



# Reconstituted Village: Relocating Traditional Houses and Transforming Traditional Malay Villages

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**Abstract.** *In the current social and economic conditions, the preservation and conservation of historic buildings has become a challenge. The city of Kuala Terengganu dates as far back as the 17<sup>th</sup> century, however, the city currently has very few historical buildings. What is worse is that within the short period of the last 20 years, the town has lost almost half of its 200-year old Straits-Chinese shophouses. Architecturally significant traditional Malay houses are being torn down on a large scale to free up land on the fringes of the city. The loss of old villages that have always been a significant part of the town at this scale have raised awareness to start protecting some of the architecturally and historically important Malay houses and, in a wider context, some of the traditional villages. However, the increasing land value of the land where these villages sit on poses a great challenge. This paper discusses the idea of having a reconstituted village as a refuge to save traditional Malay houses from being demolished. Unlike brick and masonry based historical buildings, traditional Malay houses are sophisticated prefabricated houses and can be dismantled and reconstructed in a new location. This supports the idea of forming a reconstituted village with a collection of architecturally significant Malay houses. The idea of relocating these houses and putting them back in their original context could create a harmonious ambience. This process will eventually lead to an urbanized village that is a destination by itself. From an architecture enthusiast's perspective, such a village would be a last resort to protect these precious old houses from being demolished and at the same time contribute to the tourism sector. Recreating a collective village with real traditional Malay houses is a feasible option for the future of these villages and an approach of reinventing heritage tourism in the city.*

**Keywords.** *Preservation, village, traditional houses, urbanized village.*

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**Abstrak.** *Dalam kondisi sosial dan ekonomi saat ini, preservasi dan konservasi bangunan bersejarah telah menjadi tantangan. Kota Kuala Terengganu berasal dari abad ke-17, namun kota ini saat ini memiliki sangat sedikit bangunan bersejarah. Yang lebih buruk adalah bahwa dalam kurun waktu singkat selama 20 tahun terakhir, kota ini telah kehilangan hampir setengah dari ruko Peranakan yang berusia 200 tahun. Rumah-rumah tradisional Melayu yang signifikan secara arsitektur dihancurkan secara besar-besaran untuk membebaskan tanah di pinggiran kota. Hilangnya desa-desa tua yang selalu menjadi bagian penting kota pada skala ini telah meningkatkan kesadaran untuk mulai melindungi beberapa rumah Melayu yang penting secara arsitektur dan historis, dan dalam konteks yang lebih luas, beberapa desa tradisional. Namun, meningkatnya nilai dari tanah di mana desa-desa ini berada merupakan tantangan besar. Makalah ini membahas gagasan pembangunan kembali desa sebagai tempat*

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*perlindungan untuk menyelamatkan rumah-rumah tradisional Melayu agar tidak dihancurkan. Tidak seperti bangunan bersejarah berbasis batu bata dan batu, rumah tradisional Melayu adalah rumah prefabrikasi yang canggih dan dapat dibongkar dan direkonstruksi di lokasi baru. Ini mendukung gagasan pembentukan desa yang dibangun kembali dengan koleksi rumah-rumah Melayu yang secara arsitektur penting. Gagasan merelokasi rumah-rumah ini dan mengembalikannya ke dalam konteks aslinya dapat menciptakan suasana yang harmonis. Proses ini pada akhirnya akan mengarah ke desa perkotaan yang merupakan tujuan dengan sendirinya. Dari sudut pandang pemerhati arsitektur, desa seperti itu akan menjadi pilihan terakhir untuk melindungi rumah-rumah tua yang berharga ini dari kehancuran dan pada saat yang sama berkontribusi pada sektor pariwisata. Menciptakan desa kolektif dengan rumah-rumah tradisional Melayu yang nyata adalah pilihan yang layak untuk masa depan desa-desa ini dan sebuah pendekatan untuk menciptakan kembali pariwisata warisan di kota.*

**Kata kunci.** *Preservasi, desa, rumah tradisional, desa perkotaan.*

## **Introduction**

The idea of saving and reinventing Malay villages, specifically in the city of Kuala Terengganu, is largely driven by the need to tackle two urgent issues, i.e. the lack of tourist attractions and the fast disappearance of traditional Malay villages. These issues form a barrier for the state of Terengganu in developing its tourism sector. Terengganu as an oil producing state has long relied solely on oil production for its economy. While the oil reserve is depleting, tourism is a significant alternative income generator. The state of Terengganu is well known for its natural beauty and traditional Malay culture. These two factors form the core of the tourism sector and have always been highlighted in tourism promotional materials. While the current state of the infrastructure and ecologically conscious approach have largely limited the development of mass tourism until now, the state is currently facing another serious issue, where traditional Malay villages (*kampung*) are disappearing fast to make way for developments.

## **Lack of Tourist Attractions**

The image of tourism of Terengganu is associated with beautiful beaches and sea. Kuala Terengganu as the state capital and the only major gateway has traditionally played the role of a stopover for tourists to the renowned offshore islands Pulau Redang, Pulau Lang Tengah, Pulau Kapas and to a lesser degree Pulau Perhentian. Private tourism operators have set up base in the historical quarter of Kuala Terengganu (Chinatown and the Syahbandar area). Tourist offices, resort management offices, tourist accommodations, eateries, and transportation services are all concentrated along a 2 km stretch of road that also happens to be the last remaining historical quarter of the city. Shopping and sightseeing tourists can always be spotted along this road while waiting to board a ferry to a nearby island.

It is a challenging task to convince tourists to extend their stay in the city. The city dates back as far as 300 years, making it much older than the majority of cities in Malaysia, which could potentially make Kuala Terengganu a historical town worth an excursion. Despite its considerably long history, the town is currently suffering from the dilemma of having a very confined historical quarter and limited new attractions. The year 2017 was *Visit Terengganu Year*, featuring an aggressive 'Beautiful Terengganu' worldwide campaign. Despite recording steady growth of the number of Chinese tourists, reports have shown that Terengganu only welcomed around 1.186 million tourists in the first and second quarter of 2017, a 5.4% drop compared to same period in 2016 (Utusan Melayu, 2017). This underscores the need for new

tourism products, because the existing ones have failed to attract large numbers of foreigner visitors.

In the last decade, the state government initiated some new tourism products such as the largest museum of Malaysia, an Islamic themed park, a duty-free zone, coastal area regeneration, etc. but the impact on the number of tourist arrivals still has to be determined. On the other hand, heritage tourism would offer an attractive alternative to the current dilemma facing the Terengganu tourist industry, as the state has always been proud of Malaysia's heritage and cultural uniqueness. Heritage tourism is categorized as a form of sustainable tourism (Mohamed, 2011), which accords with the state's vision to promote sustainable tourism, particularly eco and marine tourism.

### **The Disappearing Old Town**

The history of the city of Kuala Terengganu goes back to the 13th century when it became a vassal state of the Majapahit Empire of Java (Singh, 1986). Unfortunately, no historical remains can be found at present. During the 18th century, Kuala Terengganu was a small settlement with about one thousand scattered houses, especially at Kampung Cina, Losong, Chabang Tiga and further upstream riverine areas such as Belara. A report by a Frenchman, who spent five days in Terengganu from 28 July 1769 to 2 August 1769, contains a brief description of the townscape of Kuala Terengganu. The report describes the town as being located on the right bank of the river. There were many Chinese and their houses were well laid. The Chinese street was the most orderly and pleasant, with better built houses and stores stocking Chinese and even European goods. The King's palace was the town's fortress and the mosque was the only other building of note. There were three markets in the town: one for the Malays, another one for the Siamese and the largest one for the Chinese (Dunmore, 1973). These are some of the last remaining historical features and are now tourist attractions.

The lack of attention to historically not so significant buildings such as village houses and shophouses is a long-standing issue in conservation. We should realize that valuable heritage is lost when traditional buildings are decimated, a wave of needless destruction in the name of development. Many buildings of quality but without sufficient historic interest to be scheduled for preservation have already fallen beneath the bulldozers of speculators and developers (Rasdi, 2005). This is the main reason why many of the villages of Kuala Terengganu have been demolished. Browsing through old photos and archives tells us that many old buildings, either colonial buildings, Straits-Chinese shophouses and beautiful Malay institutional buildings in Kuala Terengganu have disappeared. A clock tower near the main market was demolished to make way for a road. It is unusual for a clock tower to be demolished as most clock towers are usually built at the most prominent node of a city and eventually become the landmark of that city. In a wider perspective, the historical precinct of Tanjung Pantai, which is connected to Chinatown via the market, has almost completely disappeared. Very few old houses can be spotted along this historical stretch nowadays. This is why the city now suffers from a very reduced number of historical quarters.

Traditional Malay villages (also known as *kampung*) used to form an important part of Kuala Terengganu's unique cityscape. Until the 1980s, traditional villages could still easily be found in the city. Some on the fringes of the city and some in the city center, juxtaposed with Chinatown. The recent trend of major developments all over the city has resulted in land reclamation on the river estuary, clearing some villages on good locations. There is very high demand for land close to the river, which was occupied by traditional Malay villages until they

were all torn down, turning it into flat land ready for massive developments. The land value of Kuala Terengganu is very high considering the size of the city. This makes the idea of preserving all villages unfeasible, because the land value cannot be justified from an economic point of view.

Other historical towns in Malaysia, such as Melaka, Ipoh and Penang, have capitalized on their heritage and historical built environment. They receive consistent numbers of visitors throughout the years and the tourism scene is very vibrant and has led to a revival of their forgotten old towns. The number of tourists arriving every holiday in Melaka is tremendous and brings tremendous income to the state. The economy of the state of Melaka largely depends on the tourism sector as it has very few natural resources.

Foreign tourists arrive in Terengganu with the clear intention to visit its renowned offshore islands and spend very little time on other things. On the other hand, local holidaymakers spread around the more budget-friendly islands, shopping for local crafts and delicacies. The historical Pasar Payang located at the end of Chinatown is the most mentioned name among tourists as a place to shop for batik, brassware, snacks and food. This historical market place that survives to date largely benefits the tourism sector of the city. Visiting the fish cracker stalls along Kampung Losong is another must-do activity for the tourists.

### **Traditional Malay Houses and Villages in Terengganu**

There are two main types of traditional houses in Terengganu state, namely Rumah Limas Bungkus and Rumah Bujang. These types usually vary according to the location of the house. Traditional Malay house architecture relates largely to the beliefs, desires, feelings and lifestyles, the relics of knowledge and experience of past generations. Malay traditional houses in Terengganu are subtle and artful, with beautiful carvings, although their elemental construction is simple.

Abdullah Munsyi in 1838 during his voyage to the state of Terengganu recounts that the houses of the Malays were very high. This is consistent with traditional home-based features related to different seasonal factors. The height of the traditional Malay house is due to the abundance of river water especially in the monsoon and northeastern seasons. From the aspect of safety, high houses can provide protection so as not to be directly exposed to attacks from wild animals such as elephants, tigers, jungle saints and so on. This is important because traditional Malay houses usually stand far apart and are located in the jungle or on a river bank.

The spatial planning of traditional Malay houses is unique as all activities were carried out underneath the house without isolated outdoor space. Islamic teachings have also influenced the spatial arrangement inside the house based on gender and rank. For example, the foyer is a place to chat for men and is not used by women because they are not allowed to be seen by others. Efforts to avoid genders mixing are important, so there are designated rooms for parents, boys and girls. The kitchen unit is a place for mothers and daughters to prepare food, tell stories or chat with neighbors. Therefore, the kitchen space is usually placed behind the house, far from the sight of passers-by.

The spatial arrangement of the traditional Terengganu house also takes into consideration the aspect of religion, where usually the mother's space is higher than the other spaces, which illustrates that children are always supposed to place their parents in a higher position and always respect them. In Terengganu, the size of a house is usually described based on the

number of pillars supporting the structure. Houses are named for example six-pillar houses or twelve-pillar houses. Houses in Terengganu are divided into two types, small houses called single house or six-pillar house, and large houses known as twelve-pillar house.

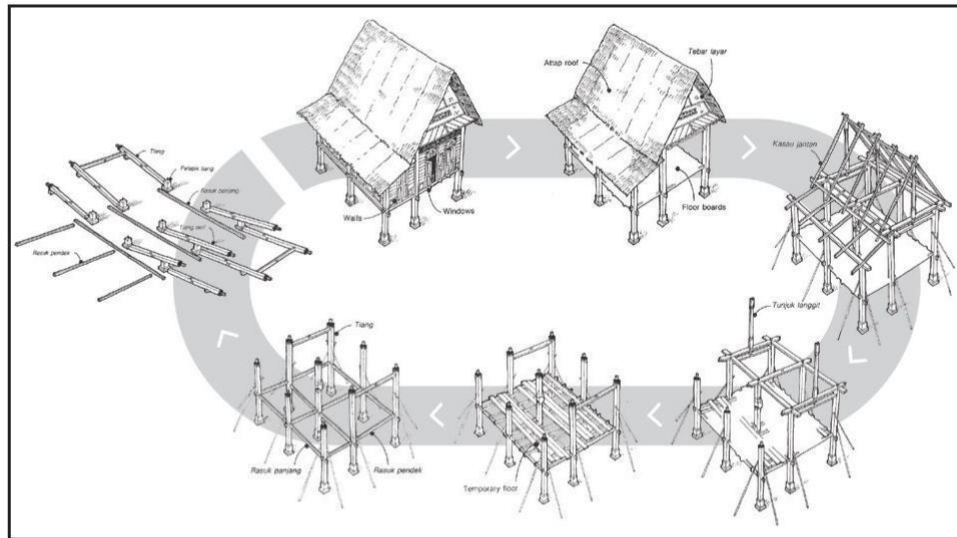
Traditional Malay houses are unique in that they are mobile permanent structures, designed to be relocatable if necessary. They are prefabricated structures that can exist for centuries. To the villagers, houses are part of their inheritance and have great sentimental value. In the olden days, relocation of a house happened when the owner moved to a new place. The construction of an authentic Malay house does not involve the use of nails. Instead, joints such as pegged joints, tenon joints, and wedge joints are used to assemble the house. The entire house can be dismantled, back to its state before assembly. Unlike masonry structures, where wet joints are used in construction, traditional Malay house consist of prefabricated building blocks. Anything constructed can be taken apart again and reused, producing almost zero wastage.

### **The Character of Traditional Malay Villages**

Traditional Malay villages on first encounter may look haphazard to outsiders. A *kampung* seems to be randomly filled with houses, trees, and paths. The houses usually look similar and blend harmoniously with the landscape and environment. Visual landmarks or focal points are not common in *kampungs* and this makes it difficult for outsiders to find their way in the village. The environment is an expression of cultural needs rather than physical and economic needs. The definition of public and private areas is unclear and overlaps. The random layout, the natural setting, the use of local materials and the lack of physical barriers give Malay villages an informal and open atmosphere, which is conducive to intimate social relations. Traditionally villagers move around the *kampung* by feet or bicycle, therefore there are usually not many roads in the village except for peripheral access roads leading into the village that were built at a later stage. Informal paths winding through the houses and leading to other parts of the village, link up the village. The typical landscape in the village consists of edible plants, fruit trees and random shrubs and very little hardscape. Large-scale playgrounds and well-planned parks are unusual in the context of the Malay village. In contrast, personalized front yards and pocket open spaces as playgrounds are common and much preferred by the villagers.

### **The Relocation Method of Traditional Malay Houses**

Relocating Malay houses is not something new in Malaysia and is typically performed by collectors such as museums, resort owners and sometimes enthusiastic collectors. An abandoned house is identified, acquired and can then be moved to a new location using two methods. Firstly, carrying the entire house with the help of villagers to a new site, usually not too far from the original location. Traditionally performed by villagers, this is a more traditional and straightforward method, which requires almost no documentation at all. However, this method puts a restriction on the distance between the original site and the new site, and also clearance of the path between both sites. Secondly, dismantling and rebuilding, which gives more flexibility although rigorous documentation is required and thus a specialist is required. However, just like any temporary structure, this method allows the house to be rebuilt anywhere.



**Figure 1.** The disassembly and assembly process of a traditional Malay house.  
(Figure reproduced and edited from Lim, 1987)

The dismantling and rebuilding method has been widely used in some recent major relocation practices, namely Bon Ton Resort, Terrapuri Heritage Village and Malay Heritage Museum in Universiti Putra Malaysia. Houses sourced from the vicinity or from other states were relocated to a new site without logistical restrictions. Terrapuri Heritage Village is a collection of significant houses sourced within the state of Terengganu, rebuilt within a cluster to form a resort that resembles a traditional Malay village. Bon Ton Resort is a collection of houses from all over Malaysia, where houses were even shipped from the mainland across the sea to the island of Langkawi.

### Relocation and Restoration of Malay Houses

Rumah Penghulu Abu Seman was built in stages between 1910 and the early 1930s in Kampung Sungai Kechil. It was purchased, rescued, relocated and restored by Badan Warisan Malaysia in 1995. Before the start of the restoration and relocation process, an specialist was asked to provide measured drawings and also a detailed report on the house. The Forest Research Institute of Malaysia was appointed to perform the task of demolishing and rebuilding the house. The house was dismantled in 1996 and the components were transferred to its new location in Stonor Street. After on-site preparation work, the positioning and cleaning of the original and new timber material, the rebuilding process was started and completed in 1997. The main challenge in this process was to ensure that all materials taken from the original site were installed in the restored house in the new location.

The relocation of Rumah Penghulu Pak Seman is a typical example of relocating a Malay house by dismantling and rebuilding it as an exhibition piece. Several Malaysian museums and cultural villages have adopted this approach by showcasing traditional houses within their compounds.

The Aryani Resort in Terengganu is an example of the relocation of a traditional Malay house to a resort complex. With great perseverance from the resort owner, who is a practicing architect, a 150-year-old timber palace was relocated from Kampung Losong to its current location in the

locality of Setiu, restored and eventually turned into the presidential suite of the resort. Minor alterations and upgrading were carried out to fit it to its new purpose while keeping the original appearance to blend in harmoniously with the resort's Malay village ambience. Unlike the various parties involved in the relocation of Rumah Penghulu Pak Seman, the relocation of Aryani's presidential suite was done locally and involved several local craftsmen complemented with the knowledge of the owner himself. Local villagers nearby were even engaged to produce singgora tiles to replace the missing roof tiles of the original house.

### **Large-scale Relocation and Restoration of Malay Houses**

Bon Ton Resort is a collection of traditional wooden houses on Langkawi Island. The concept presented and emphasized by the resort is a simple village and it is also the owner's proud collection of a number of traditional indigenous houses from various states in Malaysia in a traditional village setting that they are trying to resemble. The transfer of traditional old houses into the resort area was effective in creating a local atmosphere that provides a unique experience for foreign visitors. Not only are the rooms renovated from an original traditional house, the resort's bar and cafe were also renovated from old and existing houses in the resort compound. The houses collected by Bon Ton Resort's owner were sourced from several states in Malaysia. Generally, these traditional houses are constructed of wood and are between 60 and 120 years old but still look attractive due to the uniqueness of their traditional architecture. These houses are refurbished and equipped with modern amenities to suit the western hospitality standard.

While Bon Ton Resort is a collection of Malaysian traditional houses in a resort compound, Terrapuri Heritage Village is a much more localized example. Terrapuri is a conservation and restoration project of 29 Terengganu Malay houses aged between 100 and 250 years, most of them saved from demolition. The houses in Terrapuri Heritage Village were identified and relocated from a location in the northern part of the state of Terengganu. Consequently, most of the houses share the same character as they originated from the same region. Respecting the history of these villas, they were thoughtfully named after their original locality, such as Rumah Kedai Buluh, Rumah Binjai Rendah and Rumah Seberang Takir. The 29 houses that were relocated to the complex of Terrapuri Heritage Village are predominantly Rumah Bujang, a type of traditional Malay house found only in Terengganu. Terrapuri Heritage Village as a large collection of traditional Terengganu houses manages to resemble a local village, evoking the original local village experience.

### **Reinventing Traditional Malay Villages**

The idea of taking an existing Malay village to create a reconstituted village to adapt to change is very much driven by the need for traditional villages to disprove the doubt about their economic viability and also the need of having a protected shelter for old Malay houses. Safeguarding large numbers of villages is definitely not realistic for every developing city, as villages traditionally occupy very wide areas of land while contributing very little to the economy. As explained above about the spatial arrangement of Malay houses, which consists of several smaller houses in a large compound, an acre of land can accommodate up to 100 units of modern high-rise apartments or more than 10 units of landed link houses, but can only accommodate maybe 5 units of traditional Malay houses. On top of that, these houses can contribute nothing to the economy except for being dwellings of villagers, making the effort of protecting them fully hinge on sentimental considerations, which is extremely challenging for policymakers.

Heritage preservation can be a justification that could be helpful in this effort. However, a balance must be struck between heritage preservation and development. Preserving an entire village without innovation is too idealistic and can only be afforded on a small scale by heritage related bodies. On the other hand, heritage conservation that embraces modern functions could engage interest from all parties, especially tourism investors. Old buildings have been lost because nobody cared for them or even took notice of them. Although sometimes the level of restoration stirs debate, many of the deteriorating old shophouses in Malaysia have finally been valued properly when they gained attention from investors and tourists despite the concern that some restoration projects did not adhere to the conservation standard. Given the size of a village for conservation, a hybrid between an inhabited village and an open-air museum is suitable for a village to be reinvented by using the approach of reconstituting and urbanizing the village. Using this approach to preserve historical structures is not new. The idea of establishing an outdoor museum dates as far back as the 1790s. It was first proposed by the Swiss philosopher Charles de Bonstetten based on a visit to an exhibit of peasant costumes in the park of Frederiksborg Castle in Denmark (Rasdi, 2005).

This approach of relocating traditional Malay houses as part of a preservation effort has been done previously on a smaller scale, either with the intention of preserving old timber houses or utilizing historical houses as a gimmick. Most of the time they are preserved and restored and end up being a mere showpiece. No new function is given to these wooden houses, which is generally seen as a non-rewarding exercise. Hence, less interest is generated among the public and investors. In this respect, the open-air museum solution offers the two-pronged advantage of being able to preserve, to some extent, some examples of traditional houses, and attractively displaying them in a collective set-up that is conveniently accessible to a wide cross-section of people (Rasdi, 2005). Besides, this approach could also be pushed to a larger scale, such as an entire village that is large enough to be a self-sustained a community while embracing newly introduced activities such as commerce and tourism.

The idea of a reconstituted Malay village involves two operations. Firstly, identifying architecturally or historically significant houses to be rescued from being demolished. The selection of the houses must not only be restricted to beautiful and majestic houses. Humble and yet culturally significant structures are also worth considering. This operation also involves tough acquisition negotiations with house owners taking into account their sentimental attachment, followed by detailed documentation of the houses. The documentation should be archived and used during the rebuilding process in the next stage. This is an ongoing exercise during which as many houses as possible are scouted and identified before they are demolished.

The second part of the operations is more complicated. Identifying an ideal site and making a policy to prepare for the village to become a heritage enclave while establishing an advisory body that has locus standi within local government to protect and preserve the village so that it will not lose its character. Treating the village as a historically sensitive urban area, urban planning and redevelopment within the village must be sensibly carried out. Houses to be maintained or restored have to be identified and determined by specialists. The established advisory organization must also decide the fate of abandoned or nontraditional houses with the vision to preserve the overall traditional environment. The demolition of architecturally non-relevant houses frees up vacant land, ready to embrace reconstruction of relocated houses and the advisory organization must play a decisive role in the arrangement to protect the interest of the village. Besides overseeing the planning and management of the village, a conservation guideline has to be drafted to govern the overall architectural quality of any alteration of the houses and structures in the village.





**Figure 2.** Relocation and rebuilding of houses in a land pocket in the selected village according to zoning.

Dismantling is destruction. Historic buildings should be moved only if their destruction is inevitable and if there is a guaranteed prospect of immediate rebuilding (Rasdi, 2005). When these two operations converge, the chosen village will be a safe base to accommodate salvaged houses from other villages. This will make conservation of traditional Malay houses possible and more sensible as salvaged houses are relocated to a context where they belong instead of to alien sites. Therefore, the convergence of both operations facilitates the process of transferring salvaged historical houses to a new protected location. The village will undergo a purification process, where historically and architecturally non-relevant houses are slowly replaced with authentic traditional Terengganu Malay houses. The image of an authentic traditional Malay village will be enhanced along the process. Industries and commercial activities develop within the village and it will eventually become a destination on its own. This process could offer a distinct way of urbanization for the city in which development and heritage coexist.

## Site Selection

The site selection criteria for this proposal include distance to the city center, character and history of the village, and also existing components on site. Considering the intention to inject tourism and commercial activities into the village, the location of the selected existing village is

essential. The location of the site must ideally be known by the locals so that commercial activities will thrive not only during holiday season but also on normal days and in the weekends. Proximity to the town is crucial to make the place highly accessible to the locals as a daily hang-out place.

Kampung Losong Haji Su was identified as the village with most potential due to its location, history and current reputation among tourists. Losong is one of the remaining authentic Malay villages found in Kuala Terengganu and also one of the largest clusters of Malay traditional houses. It was the location of the earliest settlement of fishermen and seafarers in Kuala Terengganu. The name Losong allegedly comes from a Bugis lady who fled her homeland because of war and eventually settled down in the current riverfront location of Kampung Losong about four hundred years ago. The Bugis are well known seafarers and arrived in Terengganu during that time. They are known to have conducted trade, bringing commodities such as pepper and cloves (Dunmore, 1973). Most of the current residents of Kampung Losong are their descendants.

Kampung Losong is a well-known spot for tourists because of its fish cracker industry. Fish crackers are an authentic Terengganu delicacy and are well-known all around Malaysia. It is probably the most prominent local produce favored by locals and tourists. During the holiday season, the narrow roads around Kampung Losong are congested with tourist coaches. Fish crackers are traditionally a cottage industry. Stalls are set up in a house compound to sell the products. This industry has grown rapidly. Larger home-based factories and shops selling a larger variety of products have been set up and currently Kampung Losong has the highest concentration of fish cracker industries. Thus Kampung Losong is always associated with fish crackers and has eventually grown into a must-visit place in Kuala Terengganu among tourists. On top of this, the geography is also an advantage. Kampung Losong Haji Su has some existing docks and a long stretch of river edge, which means access to the river and sea. This is an important feature because the sea and boating have always been intrinsic to the culture of Terengganu and it is a great privilege to have such a feature in the village. The Terengganu village experience could be planned around it, whereby visitors could arrive at the village from the river and carry out activities related to the river and sea during their stay.

Some interesting existing components can be found in Kampung Losong Haji Su that could be maintained or further enhanced to become features of the village. There is a cluster of fully restored old houses that are partially used as a gallery to exhibit a traditional Terengganu Malay house and some beautiful houses at the east side of the village. Some existing docks are found along the river edge. They are still used by the villagers, although some of them are in very bad condition. There are plenty of village-style green areas, including a small cemetery. At the edge of the village, there is a long stretch of the famous fish cracker stalls along the road to the city center. Fish cracker factories are located behind the stalls. This vibrant cluster is an important node for Kampung Losong Haji Su. Some of the houses facing the main road have informally adopted a unique house-stall typology, a Malay version of the traditional Chinese shophouses found in Malaysia. This also proves that these houses could function as more than a mere village dwelling, which could be the answer for their future. All these features show potential to be further refined to suit the vision of a reconstructed heritage village.

### **The Planning of Reconstituted Malay Village**

On top of existing vacant land in the village, demolition of structurally unstable houses can free up pocket development lands within the village. These pocket lands are scattered around the

village with approximately the right size for typical Malay houses and could allow for potential relocation of houses from other places. Relocation could take place on these pocket lands, blending them harmoniously into a context close to their original location. Whenever endangered houses are identified, they could be relocated to the existing site and orientation without looking out of place.

The principles of the positioning of kampung houses must be upheld to ensure seamless integration between the relocated houses and their new context. Authenticity is the topmost priority and therefore careful planning and zoning are essential to keep the impact to a minimum. With respect to the ideal planning of this reconstituted village, it must be organic, referring to the way villages were formed traditionally. Unlike cities and new townships where a clear geometric pattern is applied, houses in traditional Malay villages are built randomly and house site selection is traditionally led by *bomoh* based on beliefs and rituals. Besides, the layout is very much determined by the social relations, culture and lifestyle of the villagers, who generally value community interaction over privacy. Therefore, subtle and unobstructed physical barriers are preferred over rigid boundaries and fences. Houses are never built too close to each other in order to allow for privacy, landscaping and future expansion. The series of open compounds forming a well-integrated spatial environment that promotes close community ties in the village must be maintained. Besides, the landscape design in the kampung must not be too manicured but well-kept and feature edible plants such as vegetables and fruit trees. Fruit tree foliage forms well-shaded areas, which will eventually become favoured spots for social interaction. Interestingly, although demarcation of house territories may not be important for the villagers, usufructuary rights to the fruit trees still exist.

The original inhabitants must be kept in order to preserve the living culture within the village as an essential part of the heritage, especially those houses that fall within the residential zone. Besides, fragmented residential zones would derail the effort of maintaining the authenticity and quality of the village. Therefore, ideally, contagious residential zones must be planned at the peripheral area of the village. Such zoning allows inhabitants to live in their own activity zone, minimizing the daily disturbance caused by outsiders. Ideally, the activity zone for outsiders such as tourists and day trippers is concentrated in the commercial zone. Only few who chose to stay for a longer period in a local retreat or homestay will wander around to engage in relaxing activities such as cycling, picnic, and kite flying, causing minimal interference to the village inhabitants.

Only a small number of houses zoned in the commercial core must be turned into commercial premises for rent. These premises in the form of traditional houses and their compound are suitable for food and beverage businesses. *Al fresco* dining during the night time is particularly popular among the locals. Besides, other leisure and tourist oriented businesses, such as SPA, art shops and galleries, could also be potential tenants. The outermost stretch of houses and stalls, which are already known for their fish cracker industries, must be maintained and enhanced by integrating the stalls with production to form cottage industries. Since the products are highly appreciated by outsiders, the integrated cottage industry cluster could become an attraction on its own. New economic components are introduced in a designated zone to form a core or catalyst for the village to grow and eventually become urbanized. Other components that support the commercial and tourism vision, such as herb gardens, an outdoor cinema, small-scale boutique hotels, homestays, eateries, etc., could be harmoniously inserted into scattered pocket lands in the village. The commercial core would serve as the node for visitors, coming there for dining, visiting galleries, and shopping for handicraft. For tourists who are up for a

longer stay or even a staycation to experience village life, this commercial zone could be their entrance to the village before they move deeper into the village and stay in one of the houses.

Infrastructures and facilities within the village must ideally be kept at a basic level, just like usually found in most of the original villages. Massive construction of roads and car parking bays would lead to high traffic volumes and disturb the intimate village vibe and consequently affect the villagers' lifestyle. In contrast, smaller winding paths slow down the pace of everyone in the village and nurture the original village lifestyle.

Maintaining the authenticity of the village is the biggest challenge. Due to the penetration of tourist and commercial activities, the village will slowly get developed and modernized to form an urbanized village. While the proper planning of the village and proposed location of new activities can reduce the impact to a minimum, strict guidelines and restrictions must be tightly enforced to at least ensure that the architecture features are maintained. Successful heritage enclaves such as UNESCO heritage sites, Dempsey Hill, etc. are well managed or governed by a specialized management organization regardless of the ownership status. Any physical alteration requires approval to ensure that the overall appearance of the village is conserved.

## Conclusion

This paper proposes a practical solution for conserving historical houses and traditional villages, particularly in an urban context, and at the same time creating a unique and interesting product for heritage tourism. From the point of view of historians, archaeologists, sociologist and the public, this approach clears the path for achieving recognition of the value of historical buildings by conserving them. From a socio-economic perspective, this paper discussed the prospect of turning a traditional village into an urban village under current economic and social conditions. If carefully governed, the process could be a viable alternative way of urbanization, where development and conservation of heritage coexist. This is an opportunity of making history come alive and teaching people the enjoyment of beautiful historical Malay houses.

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