

## URBAN MORPHOLOGY OF BUFFER ZONE AND ITS SURVIVAL IN THE HISTORICAL CITY OF MALACCA

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### ABSTRACT

In Malaysia, awareness, interest and realization among the public towards urban conservation are still few. Recently, it has only become an important agenda in heritage cities of Malacca and Penang that are being listed in the World Heritage List of UNESCO. Government, private and charitable organizations have started taking part in conserving and preserving the heritages. However, conservation guidelines, practices and development planning are mostly being concentrated on the Core Zone, and creating a negligence to the Buffer Zone, bringing issues to the historical environment, heritage buildings and *kampung* in the city. Realizing this phenomenon, this study has been carried out in order to illustrate the present situation of urban conservation in Malacca City along with the urban morphology, focusing on the Buffer Zone areas. Kampung Banda Kaba, Kampung Jawa and Kampung Bukit China are chosen as study field representing kampung areas in Buffer Zone. The aim objective of this study is to reveal the historical value of Buffer Zone areas, the heritage buildings within the area, and the survival of Malay community in the city despite the surrounding's urbanization. By carrying out site investigations, interviews and studying from the old maps and documents, the study aims to find solutions for the urban issues occurring in Buffer Zone, and to provide a greater conservation guideline for the areas.

**Keywords:** urban morphology, conservation, buffer zone, urban *kampung*, shop houses

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Urban conservation is a new field in Malaysia, and there is a lack of interest and realization among the people towards it. Moreover, legislations related to urban conservation in the country are still few. Heritage cities, buildings and monuments in Malaysia are presently facing damages and pressures from the rapid development. A total control should be taken in order to keep these heritages alive and preserve cities in the country from losing their historical and traditional identities.

In protecting and preserving these heritages, local authorities, federal and state governments, departments of Museum and Antiquity, heritage trusts and other professionals have been given the responsibility to carry out the concept of urban conservation. These organizations hold responsibilities in providing seminars and workshops on skills development, financial incentives to heritage traders, commercial spaces and promotion, and marketing traditional activities as tourism products. These programs will bring out major benefits such as protection of the historical national heritage, building the image and identity of heritage cities, heritage values of local culture and benefits to the tourism industry.

Although the conservation practices have been started in Malaysia, concentration is being put largely on building preservation and conservation, especially the colonial buildings. However, the amounts are limited due to the lack of legislations and enactments regarding to the conservation practice. An act of preserving the antiquities has been legislated in the country during late 20<sup>th</sup> century, but it is only restricted to the buildings that aged more than 100 years old. This act also does not reach the surrounding urban area which is built by the heritage buildings inside it.

Recently, urban conservation in Malaysia has become an important agenda in the development of the heritage cities of Malacca and Penang. These two cities that were parts of British Straits Settlement during the 19<sup>th</sup> century hold both historical and architectural heritages where the history of

the country can be explored from here. Malacca City, which was the birth place of Malaysia, represents the history of Portuguese and Dutch colonial. Meanwhile, the city of Georgetown in Penang represents the identity of British colonial architecture. The roles of these cities have been highlighted by the growing tourism industry as the main tourist destinations in the country.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### • *Historical Background*

After Malaysia gained its independent, Malacca grew freely and the economy was concentrated on farming and tourism. Development of the city was slower until 1970s. According to the map of Malacca City in 1970, there is some development which clearly shown on both side of the river. More *kampung* was established on the west side and named from *satu* (one) to *tujuh* (seven). By 1980, the tourism movement in Malacca was even faster comparing to other states in Malaysia. On 1989, Malacca was declared as a Historical City, where almost all the historical buildings at the area of Saint Paul's Hill were regenerated as museums. There was also a new planning carried out to make Malacca as a museum city in order to preserve the historical buildings and monuments, and also to attract more tourists to the city. The development then grew rapidly, forcing for a reclamation land. As a result, the government reclaimed the sea to make a new commercial and housing area and changed the whole form of the city. This reclamation area contains the areas now called Taman Kota Laksamana (housing development area), Mahkota (shopping complex and hotels), Melaka Raya (commercial area), and Pulau Melaka (housing and commercial area).

### • *Urban Morphology*

Malacca state presently contains three districts; Melaka Tengah, Alor Gajah and Jasin. Malacca City which located in Melaka Tengah, was merely a village of *orang laut* (sea people), grew into a big emperor and trading port during Malacca Malay Sultanate era (1400~1511) . During the Portuguese rule (1511~1641), it developed as a fort town, divided into three suburb; *Upe* (trader's settlement), *Yler* (Portuguese's settlement) and *Sabba* (Malay's rural area) (Figure 1). The structure of town and road was clearer during Dutch era (1641~1824) with a new town planning on the west. The Portuguese fort was demolished by British during its era (1824~1957) and the town was divided into two parts; European Town (British settlement) and Native Town (Dutch, Portuguese, Chinese, Malay and Indian settlement). More Chinese and Indian people were invaded for rubber and tin industries, and changed a part of the city into a Chinatown. Road and railway became the main transportation replacing river and sea.

Malacca grew freely on farming and tourism industries after the independence on 1957. After being declared as a Historical City in 1989, colonial buildings were regenerated into museums and reclamation land was increasing. Nowadays, the city covers commercial and housing, institution, religious (mosques, temples and churches) and green areas (hills, parks and stadium).

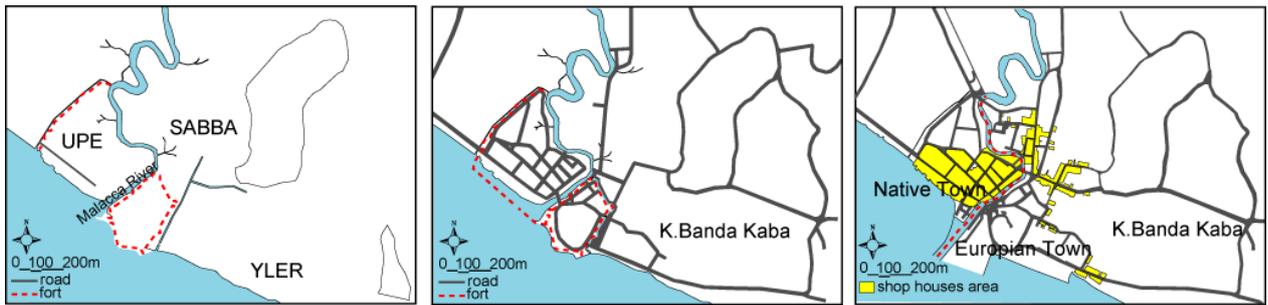
### • *Urban Conservation; Core Zone and Buffer Zone*

*Perigi Raja* (The Royal Well) was the first monument preserved by the Government of Malacca during British era in 1934. After the independence, Government of the Federation projected the *Antiquities and Treasure Troves Ordinance* which was later amended as the *Antiquities Act* in 1976. On the same year, *Town and Country Planning Act* was projected, allowing every state in the country to assign any group of land or building with historical and architectural values for conservation. The *Restoration and Conservation of Cultural Heritage Enactment of State of Melaka 1988* was carried out in Malacca by 1988. Malacca Municipal Council may designate any heritage buildings or areas to be conserved, preserved or quality improved. By 2005, all acts were gathered to form a new legislation, the *National Heritage Act*.

Malacca Municipal Council, Malacca Museum Corporation and Heritage of Malaysia Trust are major organizations in conservation programs. Saint Paul's Hill Civic Zone (museums area), and Residential and Commercial Zone (old shop houses area) are legislated as Core Zone (Figure 3). The surrounding areas of Commercial Zone and Housing Zone (*kampung* areas) are designated as Buffer Zone, regulated under Plot Ratio Control; 3.5:1, Plinth Area Control; 80%, Height Control; 4<sup>th</sup> floors, and Building Conservation and Preservation Control.

Green areas of Saint Paul's Hill, Saint John's Hill and Bukit China, and *kampung* areas of Kampung Morten (Kampung of Malay Culture), Perkampungan Portugis (Kampung of Portuguese

Culture) and Kampung Chitty (Temple of Fine and Authentic Chitty) are also designated as conservation and preservation areas.



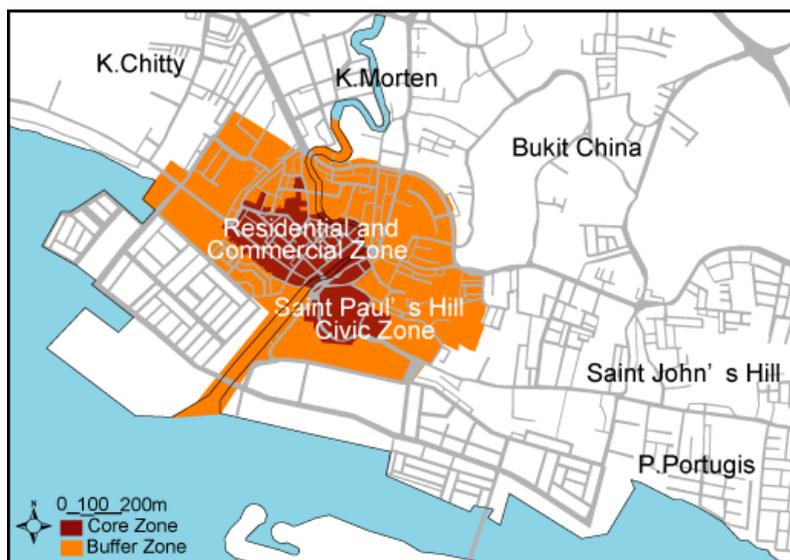
Source: (Author, based on Old Malacca, 2008)

**Figure 1:** Malacca City during Portuguese, Dutch and British Colonial Era



Source: (Author, based on Action Area Plan, 2008)

**Figure 2:** Spatial Land Use in Malacca City



Source: (Author, based on Action Area Plan, 2008)

**Figure 3:** Core Zone and Buffer Zone of Malacca City

### 3. METHODOLOGY

Several methods have been used in the process of exploring the conservation practices and urban

morphology of Malacca City and the characteristics of *kampung* areas in this study. In order to gain basic knowledge about the conservation practice done in the Historical City of Malacca, *Action Area Plan for Historic City of Malacca Municipal Council's Conservation Zone 2002* prepared by Malacca Municipal Council is being studied. Then, the history and urban morphology of the city is revealed from old handbooks and maps of the colonial eras, focusing on the areas of Buffer Zone. The environment, urban planning, issues and architecture in Buffer Zone is being studied by a field investigation done in the whole Buffer Zone including the three *kampung* existed in the area. Interviews were conducted with the residents in the three *kampung* and owners of shop houses in the commercial areas, in order to clarify the urban issues and problems occurring surrounding the Buffer Zone area.

#### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Findings clarified that the present Buffer Zone areas was developed from two settlements called *Sabba*; Malay rural area, during the Portuguese era to a new Chinatown built within the British colonial era. It has then grown with shop houses along the road and *kampung* areas with several Malay houses behind them.

- ***Old Shop houses***

Two types of old shop houses can mostly be identified in the Buffer Zone area; Straits Eclectic and Art Deco Styles. It shows that the area started developing with the Straits Eclectic Styles around years 1930 and started increasing in 1939 with the Art Deco Styles. However, uncontrolled development and no enforced legislations towards this area, causing a few damages that may endanger its importance of buffering the main heritage area of the Core Zone. Buildings more than 4<sup>th</sup> floors are abundantly built, ruining the historical streetscape and squatters are located between and behind the rows of shop houses.

The result from the observation shows that façade of the old shop houses are also unprotected with oversize signage, unsuitable location of mechanical system, and replacement of the original elements. Uncontrolled renovation, extension and no standardization of colour scheme used are also identified as harms to the old shop houses.

- ***Urban Kampung***

Three *kampung* areas are selected representing the urban *kampung* in the Buffer Zone area; Kampung Banda Kaba, Kampung Jawa and Kampung Bukit China. Kampung Banda Kaba and Kampung Jawa are the presently settled by Malays and Chinese. Kampung Banda Kaba, starting as Malay rural era namely *Sabba*, is known as a former settlement for Malay government workers during the Dutch era (Figure 4). Kampung Jawa was established during Portuguese era in suburb of *Upe* as a settlement for Javanese traders (Figure 5). It was then moved across the river, developed as a Malay fishing village and said to be the origin of Kampung Morten. Kampung Pokok Kelapa, presently a Chinese settlement, was used to be a part of Kampung Bukit China, built during Sultanate era as a settlement for Chinese traders (Figure 6).

Urbanization forced the *kampung* areas to shrink and can only be approached by narrow entrances between shop houses, terrace houses, parking lots, schools and government buildings. Besides Malacca River's Beautification Project along Kampung Jawa, there is no further planning for Buffer Zone's development, let alone for resolving issues of environment and houses in the *kampung* areas.

- ***Malacca Long-Roofed Houses***

Malacca long-roofed house with sixteen pillars concludes main house (*serambi* and *rumah ibu*), middle house (*selang* and *rumah tengah*) and kitchen area (*selang* and *rumah tengah*), found further inland owned by richer Malays. While the twelve pillared house is only structured by main house and kitchen area, found along seafront or in distant rural areas.

56 long-roofed houses are found in the *kampung* and can further be categorized into four groups regarding to the transformation on the roofs and floors; 1) original high roof and raised floor, 2) high roof with ground level floor, 3) lower roof with raised floor, 4) lower roof and ground level floor. Further investigations on 11 of these 56 houses found that only *rumah ibu* that still existed in every house, although the spatial use changed from guest area to family's private area. Extensions are usually done next to *rumah dapur*, providing extra spaces for kitchen, family and guest relaxation area, or living room. The original structure of *anjung* and *serambi* are also walled or brought down into ground level. In addition, an extinction of *selang* is also found in all houses where this space is being roofed. *Selang* is a special part of Malacca long-roofed house which provides no roof and

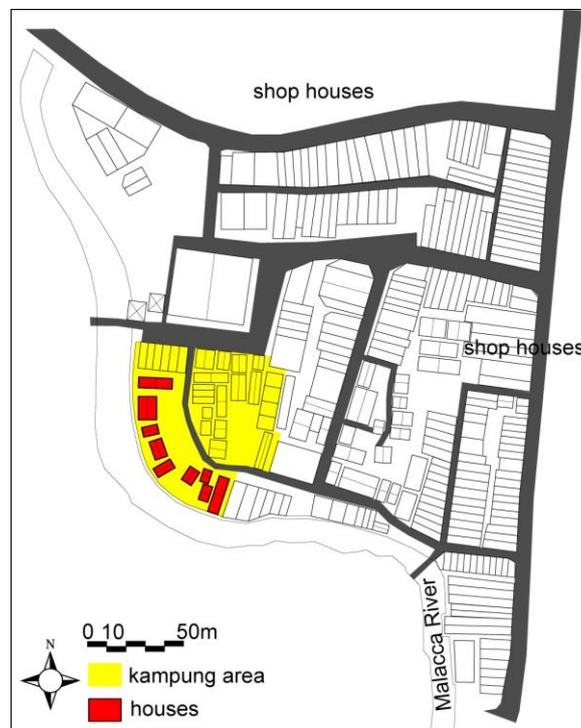
locates the entrance for women to the kitchen area .

Efforts to protect the houses by the residents are limited to their financial, ages and skills to maintain, reuse, rebuilt or repair the houses. Selling and moving out has been the final solution due to incapability of owners to afford maintenance cost, and needs for instant cash. Alteration also occurs in terms of use, as in the case of traditional space which no longer use as residential usage. Rebuilding demands traditional building techniques and craft skills which have long been declining. The repair often uses affordable new materials such as zinc plate and laminated-wood panel.



Source: (Author, 2008)

**Figure 4: Kampung Banda Kaba**



Source: (Author, 2008)

**Figure 5: Kampung Jawa**

- ***People and Culture***

The industry in Malacca changed from trading to rubber and tin industry during the British colonial

era. British brought a lot more Chinese people for tin industry and Indian people for rubber industry. As a result, Malacca became a multi-racial town with British, Chinese, Malay, Indian, Dutch, Arab, Javanese and Portuguese people. In 1920s, Kampung Morten was established on the north side of the town as a new settlement for Malay people that moved out from Kampung Jawa due to the construction of the central market.

As a result, majority of the shop houses in both Core and Buffer Zone areas are occupied by Chinese and kampung areas by Malays. It can be concluded that the existing of urban kampung in Malacca City shows the survival of Malay community surrounding by the commercial areas that populated by Chinese since the migration made by British.



Source: (Author, 2008)

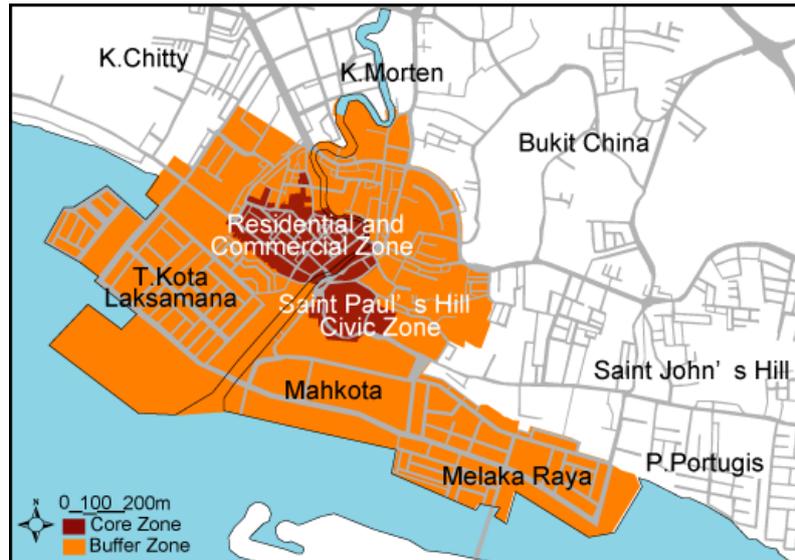
**Figure 6:** Kampung Bukit China

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The study has identified that regulations are not strictly enforced in Buffer Zone area and negligence towards the conservation practices comparing to the Core Zone area. Buildings over than 4<sup>th</sup> floor; hotels, apartments and government buildings are being built abundantly and new housing developments are being constructed inside the kampung area. There is no traditional style or arrangement adopted into these new architectures bringing an unsuitable modernization into the historical city. The study also clarified issues occurring in the kampung areas inside Buffer Zone; Kampung Banda Kaba, Kampung Jawa and Kampung Pokok Kelapa, where there is a lack of attention towards damaged and abandoned houses, and the environment inside the kampung.

The unbalanced development has brought some influences to the urban formation of the area. It has been illustrated that areas outside the New Chinatown in Buffer Zone are also transforming into Chinatowns by the increasing number of shop houses along the roads. This is bringing more Chinese population, the majority race in the commercial industry and reducing Malay community in the city. The kampung areas that used to be opened to the roads and river are also changed into hidden areas behind the shop houses and tall buildings. This also results alteration on the existing Malacca long-roofed houses.

Several actions should be considered to provide a greater kampung environment and Buffer Zone area; regenerate and adopt the original style and structure of Malacca long-roofed houses, encourage traditional architecture style and arrangement to new housing development, revise the conservation guidelines for Buffer Zone towards redevelopment and integration of new buildings, include the reclamation land into Buffer Zone to preserve the sea view from the city centre (Figure 7).



Source: (Author, based on Action Area Plan, 2008)

**Figure 7:** Proposal of Core Zone and Buffer Zone of Malacca City

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