced transformation especially from 19<sup>th</sup> century through to the present day. From the thesis, it is very clear how recent trends have changed the cultural landscape in general and how traditional elements have been adapted through Islamic and modern design approaches. The thesis also revealed how the Kota Bharu Islamic City Municipal Council plays a very important role in creating an Islamic City of Kota Bharu by adapting various Islamic design concepts from other Islamic countries, especially from the Middle East. The thesis also showed how the Islamic City concept became a dominant model for the state government which is ruled by its Islamic party.

#### 9.1.2 Characteristics and Identities of the Kelantan Malay Cultural Landscape

Since Kelantan is famous for its Kelantan Malay timber house and vernacular architecture, it is essential to make sure that this does not vanish from the state's heritage. The thesis has shown that the Kelantan Malay timber house is currently facing degradation due to several factors, for example, lack of skilled workers, the cost of timber material, maintenance, and low levels of public interest. Moreover, it was disappointing that the thesis failed to discover any new Kelantan Malay traditional houses being built, and instead found that new houses were being constructed in contemporary designs from concrete, which is more commercial and practical in the current market.

Although cost and awareness may be contributory factors, these appeared to be less critical than loss of skills. Loss of traditional skills emerged as a deep-seated issue, whilst other factors might potentially be overcome through awareness-raising and possible grant-aid. Finding skilled personnel is the central problem, and skills are increasingly confined to older people. In this regard, the government has introduced some certificate and diploma courses

to develop traditional crafts skills under the Council of Trust For the People (MARA) Skills Institute of the Ministry of Rural and Regional Development.

The traditional vernacular style can be seen in the museums and galleries in Kota Bharu. For example, it is notable in the Palace of the Great Hall and Jahar Palace (currently known as the Museum of Royal Tradition and Customs). Meanwhile, the local traditional Islamic vernacular of Kelantan can be seen in the old mosque of Kampung Laut, which now has been reconstructed in a safer place near Kota Bharu. The design concept has shown how regional vernacular can be suited to the local Islamic design without needing to adopt pastiche from the other Islamic countries.

#### 9.1.3 Understanding of the Traditional Cultural Landscape

The findings have also highlighted that an improved understanding of traditional cultural landscape elements can help planners, landscape architects and municipal administrators to more fully respect traditional values and give greater attention to conserving the vernacular.

#### 9.1.4 Conflict between Islamic and Modern Design Principles and the Vernacular Regional Identity

This research has found that in Kelantan, there is conflict between Islamic and modern design principles and vernacular regional identity. Islamic principles add more spiritual elements that signify God and various other social matters such as planning for separate spaces among men and women. Additionally, Islam prohibits any statue that been used purposely for praying (e.g. traditional statues to local gods).

This study also found evidence of the concept of “glocal” where global identities grounded through localised physical manifestations have been implemented in Kelantan. It is suggested here that expressions of the “glocal” are often to be welcomed rather than considered entirely problematic, because they show the continuing relevance of cultural character to current design. In doing this, local character is applied in a positive ways. However, in some cases, the combination of global and local has been inept, with global influences overshadowing instead of highlighting the beauty of the local character. This is particularly evident in some of the new shopping malls in the Kota Bharu area.

Glocal effects were widely observed in Kota Bharu city centre, where global identities have been mixed with and adapted to the local cultures and identities, or more recent Islamic influences. It is particularly evident in some of the recent commercial buildings, and the example of TESCO (Sireh Valley) emerged as a relatively successful attempt to synthesise modern, traditional and Islamic elements.

#### 9.1.5 Changes That Are Sympathetic to the Vernacular

The results of this study show that recent changes vary considerably in the extent to which they appear to be sympathetic to the vernacular. Many of the changes were classified as modern but justifiable. At the same time, however, some of the changes could be described as merely pastiche or kitsch, or even conflictual and unsympathetic. Many of the new development projects have implemented a variety of concepts that contribute to a new and relatively “placeless” design style. Adaptations such as the transference of designs from other Islamic countries continue apace, and have overridden the opportunity to conserve the vernacular. However, some design approaches do support the idea of promoting vernacular landscape in order to keep alive the Kelantan Malay heritage. Further, requirements by local municipal councils to provide traditional designs as well as Islamic elements, especially in urban and new developments, showed that the municipal councils are taking seriously their role to sustain identity and sense of place, especially in Kota Bharu city centre. Broadly, this research supports Relph’s distinction between the ‘authentic’, which gives ‘a direct and genuine experience of the entire complex of the identity of places’, and ‘inauthentic’, which displays ‘arbitrary social and intellectual fashions..following stereotyped conventions’.

In terms of Rasdi's suggestion that successful places capture both a “spirit of times” and a “spirit of place”, certain measures do seem to have responded appropriately, on the one hand, to contemporary technologies and economic requirements whilst, on the other, invoking a sense of local uniqueness derived from natural and cultural features, and personal associations. For example, the Handicraft Village/Craft Museum and Siti Khadijah Square illustrate how traditional and new places can be blended together. Both of these utilize traditional vernacular design in their building styles with the use of Malay decorative arts, ornament and traditional crafts. They promote traditional and cultural activities with the purpose of sustaining the uniqueness of the Kelantan cultural identity.

The Handicraft Village and Craft Museum is arguably more successful than Siti Khadijah Square for its preservation and conservation of traditional Malay arts and culture, whereas Siti Khadijah Square performs particularly well in terms of maintaining culturally rooted activities within a public space. The adaptation of a traditional Malay boat, incorporated in the structural design, has also contributed to an integration of the spirits of place and time. However, whilst the Handicraft Village has made a noteworthy attempt to capture the spirit of the place and is a hub of activity, it is fundamentally a tourist attraction and, as such, a pastiche. Somewhat in contrast, Siti Khadijah Square continues a long-standing tradition of economic activity with a very distinctive character. It successfully reflects the spirits of both time and place, thereby achieving a greater degree of authenticity.

The situation in the kampungs is more questionable. Whilst many of the modern buildings are unsympathetic, the curtilages and wider landscape have remained relatively unchanged. Further, many of the cultural activities persist, such as weddings and Eid celebrations, often contrasting with more self-centred city lifestyles focused only on the nuclear family.

#### 9.1.6 Current Landscape Design Approaches

Overall, the findings of the study reveal the variety of current landscape design approaches in Kelantan. The current approaches are mixtures of Islamic, traditional and modern designs. The combination of these concepts has played a very important role in the emergence of a new Kelantan landscape. Looking at the current trends, however, it is considered that there is insufficient sensitivity to the heritage. To a degree, the local government has sought to be sensitive. Nonetheless, some of the current approaches need to change, especially in order to give more respect to heritage as well as to the traditional and Islamic elements. However, there are implications for practice and education which must be effected. Moreover, many Kelantan people tend to tolerate any new development as long as it is done in conjunction with the Islamic purposes. The result is that there are many new developments which could be regarded as pastiche or kitsch due to their adaptation from the other design concepts, especially from the Middle East countries.

Kelantan has experienced different influences over time from other cultures especially from Islamic conventions and contemporary as well as traditional concepts. These diverse influences have blended together to produce considerable variety in landscape design.

Islamic design seems to be very dominant in contemporary developments, especially in relation to building design and the landscape.

#### 9.1.7 Authenticity

The study revealed that many vernacular landscape elements and characteristics still persist. For example, the most significant style can be seen in the Palace of the Great Hall which is well-known as one of the most complete Kelantan Malay vernacular complexes that is still in an excellent state of preservation. The palace design structure, especially its roof design and the traditional archway have since become a trademark to influence other new buildings and structural designs in Kelantan. It has thus become a signature informing the making of Kelantan Malay identity, and one which characterises “Kelantan Malay” as distinctive from others. This thesis has suggested that an improved knowledge of the characteristics and identities of the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape may lead to an improved appreciation and conservation of it.

This study has also found that the Kelantan Malay community values both the tangible and intangible properties of landscape such as historical elements, traditional cultural values, arts and crafts, and traditional activities. These properties are valued as important and they will need suitable levels of protection if they are identified as threatened.

As noted, authenticity relates not just to physical elements, but also to the retention and promotion of activities and meanings. This study has found some evidence that new spaces are being used in active and meaningful ways. For example in the Handicraft Village and Craft Museum the combination of sensitive vernacular design and appropriate landscape treatment has created a space in which it is meaningful to explore the beauty of Kelantan Malay heritage. The Siti Khadijah Square is always crowded with people and fulfils a clear need related to the cultural attribute of industriousness. KB Mall and TESCO appear to actively encourage spontaneous use, although this would be more pleasant and probably more memorable with stronger attention to landscape planning. By contrast, Independence Square seems to fail to attract people or to encourage lively activity, probably due to lack of attention to landscape planning and design.

### **9.1.8 Influences from Other Cultures.**

The study revealed that Kelantan Malay cultural landscape includes influences from other landscape design styles. Without doubt, Islamic, Thai and Western colonial have had an important influence on the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape and its people. For countries that were once under a succession of colonial rules like Malaysia, public landscape perceptions were influenced by external material culture and ideas.

#### **9.1.8.1 Thai Styles**

Kelantan Malay vernacular architecture was influenced by the nearest neighbouring country, Thailand, formerly known as Siam. This influence had a long history, and Kelantan and Siam had a diplomatic relationship until the arrival of the British. Furthermore, some of the southern part of Thailand which is dominated by Thai Malay Muslims still has traditional Kelantan Malay house patterns. In addition, in certain parts of Kelantan there still exist Thai community villages consisting of traditional Thai architecture styles. Even though both Thai and Kelantan Malay have their own authentic identity, they share some similarity especially to the southern part of Thailand.

#### **9.1.8.2 Western Styles**

After the British succeeded the Thai government, influences then arrived from British architectural styles. Some of the modern concrete houses have been built with adaptations of traditional local designs. Some of the buildings still exist in Kota Bharu area, for example, the Istana Batu Palace, now a Royal Museum.

The British colonial legacy is acknowledged as a very important contribution to the Malaysian architecture heritage. Many famous colonial buildings have been preserved and conserved as heritage monuments and iconic buildings. Moreover, most of the colonial buildings have been declared as historical buildings under the National Heritage Act 2005. In Kuala Lumpur for example, the Sultan Abdul Samad Building (designed by A.C.Norman, 1894-1897) during the British administration remains a very important landmark in the urban landscape. However, the colonial heritage is generally regarded as a historic example rather than as something which is to be reflected in contemporary designs as a component of the traditional or vernacular cultural heritage. Citizens and planners both prefer to adopt

more contemporary designs, and to recall a more deeply rooted heritage, rather than mimic the recent colonial legacy.

#### 9.1.8.3 Islamic Styles

Rahman (1998) stated that the arrival of Islam in the late 13<sup>th</sup> and early 14<sup>th</sup> century, and its consequent acceptance by much of the Malay world during the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, was an important historical event that greatly influenced the Malay lifestyle and culture. The integration of Islam into everyday life is an ongoing process in Malaysia even today. Many changes have occurred especially to some of the daily lifestyle practices that contradict the teachings of Islam. Islam has had a massive influence on the Malay community – for instance in the Malay arts and culture which was strongly influenced by Hindus before being transformed into expressions that were more acceptable to Islam. Thus, Nasir (1997) has stated that Islam has changed mindsets and lifestyles (intangible culture) of most of the Malays as well as the material culture, such as the architecture of houses, mosques, palaces, gazebos and graveyard stones.

#### 9.1.8.4 Hindu-Buddhist

Before the advent of Islam, the Malay community was influenced by Hindu-Buddhist beliefs in their daily lifestyle especially in the arts and culture. Despite the progressive influence of the Malay people by the Islamic cultures, some of the Hindu-Buddhist legacy has remained though much has been supplanted. Examples of the Hindu-Buddhist influences in Malay arts and crafts that have been lost include the use of animal figures for ornamentation which have been replaced with Arabic calligraphy and floral patterns. Particularly, after the coming of Islam, the development of Malay art and crafts was very much focused on the relationship between human beings and the natural world around them. Therefore, they relied heavily on natural materials and motifs and symbols that were derived from the flora. Humanism and animism have, however, since then been rejected.

#### 9.1.8.5 Political Factors

Political factors are crucial in Kelantan since the state is governed by a different party with a different ideology from the national government. Clearly, the political factor creates a massive influence in the building of the Islamic city in Kelantan. As noted, the concept of

“Developing with Islam” has been the main focus of the state government, and as a result, Kelantan has become more similar to an Islamic state as regards the image of the *Mecca Corridor* that has been promoted to the public. The implementation of a new Islamic law by the state government has had a big impact on the Kelantan people. Some of these principles have been incorporated into urban landscape planning in Kelantan, and have become a transformative new landscape driver which has gradually been accepted by the local people. Subsequently, it has had a major impact especially in the Kota Bharu city centre area.

Kelantan has progressively faced different pressures over time from a range of landscape drivers, especially from Islamic influence, but also contemporary modern (international) as well as traditional concepts. These various design concepts have mixed together in ways that sometimes produce value in landscape design.

Kelantan is gaining more experience in preservation and conservation of heritage. Since there are still many heritage buildings and spaces in Kelantan, it is essential to take measures to ensure that the heritage area remains in a good condition.

However, Malaysia faces several problems in dealing with the issue of historic buildings. Critically, the present legislation on historic buildings is not sufficient and suitable to protect buildings from being altered or even demolished and destroyed. In addition, there is lack of technical knowledge in repairing, restoring and maintaining historic buildings. Under The National Heritage Act 2005 grant aid scheme, there is provision for historic buildings to be preserved, but this scheme is currently limited in its scope.

## 9.2 Conclusion

This thesis has indicated that the continuity of the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape should be assured through effective action by state government. The Kelantan Malay cultural landscape has undergone a diverse transformation from various influences that have affected its authenticity, characteristics and identities. The most prominent changes were after the arrival of Islam during 13<sup>th</sup> century which, since then, has gradually and progressively changed the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape. Even now, the cultural landscape still remains in a state of change, subject to the influence of new Islamic and modern contemporary design styles. Thus, the thesis has shown that there is an urgent task to

improve understanding and appreciation of the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape especially amongst the public, practitioners, government and local councils.

## **Chapter 10: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **10.0 Introduction**

It is clear that Kelantan Malay cultural landscape is facing transformation in every aspect. There are many factors that contribute to the current rapid rate of change. A combination of social, religious, geographical and political factors affect the development pattern of the current landscape. It is very important to make sure that traditional places are conserved while also promoting contemporary designs that respect the vernacular traditional styles. Local government should be more concerned about and sensitive to the progressive development of Kelantan especially in Kota Bharu. Future development in Kelantan should not be based on political opportunity but should demonstrate consideration of the essence of the existing valuable cultural landscape.

### **10.1 Summary and Conclusion**

The first objective of this research was to identify the elements, characteristics, history and influences of the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape. These factors have been explored and interpreted. The influences from Hindu-Buddhist, Thai, Islamic era and Western colonial to the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape have been discussed respectively.

The second objective of this research was to examine cases where recent landscape planning practices illustrate ways in which the cultural landscape has been incorporated or disregarded. Specific cases have been examined in detail. Also, the current landscape approaches by the municipal council have been analysed. Similarly, relevant design concepts, trends and design principles have been examined in order to understand the current trends in Kelantan.

Finally, the thesis has advanced constructive ideas for improved practices in respect of the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape. It has also recommended principles and guidelines that might be developed in order to promote practices which are more respectful towards the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape.

The findings of the study reveal that there is a need for planners, architects, landscape architects, municipal council, designers and local government to have more respect and

awareness about conservation of and caring for traditional culture instead of producing more commercial and contemporary designs that do not reflect a sense of place.

The study concludes that the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape is facing a precarious evolution due to some of the political agendas of local governments as well as a lack of awareness concerning vernacular traditional styles among the public and practitioners.

The findings have indicated that remedial action has to be taken in well resourced and evidence-based manner to secure the continuity of the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape, and ensure that the valuable Kelantan Malay heritage can be passed on.

This study aimed to explore the authenticity, characteristics and identity of the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape from various periods, and the influences that have transformed the regional cultural landscape overall.

It is concluded that these investigations will be helpful in determining future approaches to landscape conservation planning.

## 10.2 The Importance of Islamic Values in the Kelantan Malay Community

This study has revealed the importance of Islamic values to the Kelantan Malay community. Islam has influenced most aspects of the Kelantan Malay people. Historically, Islam came to Kelantan by Arabian travellers during 13<sup>th</sup> century. Since then the people of Kelantan slowly adapted to the Islamic values in their daily life while some of the Hindu influences, especially in the ritual and traditional culture were abandoned. Until now, Kelantan people have assimilated Islamic influences since the arrival of Islam and slowly became accepted into their entire lifestyle. Moreover, under the Islamic government the concept of Kota Bharu Islamic City, the “Developing with Islam” slogan and the Mecca Corridor have shown that how seriously the state government tries to create a more Islamic environment for the local people and their lifestyle.

However, whilst the principles of Islamic design identified in Section 6.1.6 are widely adhered to, there appear to be some implementational deficiencies with regard to landscape. Some spaces are clearly not well maintained, and may have fundamental landscape design limitations. Hence, they may not be “conducive to reflection”, and the desired levels of

activity may be absent. Greater attention to landscape and the public realm, as well as to the built environment, is desirable. Further, whereas the use of colour contributes significantly to a sense of place, or to cultural resonances – for example the emphasis of original timber colours and the use of pastel surface treatments at the Palace of the Great Hall – there is no formal guidance on the use of colour.

### 10.3 The Political Factor is a Major Issue in Transforming the Existing Vernacular Landscape Characteristics.

The political factor is remarked as the most influential contemporary element contributing to the Kelantan vernacular landscape. Strong landscape evolution can be seen since the Islamic party's state government rule from 1990 until the present. Many changes have been effected in order to realize the making of Islamic City as a pre-eminent political objective. The thesis has shown that how the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape has been massively transformed based on the Islamic design guidelines and requirements by the state government and the municipal council. However, the vernacular tradition should not become subservient to this express political desire.

### 10.4 Recommendations

#### 10.4.1 Increase Public Awareness

Public awareness of the vernacular traditional should be promoted especially to the younger generation in order to ensure that they have a better understanding about Malaysia's vernacular architecture and landscape in general and specifically about the Kelantan Malay. Currently, it is clear that lack of awareness among the local people has gradually adversely affected the continuity of the cultural landscape. The Kelantan people should play their active roles in helping the local council by giving useful opinions and ideas to promote Kelantan Malay cultural landscape. They should not easily accept any landscape planning that does not contribute any benefits to the cultural landscape.

#### 10.4.2 Exemplary Practice by the Municipal Council

The municipal council should set a good example in preservation and landscape design in order to create a faithful Kelantan Malay design that has a strong quality of authenticity.

They should not simply bring new or external designs to the area without giving consideration to their contribution to traditional culture. They should provide good urban design planning with greater respect to the vernacular landscape to ensure that the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape characteristics and identities are well guarded. There should also be an increased emphasis on the quality of landscape design and management. For example, not all recent developments appear to meet the avowed intention to effect landscape designs that stimulate the human senses in order to ensure the full use of and engagement with the spaces.

#### 10.4.3 Policy and Design Guidelines Should be Reviewed Regularly

The policy and design guidelines should be reviewed and updated regularly to make sure that the continuity of the vernacular landscape can be preserved. The Kelantan Malay heritage should be highlighted as a main consideration in the future planning to avoid further damage or loss of valuable heritage. Meanwhile, a regional vernacular tradition should be set as focal point in the making of the Islamic City of Kota Bharu without mimicking from other Islamic countries. Specifically, there should be an aim to develop criteria for the listing of culturally significant landscapes.

#### 10.4.4 Vernacular Traditional Styles as a Source in Architecture and Landscape Architecture Education

In the educational sector, it is very important to architecture, planning and design students to understand how the vernacular tradition plays an important part in safeguarding the Malay heritage. The study of vernacular traditions in architecture, landscape and urban planning has the task of informing about the past and its evolution and transformation. It is useful for students to learn about the past heritage to make sure that they are more sensitive towards their own traditions and cultures.

#### 10.4.5 More Promotion of Vernacular Traditional Landscapes

More campaigns should be undertaken by local government and national government to promote the beauty of the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape. The government should educate people to understand the heritage values through programmes including campaigns

through television, radio, internet and newspaper as well as organizing programmes in which local people can participate directly.

#### 10.4.6 Academicians and Historians Should be Actively Involved in Landscape Planning

It is suggested that the roles of the academics and historians are very important to contribute ideas about landscape planning especially when heritage and vernacular traditional issues are involved. State government as well as central government should include academicians and historians in regional planning to make sure that heritage and traditional values can be understood appropriately.

#### 10.4.7 More Research on the Kelantan Malay Cultural Landscape Should be Conducted

Currently, research about the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape is very limited especially before the arrival of Islam in Kelantan. Very few documents discuss the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape in detail and how it has changed. The concept of the Flower Garden Land which was famous in Kelantan during the 15<sup>th</sup> century is still unclear and needs more exploration. Thus, it is important that more research on the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape should be undertaken to better understand those factors that underlie its integrity.

### 10.5 Future prospects

By looking at the current urban patterns and architectural styles in Kelantan, it is strongly believed that the authenticity of the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape will diminish gradually if no stronger commitment is forthcoming either from state government or national government concerning its continuity. It was very clear that Islamic issues have been used by the state government in order to change the Kelantan environment from a traditional cultural one, to one which more closely resembles an Islamic state. In a sense, the ‘Developing with Islam’ slogan which is widely promoted by the state government has been used to achieve political desires and aspirations. Therefore, there is a very important task to be carried out among the Kelantan Malay public, practitioners and government, to make sure that the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape still survives and flourishes as a precious heritage of the Kelantan Malay people and to the wider Malaysian legacy also. In addition, a similar transformation is needed in relation to other discordant landscape designs from all

around the world, especially from the other Islamic countries which is entirely different from the regional tradition.

## 10.6 Conclusion

The thesis has shown that an understanding of traditional cultural landscape elements can help planners, landscape architects, and municipal administrators in their endeavours to conserve, in an authentic way, the integrity and the beauty of the Kelantan Malay cultural landscape. A strong message has emerged during the observations and interviews with some of the respondents that, by better understanding the traditions, we will find improved ways of planning the cultural landscape. Meanwhile, analysis from the master planning process has shown how more careful reference to the traditional Kelantan Malay has resulted in better outcomes.

The thesis has found that traditional village landscapes are being lost to forces of cost and convenience, whilst Islamisation sometimes means that Middle East styles are being inappropriately adopted in the urban area. Sometimes, attempts to reflect traditional styles result in pastiche, whilst some landscape maintenance is poor and the selection of appropriate species is based on rather restricted criteria. However, there are some successful examples of balancing Islamisation with regional traditions, based on design, materials, colour, relevant activities, and meanings. These demonstrate that Kota Bharu municipal government is making some progress towards ensuring that the city is both an "Islamic city" and a "cultural city". Even so, more progress needs to be made through improved public awareness, appropriate professional education, improved planning and landscape guidelines, and stronger conservation measures

Effective changes to urban planning that will lead to improvements in the contemporary and future environment require further consideration. However, it is evident that we should not just copy the traditional cultural styles, but should develop principles and lessons from a clear understanding of concepts, models and theories underlying the vernacular. These principles and lessons from the past can be used today to improve the quality of our contemporary urban and rural environment.

There is a crucial need for today's designers, architects, landscape architects and planners in Malaysia to rigorously evaluate their traditions of vernacular design and seek to incorporate

what is still significant into contemporary practice. It is very important to understand the past, the present and the future prospects of the vernacular tradition, in order to ensure that our architecture, landscape and urbanism practices express its values.

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