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THE INFLUENCE OF ETHNIC PRACTICE IN THE
MAKING OF JAVANESE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

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 research explores the Javanese culture and belief and their interaction with the environment. Furthermore, it was conducted to suggest that landscape corresponds with culture and ethnicity. This study focuses on the Javanese ethnic group who lives in rural areas. To achieve the objectives of this study, the methodology employed was based on literature and historic research collected from primary and secondary sources. Also, a review on the Javanese culture and belief in Yogyakarta, Indonesia and a case study in Banting, Malaysia were documented through observation and informal interviews. From this research, it was found that culture and belief of this ethnic group serve as a critical path for conservation and symbolize the ethnic's respect towards the environment hence a guide to teach humans to respect nature.

Keywords: ethnic, culture, cultural landscape, Javanese.

ملخص البحث

هذا البحث العلمي يستكشف الثقافة الجاوية والمعتقد ، وتفاعلها مع البيئة . ومن ثم ، تهدف هذا البحث إلى أن مناظر الطبيعة والمشهد يتوافق مع طبيعة الثقافة والعرق. وتركز هذه الدراسة على مجموعة عرقية الجاوية التي تعيش في المناطق الريفية . لتحقيق أهداف هذه الدراسة ، فقد استندت المنهجية المستخدمة في الكتابات والبحوث التاريخية التي تم جمعها من المصادر الأولية والثانوية. وكذلك ، تم توثيق الاستعراض على الثقافة الجاوية والمعتقد في يوجياكارتا ، إندونيسيا ، ودراسة حالة في بانتينغ ، وماليزيا ، من خلال الملاحظة والمقابلات الرسمية. ومن هذا البحث ، فقد وجد أن الثقافة والمعتقد هذه الجماعة العرقية بمثابة المسار الحرج للحفاظ وترمز الى احترام العرقية تجاه البيئة وبالتالي دليلا لتعليم البشر على احترام الطبيعة .

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Landscape is an expression of ideas that includes the physically natural characteristic and build environment of an area of land. While cultural landscape is a geographic area that includes cultural and natural resources associated with historical events, activities, and community. Cultural landscapes are work of art texts and narratives of cultures and expressions of regional identity. As noted by Lewis (2003), if we want to understand our culture, we should observe and examine our landscapes.

According to Ignasio (2003), there are ten categories of landscape; i) landscape as nature, ii) landscape as habitat, iii) landscape as artifact, iv) landscape as system, v) landscape as problem, vi) landscape as wealth, vii) landscape as ideology, viii) landscape as history, ix) landscape as place, and x) landscape as an aesthetic. Cultural landscape is the translation of belief and cultural values of an ethnic people on the landscape. The word ‘culture’ generally refers to the patterns of human activity and the symbolic structures that give such activities significance in their lives. There are many ways individuals may interpret the landscape, all of them depend on the ‘viewers’ mental ideas evoked by their previous experience (Ignasio, 2003).

There is a widely accepted view that the character of a landscape reflects a culture’s values and ideas with respect to the natural world. In the United States, there are four general types of cultural landscape; historic sites, historic designed landscapes, historic vernacular landscapes and ethnographic landscapes.

The cultural landscape is fashioned from natural landscape by a cultural group. Culture is the agent, the natural are the medium, 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 (Sauer, 1963: 343).

In Malaysia, cultural ethnic landscape symbolizes the belief and cultural values of an ethnic group living in a community. The rural settlements of the Malay, Chinese, and Indian communities in Peninsular Malaysia possess some cultural characteristics particular only to these different ethnicities.

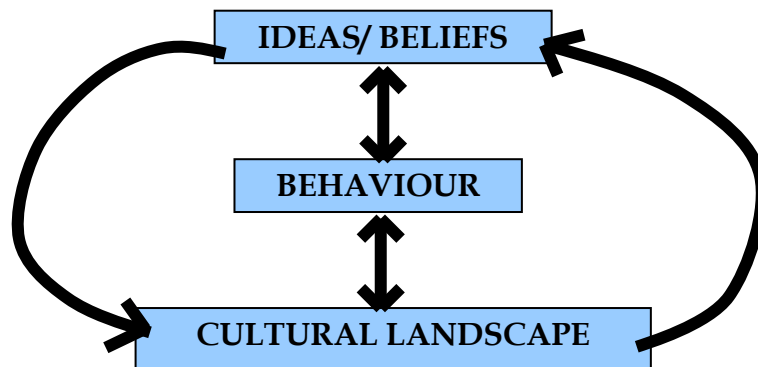


Figure 1.1: Relationship between behavioral and cultural landscape is mutually influencing each other (source: Cultural Landscape Analysis,

1.2 CULTURAL LANDSCAPE STUDIES

Malaysia is a multicultural society that consists of Malay, Chinese, Indian and other races. The Malay makes up the largest community in Malaysia comprises of about 65% of the population as compared to the Chinese that makes up quarter of the population while Indian accounts only 8% of the population (Department of Statistic Malaysia, 2007). The Malay, Chinese and Indian societies utilize the nature in different ways corresponding to their respective cultures and beliefs. The selection of plant species are determined by their religious beliefs and rituals. Thus, the hierarchy

of the plant species planted in their house gardens and yards serve their purpose for ritual, decoration, food, medicine, cosmetic, as well as provision of shade (Ismail Said, 2001).

According to Ismail (2001), cultural landscape is widely practice in rural areas or villages but not so in urban residential communities because of the limited space and less time for gardening by the residents. In the rural areas, the yards or the home gardens create a sense of belonging to the community thus showing the ethnicity of the residents. This is important in order to show positive expression of the household that participates in the development of community (Ismail, 2001).

Ismail Said has also suggested that the study of cultural landscape is important for the planners and designers. So that they are aware of the importance of establishing the cultural landscape and its significance in integrating people in a multi-ethnic community. With this, local authorities play a major role to integrate the cultural landscape values during zoning and planning of residential areas. Moreover, cultural landscape plays an important role as a method for new town and city planning.

According to Mohd Ramzi (2001), the landscape of the house is very much influenced by the economic and social factors of the household. Also, he believes that the ethnic culture has its own character and style in influencing the landscape planning and design in Malaysia. An example of this is Putrajaya, the new Malaysian Government and Administration Centre whose landscape displays the Malaysian culture in its city planning which aims to create a new Malaysian identity.

Furthermore, it has been documented that the cultural landscape of a particular area is characteristic to certain ethnicity corresponding to its cultural beliefs and traditions. Such conceptions express symbolic or identity values of the ethnics

(O'Hare, 1997). Hence, preservation of cultural landscape is important in order to prevent the irreversible damage to cultural landscape. Lewis (2003) has noted that:

The man-made landscape- the ordinary run-of-the-mill things that humans have created and put upon the earth, provides strong evidence of the kind of peoples we are, and were, and are in process of becoming.....We must conclude that if there is really a major change in the look of the cultural landscape, then there is very likely a major change occurring in our national culture at the same time (Lewis, 2003, p. 10).

The potential benefits from the preservation of cultural landscapes are thus very huge. Their continuing preservation can improve the quality of life for all community as well as provide a sense of identity for the future generation. In addition, cultural landscape is not only an expression of people's ideas and beliefs, but also an expression of functional value.

1.3 STATEMENT OF PROBLEMS AND AIMS

Various studies have been conducted on cultural landscape. Most of these researchers discuss the cultural landscape with respect to space utilization and aesthetical value only. As a result, often the functional purpose of a landscape is pushed aside. Today's landscape planning and design must take into account not only on ways of maximizing space and enhancing aesthetic importance but also increasing the functionality of the landscape so as to ensure sustainable land use. For example the Javanese cultural landscape has illustrated the different possibilities of future landscape transformation to regulate functionality and space maximizing. As such this research was conducted on the Javanese cultural landscape not only to study their culture but also looking at it as a source of inspiration for further generations. This is also a response to few studies that have highlighted our cultural landscape as lacking

in identity and personality, unlike its counterparts the Japanese, English or Balinese landscape designs.

The migration of the Javanese into Malaysia corresponds to the change in the socio-economic condition especially in agricultural development. The Javanese immigrants cleared the Malaysian forests to build settlements and started agricultural activities. Some of these immigrants married the local Malays whilst others married other Javanese immigrants. With time and acculturation, these immigrants adopted some local customs but still maintain the Javanese cultural traits such as the languages and customs (Sekimoto, 1994). So, this research aims to create some understanding about the uniqueness of this ethnic group especially with the Malaysian-Javanese whose ancestors migrated into Malaysia a long time ago.

Furthermore, this research aims to identify the functional value of Javanese cultural landscape in understanding the ecological, economic and social interactions of the Javanese community. In addition, this study aims to bring about the cultural-ethnic landscape of Javanese so that an improved quality of life and sense of identity for future generations may be contemplated.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- i) How do the Javanese culture and beliefs integrate with the environment?
- ii) What are the functional values of the Javanese cultural landscape towards the ecological, economic and social interactions?

1.5 OBJECTIVES OF RESEARCH

- i) To understand the interaction of Javanese culture and belief towards the environment in shaping the cultural landscape.
- ii) To ascertain the quality of Javanese cultural landscape towards the environment especially in ecological, economic and social interactions of Javanese community.

1.6 HYPOTHESIS

Landscape corresponds to culture, belief and ethnicity of the community.

1.7 SUBJECT OF STUDY

The research was carried out in the Yogyakarta (Central Java), Indonesia to get a real image about the Javanese cultures and beliefs as well as their landscape settings within the environment. Yogyakarta, Indonesia was chosen as a reference study because she is the Javanese Cultural Centre. The Javanese village in Banting, Malaysia was chosen as the case study because according to history, most of the pioneers were from Yogyakarta. Hence, the current villagers could trace back their roots back to Yogyakarta. The informal interviews were carried out on old villagers in order to see the relationship between their culture and belief toward the formation of the landscape and environment especially in their home garden. Javanese village in Banting, Selangor was selected because all the populations of this village are Javanese ethnic group.

1.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter contains the introduction on the cultural landscape studies that were carried out by the previous researches using various methods and approaches. Most of the researchers concentrated only on the cultural landscape as a tool to enhance the identity of the area without giving much concern on the functionality of the landscape. The research problems of this thesis have been identified and the objectives of the research have been highlighted. From that, the research questions were drawn to serve a guide during the research process. The next chapter is a literature review on cultural landscape, Javanese ethnic, culture and belief.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the ethnic cultural study in Malaysia as well as on Javanese cultures and beliefs. This chapter also highlights the historical research on the Indonesian-Javanese and Malaysian-Javanese in order to see the uniqueness of the ethnicities. The most important part of this chapter is the influences of Javanese culture and belief (ritual symbolism) towards the environment especially in their architecture style and home garden design.

2.2 DEFINITION OF TERMINOLOGIES

Below is a list of terminologies used in this research:

i) **Ethnic**

Relating to large groups of people classed according to common racial, national, tribal, religious, linguistic or cultural origin or background (Kottak, 2004).

ii) **Culture**

Culture generally refers to patterns of human activity and the symbolic structures that give such activity significant importance (Kottak, 2004).

iii) **Landscape:**

A landscape comprises the visible features of an area of land, including physical and man-made elements. Landscape may also signify objects around the building (Siririsak, 2005).

