



RECLAIMING THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE OF
THE MINANGKABAU IN NEGERI SEMBILAN

BY

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for
the degree of Master of Science (Built Environment)

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ABSTRACT

This study fundamentally discusses the importance of reclaiming the Minangkabau cultural landscape in Negeri Sembilan. The notion of reclaiming the loss of culture is perceived as an important initiative towards protecting cultural landscape values. Therefore this study was conducted to provide understanding towards the importance of reclaiming cultural landscape in order to protect i) traditions, ii) local practices and iii) sense of identity. For that reason, it is important to identify the types of cultural landscapes that are significant to the tradition of the Minangkabau in Negeri Sembilan, to assess the existing condition of Minangkabau practices, as well as to assess the influence of cultural landscape towards the local identity of Minangkabau in Negeri Sembilan. This study employed a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, namely questionnaire surveys and semi-structured interviews. The analyses were carried out by using the Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS) version 20 and discourse analysis. The findings show a decline in the Minangkabau tradition, including the fact that the local practice is slowly diminishing and eventually causing the loss of a sense of identity. Due to these reasons, reclaiming the cultural landscape of the Minangkabau is seen as an initial step to rectify the current condition of the Minangkabau culture. It is also discovered that the perception towards the traditions, local practices and identity also contribute to further understanding the purpose of reclaiming the culture as a whole. Thus the findings demonstrates four aspects on the perceptions which are i) definition and representation of the Minangkabau ii) awareness on the local identity of the Minangkabau iii) the intervening factors of the declination of the Minangkabau and iv) ideal suggestions. This study has contributed to increase our knowledge on the level of understanding, responsibility and appreciating the Minangkabau traditions, local practices and identity.

خلاصة البحث

هذه الدراسة تتناول بشكل أساسي على أهمية استعادة المشهد الثقافي في مينغكابو بنكري سمبيلن. بنظر الى مفهوم استرداد فقدان الثقافة كمبادرة هامة نحو حماية القيم المشهد الثقافي. ولذلك أجريت هذه الدراسة لتقديم فهم لاهمية استعادة المشهد الثقافي من أجل حماية التقاليد والممارسات المحلية والاحساس بالهوية , لهذا السبب المهم التعرف على انواع المناظر الطبيعية الثقافية والتي تكون مهمة لتقليد مينغكابو في نكري سمبيلن لتقييم حالة الممارسات القائمة مينغكابو. وكذلك لتقييم تأثير المشهد الثقافي نحو الهوية للمحلية في مينغكابو بنكري سمبيلن. تستعمل هذه الدورة مجموعة من الاساليب الكمية والنوعية والدراسات الاستقصائية والمقابلات الاستبيان وهي شبه منظمة نفذت التحليل باستخدام الجزمة الاحصائية للنسخة الاجتماعية (SPSS) العلوم وتحليل الخطاب وتشير النتائج الى انخفاض في التقليد مينغكابو بما في ذلك حقيقة أن الممارسة المحلية أخذة في التناقض ببطء وتسبب في نهاية المطاف الى فقدان الاحساس بالهوية. نظرا لهذه الاسباب ويستعيدون ا في المشهد الثقافي في مينغكابو يعتبر خطوة أولية لتصحيح الوضع الحالي للثقافة مينغكابو , واكتشفت ايضا أن تصور نحو التقليد والممارسات المحلية والهوية يسهم ايضا في تعزيز فهم الغرض من استعادة ثقافة ككل , وبالتالي النتائج اوضح أربعة جوانب على التصورات التي هي تعريف وتمثيل مينغكابو والوعي على الهوية المحلية للمنتغكابو وقرارات المثالية وقد ساهمت هذه الدراسة الى زيادة معرفتنا على مستوى المسؤولية والتفاهم وتقدير الثقافة مينغكابو والممارسات المحلية والهوية.

APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that, in my opinion, it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Science (Built Environment)

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

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“*Bismillahirrahmanirrahim*: In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious and the Most Merciful”

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

A	Agreed
CV	Chief Village
D	Disagreed
DMB	Dato' Mangku Bumi (Undang)
DP	Dato' Perak (Buapak)
FCV	Former Chief Village
FREQ	Frequency
E1	Elderly
E2	Elderly
E3	Elderly
IECL	Intangible elements of cultural landscape
M	Mean
S/A	Strongly Agreed
SD	Standard Deviation
S/D	Strongly Disagreed
PBUH	Peace Be Upon Him
JKK	Jawatan Kuasa Kampung
TS	Tok Selampit (Story Teller)
U	Undecided
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This study focuses on reclaiming the cultural landscape of the Minangkabau in Negeri Sembilan. Reclaiming cultural landscape in this study is defined as the idea of regaining the valuable traditions and practices that represent the peoples' identity or sense of identity. Reclaim cultural landscape is perceived as an initiative to protect human history, heritage and culture. It is important to preserve the cultural landscape as it holds the key to peoples' identity and the original culture of a group of people or place. A cultural landscape cannot be replaced or regained after it has been destroyed and its loss would imply the absence of human identity. Therefore this study is conducted to provide understanding towards the importance of reclaiming cultural landscape in order to protect traditions, local practices and sense of identity. This chapter explains the aim, objectives and research question on the idea of reclaiming the cultural landscape of the Minangkabau in Negeri Sembilan in terms of traditions, local practices and identity.

1.2 RESEARCH BACKGROUND

This study focuses on the key words which are “reclaiming”, “cultural landscape” and “the Minangkabau”. “Reclaiming” is defined as an attempt to regain and sustain something valuable for future use. It is an approach of maintaining significant assets and valuable heritage as well as pertaining to the idea of appreciating something valuable and priceless (True, 1994). “Cultural landscape”, on the other hand, is described as human activities on land and past experiences are the elements that shape identities, traditions, beliefs, values, norms and cultural meanings to the place. Many scholars have discussed the importance of cultural landscape towards enriching people’s identity, developing a sense of place or belonging and protecting the original culture of certain community or place as it is the main key to human legacy (Clement, 1997; Arntzen, 2003; Stoffle et al., 2003; Loures, 2008). Cultural landscape can be considered as a valuable heritage and is irreplaceable. Arntzen (2003) affirms that cultural landscape is to sustain the heritage tradition and practices, to protect local identity and to enrich original culture of a group of people or place. As cited by Sirisrisak and Akagawa (2007: 26), heritage is defined in the UNESCO World Heritage Centre as, *‘Heritage is our legacy from the past, what we live with today, and what we pass on to future generations’*.

This study focuses on the idea of reclaiming the cultural landscape of the Minangkabau in Negeri Sembilan. Negeri Sembilan is known as The Land of The Minangkabau Tradition and tradition is one of the aspects that differentiate the Minangkabau with the other ethnic groups in Malaysia. Studies by Khadijah Muhamed (1978) and Nazri Shariff (1989) highlight the loss of identity of the Minangkabau in Negeri Sembilan. The Minangkabau people are beginning to lose its sense of identity (Malay Cluster, 2011). Therefore this study focuses on reclaiming the

cultural landscape of the Minangkabau in order to highlight the growing sense of loss in the Minangkabau tradition, local practices and identity.

The Minangkabau in this study refers to the local people of Minangkabau in Negeri Sembilan. The state is known as the Land of the Minangkabau Tradition and is considered special because of its uniqueness in terms of its culture, traditions, architecture, language, oral traditions, performing arts, crafts, cuisine, and literature. Khadijah Muhamed (1978) states that the Minangkabau is the largest matrilineal society in the world and Negeri Sembilan is the only state that preserves the influences of the matrilineal societal system while Nazri Shariff (1989) emphasizes that Negeri Sembilan is the first and only state in Malaysia that practices the “*Adat Papatih*”.

However the people of Minangkabau in Negeri Sembilan are undergoing the process of losing their identities. In other places in the world, similar problems of losing the sense of identities, traditions or cultural landscapes have been experienced in native Afghanistan, Hawaii, India, Indonesia, Palestine, Sri Lanka, Somalia and Thailand among others (True, 1994; Sirisrisak and Akagawa, 2007; JIM, 2008). Some of the places have nearly lost their cultural landscapes and only a few have managed to slowly regain their loss. In order to avoid this scenario from happening to the Minangkabau in Negeri Sembilan, the approach of reclaiming the loss of cultural landscape is taken into consideration. The reclamation of cultural landscape is able to increase people’s awareness and to provide understanding on the importance of preserving cultural landscapes (Garibaldi and Straker, 2010).

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Issues on the loss of culture or cultural landscape have been discussed throughout the world. The issue highlights the contributing factors towards the loss of culture that affect the loss of identity (True, 1994). Hence, the needs to preserve the culture from declining and disappearing have been identified. Malaysia is a multicultural society surrounded by various types of cultural practices, among them the Minangkabau culture. Minangkabau in Negeri Sembilan is one of the most treasured cultures experiencing steps of losing its identity. There are several contributing factors that have caused this problem. Assimilation with other Malay ethnic groups is probably the main reason contributing to the loss of Minangkabau culture (Malay Cluster, 2011). Other than that, the modern lifestyle and economic challenges may have contributed to the disappearing of the Minangkabau cultural landscape.

According to Khadijah Muhamed (1978: 15), "*Minangkabau is the largest matrilineal society in the world*". Matrilineal is an exclusive heritage of the Minangkabau community in Negeri Sembilan. Unfortunately, the community feels that they are losing the sense of identity; this is probably the result of mixing with other Malay ethnic groups. There are seven districts in Negeri Sembilan; however, only four areas are still preserving the Minangkabau traditions and practices, namely Kuala Pilah, Tampin, Seri Menanti, and Jelebu (Malay Cluster, 2011). As other areas of Negeri Sembilan have shown, assimilation with other Malay ethnic groups has resulted in a loss of the Minangkabau tradition, local practices and identity (Malay Cluster, 2011).

Modern challenges is the major threat towards cultural landscape and people's identity. Modernism promotes a better standard of living as it offers vibrant social activities and economic growth yet they are only focused on urban or new township

areas. Cities offer countless numbers of job opportunities hence many people are forced to migrate to the urban areas. Tachimoto (1998) stated that the younger generations are more interested to find employment outside their villages and most of the educated youths have preferences in choosing their works. They focus more on occupations with reasonable payments, such as government agencies, and from white to blue collar jobs, such as teaching.

This scenario, therefore, have contributed a negative impact towards the people of the Minangkabau in Negeri Sembilan, especially those who are still preserving the legacy in the sub-urban areas. As the number of people migrating to the city increases, the amount of people who are practicing the Minangkabau traditions in the sub-urban areas and preserving the cultural landscape eventually declines (Malay Cluster, 2011). In general understanding, the awareness and sense of attachment towards the identity of Minangkabau is also reducing. The newcomers or immigrants with the intention to stay permanently in the sub-urban areas of Negeri Sembilan may not have the similar awareness towards the idea of appreciating the Minangkabau traditions, local practices and identities. Khadijah Muhamed (1978) suggests that newcomers of a certain place do not feel the responsibility over the sense of identity of the place they are migrating in. Therefore, it can be argued that modern challenges have contributed to the negative impact with regard to the sense of identity of the Minangkabau community.

The location of the place, which is in sub-urban areas, enables the people of the Minangkabau to maintain their culture and traditions. Nevertheless, the lack of awareness and level of appreciating the original culture of the Minangkabau are foreseen as a threat towards the notion of reclaiming the cultural landscape. Based on the issues raised, the focus of this study is important as it focuses on the idea of

reclaiming the cultural landscape of the Minangkabau in order to protect the traditions, local practices and identity. Initiatives should be taken into consideration to sustain the culture and legacy for future generations. In particular, cultural landscape assists in enriching the identity of the Minangkabau in Malaysia. Cultural landscape reflects the story of people who shaped it not only in the past but also at present time. Each culture has unique characteristics that connect humankind with the environment. Therefore, it is important to preserve cultural landscape as it is a valuable heritage, the key to peoples' identity and the original culture of a group of people or place which cannot be replaced or regained after it has been destroyed. The loss of cultural landscape would imply the absence of human identity.

1.4 AIM

The aim of this study is to examine the issue of reclaiming the cultural landscape of the Minangkabau in Negeri Sembilan, in order to identify the necessary actions needed to be taken to protect the traditions, local practices and identity from decline.

1.5 OBJECTIVES

The objectives are outlined as follows:

1. To identify the types of cultural landscape that are significant to the traditions of the Minangkabau in Negeri Sembilan.
2. To assess the existing condition of the Minangkabau practices.
3. To assess the influence of cultural landscape on the local identity of the Minangkabau in Negeri Sembilan.

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions are outlined as follows:

1. What are the types of cultural landscape that are significant to the tradition of the Minangkabau in Negeri Sembilan?
2. What is the existing condition of the Minangkabau cultural landscape in Negeri Sembilan?
3. How does the cultural landscape influence the shaping of the Minangkabau local identity?
4. How do we sustain the cultural landscape and maintain the legacy for future generation?

1.7 RESEARCH STRUCTURE

The structure of this study is divided into five sections. Section one is on the research framework, section two covers the reviews on cultural landscape and the Minangkabau, section three discusses the methodology employed in the study, section four explain on the analysis and the last section concludes the study. The structure of the research is developed as below:

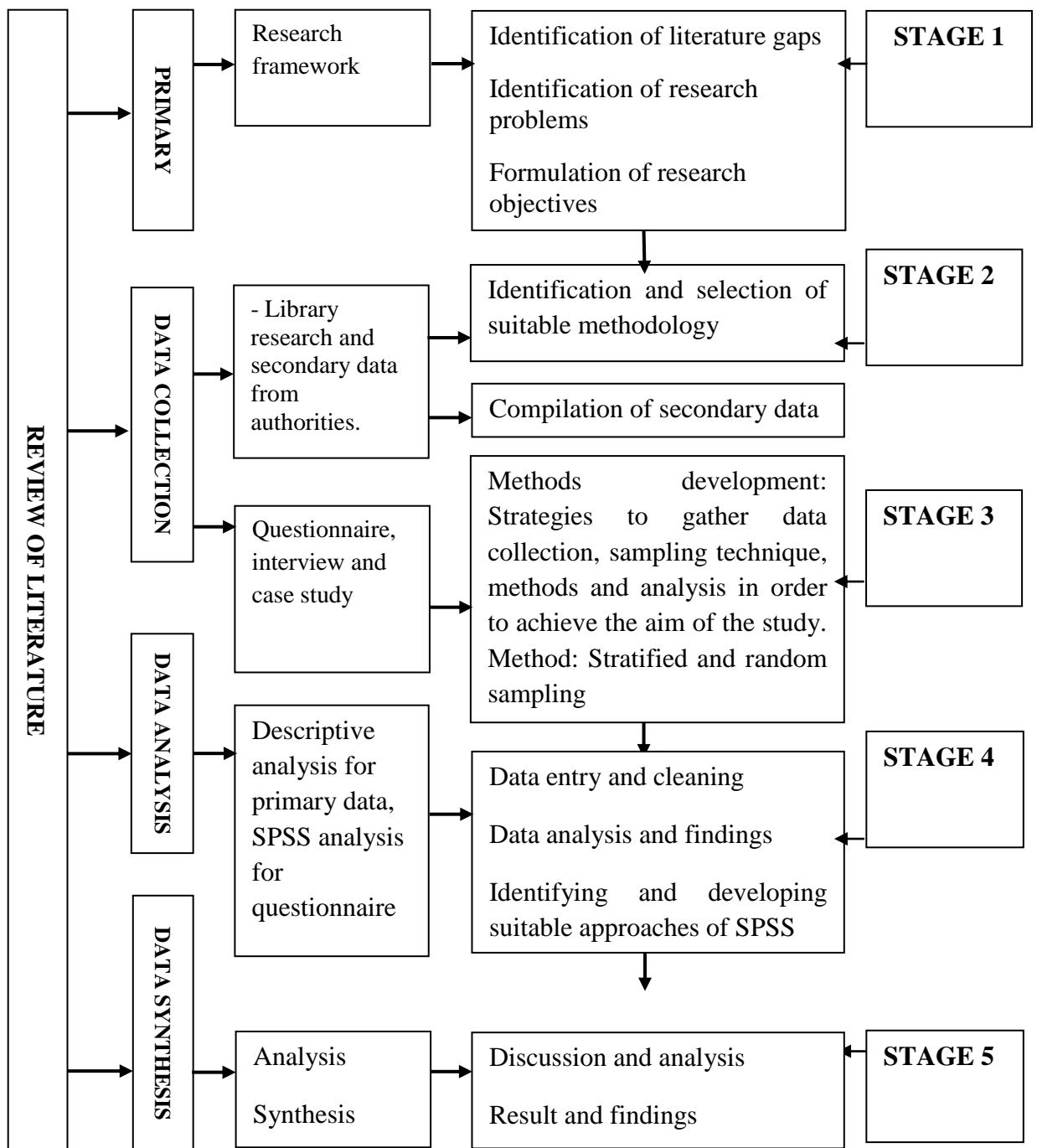


Figure 1.1: Research Structure