



MELAKA MALAY CITY BEFORE 1511 BASED ON PORTUGUESE SKETCHES

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Author's Biography

Picture

Noor Aisyah Mokhtar graduated in Bachelor (Hon) Science of Architecture from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia in 2008. She pursued her study in Master of Architecture and graduated from University of Tasmania, Australia in 2011. She is currently finishing her PhD thesis in Institute of Malay World Civilization, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia under the topic of 'Existence of Melaka Malay City from 1402 till 1511 Based On Historical Records and Sketches'.

Peer-review under responsibility of 3rd Asia International Multidisciplinary Conference 2019 editorial board
(<http://www.utm.my/asia/our-team/>)

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Research Highlights

The Melaka Malay Sultanate Empire is often referred as a glorious empire of various administrative, economic, and physical aspects. The Melaka Malay City in the context of this paper refers to *Bandar Melaka* during the reign of the Melaka Malay Sultanate, which was originally from *Bukit Melaka* which houses Melaka Palace to the surrounding area. Based on research, mapping of the Melaka city can be divided into three hierarchy with clear separation morphology. The first hierarchy is the Melaka harbor extending from the coast to the settlement and the city of Melaka. The second hierarchy is the administrative area of Melaka, the mosque as a center of knowledge and da'wah, bridges that connects area and as economic activities' space for traders and residents of Melaka. The third hierarchy is the area deeper into Melaka forest that had orchard houses of Melaka's residents, agricultural area and settlements of most Melaka residents.

Research Objectives

The purpose of this study is to examine and interpret the picture of the Melaka City based on the sources of Portuguese sketches and paintings which are believed as trustworthy and valid sources. This paper aims to unravel the historical records of the Portuguese in order to locate and map the Melaka municipal plan before the collapse of the Melaka Malay empire into the hands of the Portuguese. Criteria of a Malay city (Husin Mutalib, 1993) and the Islamic Township in the context of the Malay Archipelago (Tajuddin Rasdi, 2003) are the municipal definitions used in internal argument when extracting and interpreting historical records into the map of the Melaka Malay municipal plan. All significant historical records will be discussed to map Melaka's city plan in terms of environmental, physical, socio-cultural and other related aspects. The implications of this study can be a catalyst for continuous and deeper research to know about Melaka City's physical background and skyline during the era of the Malay Sultanate. Conclusively, the Melaka Malay City before the Portuguese's conquest was likely to be a physical civilization and should be examined and explicitly evidenced in rebuilding the Melaka Malay civilization that had long been established.

Methodology

The method focused in this paper is through debates on sketches and drawings obtained. Then contrasted and combined with historical records relating to Melaka City or events related to the sketches and paintings. In the process of reviewing and interpreting the paperwork, various aspects and methods are used to find the most suitable matches and comparisons that accurately or almost accurately reflect the Melaka municipality. Portuguese portraits and paintings obtained from diverse sources are analyzed according to historical and architectural methods. Later, historical records of Melaka and the townships from Malay and archipelago sources, Portuguese and Dutch were the backbone of Melaka municipalities. As a reinforcement, this municipal study was revamped back to the past maps and the latest satellite maps to illustrate Melaka's area and the past with the current Melaka map (Izani, M., Bridges, A., & Razak, A., 2009).

Results

The evidence and illustration of the Melaka City (*Kota Melaka*) presented in this paper corresponds to the main features of a Malay and Islamic township's concept (Tajuddin Rasdi, 2003). First, the Melaka City has walls and gates entering the city area as a defense fortress.





Secondly, the location of the city center of Melaka, the administrative office, palace and mosque are in a complex and become the center of the whole city and the township. Third, the market and business area are located along the main road, on the bridge, beach and roads. Fourth, there is a separation between public areas and private areas (settlement/houses). The study also shows that the urban plan of Melaka city is not a planned city plan since the reign of the first Sultan of Melaka, but is a city that grows organically according to the current and growing needs of the Malay Empire Melaka (Yusoff Hashim, 2012). It starts at the beach and Bukit Melaka, then expanded to Kampung Upeh Village, Kampung Leleh Village, Sabak, Bertam and then extending to the foot of Mount Ledang. The development and layout features of this Melaka City are in line with its function as an entrepot city which have various facilities for administrative, commercial and economic activities, daily activities and settlement of diverse groups (Pintado. M. J. (2012).

Findings

The Melaka city's gross urban planning during Melaka Malay Sultanate era is too complicated to be presented in detail. Although only based on historical records, the municipal gross plan is seen to match and resemble the picture of paintings and sketches described in most historical records. The development, distribution of population based on historical records, and the number of activities carried out during the reign of the Melaka Malay Sultanate could be the basis of the argument to the depiction of the Melaka city (*Kota Melaka*) municipal plan. Indeed, further studies with scientific methods should be done in order to get more accurate details.

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