

The Primary Gate of the Melaka Sultanate

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Abstracts: Based on the historical Malay, China and Arab textual account, there was a primary gate that marked the entrance to the royal compound of Melaka Sultanate before 1511. The primary gate was arguably among the most iconic construct and strategic to the Sultanate city, at security, socio-cultural, symbolic and aesthetic levels. However, no critical study has been conducted in tracing the form, position, and its relation to the municipality of the Sultanate Melaka City. This study employs narrative analysis framework to carefully investigate descriptive clues to provide the big picture on the primary gate of Melaka Sultanate in view of historical texts from Malay, China, and Arab; all of which were written within or close to the Sultanate period. The findings of the narrative analysis were compared to a collection of municipal plans from the Portuguese and Dutch Melaka eras. This reconstruction study also took precedence of an ancient Malay sultanate gate for the design process which can be seen carrying the tradition of Sultanate Melaka gate. The finding of the study suggests the form, position and orientation of the sultanate Melaka gate. The study also discusses and proposes the route which could possibly accommodate another 6 gates before reaching the sultanate Melaka palace. The study has limitations since it relies on English translation in dealing with ancient Portuguese texts. The long-term goal of this reconstruction study is to promote historical Melaka identity tourism, which is in line with SDGs 8.9 and 11.4.

Keywords: Primary Gate of the Melaka Sultanate, Melaka Sultanate city, Route to Sultanate Palace.

1. INTRODUCTION

The central city of Melaka Sultanate was once situated at the shore of the west part of the current Peninsular Malaysia, almost at the middle of the Straits of Melaka. The Melaka River flows from the inland which separates this city into two parts; i) the cosmopolitan trading town of Upeh and ii) the royal compound. The royal compound of the Melaka Sultanate was in the southeast part of the city that is opposite of the trading city with the river and the bridge in the middle. This large royal area includes Bukit Melaka (now known as St. Paul Hill) and the area surrounding its foothill. Tome Pires suggested that the location of the Sultanate Palace being on top of the hill and described the royal compound as the same place that is of Portuguese famous fortress [1]. Eredia on the other hand, pointed out the palace was located at the foothill close to the sea, with justification that 'it would be easier to be reinforced in time of war' [2].

A Sultanate gate was mentioned in several historical texts [3], [4], [5] and [6] in reference to the fifteenth century kingdom of Melaka Sultanate; connecting the trading town of Upeh and the land of the royal compound. The central Melaka Sultanate City is situated in Bandar Hilir, Melaka of modern-day Malaysia. Currently, neither the Sultanate gate nor the Sultanate city has legitimate visuals. It is still not known if the Sultanate gate partially survived or was still intact after the 1511 war especially during the early period of colonisation.

This research project considers the historical context of the Melaka Sultanate as a continuous civilization that spanned approximately 250 years [7]. It acknowledges the influence of historical and technological traditions inherited from Srivijaya that existed over many centuries [9]. With the magnitude of the city, it is deemed illogical to assume that the Portuguese, who arrived in Melaka seeking economic gains, completely demolished the city and began anew. From this perspective, the effort to trace the Sultanate gate is not considered impossible in the light of historical text and visuals. By examining historical texts and visuals, the researcher aims to gather evidence that supports the existence of the primary gate and its significance within the historical and cultural landscape of Melaka

Sultanate. This study hypothesised that the gate that was a crucial element to the city's symbol of strength and greatness would at least not be completely eradicated by the Portuguese.

Recent study has spotted a strange anomaly on Portuguese and Dutch Melaka municipal plans that led to the proposition of the location of a gate before colonial Melaka period. Fig.1(a), (b), (c), (d), (e), and (f) illustrate the relationship between the primary street, bridges, and the main fortress gate of A'Famosa in the Portuguese and Dutch municipal plans. These figures demonstrate a consistent pattern where the primary street and series of bridges deviate their orientation and appear to deliberately avoid reaching the main fortress gate [11].

Upon closer examination, the study discovered that the main gate of A'Famosa seemingly was not utilized throughout the entire period of Portuguese and Dutch Melaka[11]. Whenever the gate is depicted in three dimensions, it is illustrated as a large box-like structure without a door leaf (for example, see Fig 1(b) & (c)). Furthermore, none of the network of streets within the fortress city led directly to the fortress gate (Fig 1(a) (b) (c) & (d)). In the Portuguese municipal plans of Melaka, the main gate appears to be 'sealed' with buildings located behind it (Fig 1(a) (b) (c) & (d)). During the Dutch period, when more accurate measurements were incorporated into the municipal plans, the primary street of Upeh is depicted as twisting before reaching the Melaka river. Even though the twisted street cannot be seen in Portuguese municipal plans, it is phenomenal that colonial Melaka bridge always diverts away from the main gate of A'Famosa as reflected in Fig.1(a), (b), (c), (d), (e), and (f).

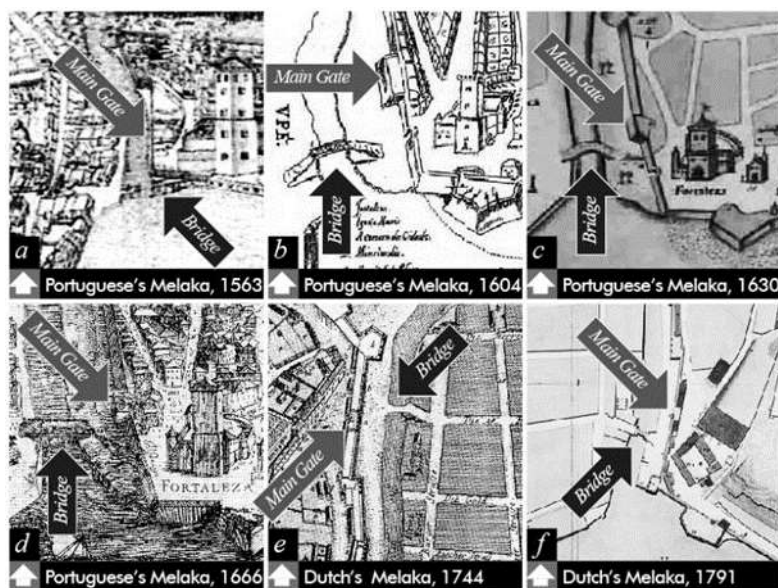


Fig. 1. Typical Relationship between Primary Street, Bridge, and Main Gate in the Portuguese and Dutch Melaka Municipal Plans.

A Malay eye-witness account of the British Melaka period mentioned that the A'Famosa fortress had four outer gates before its demolition [12]. This coincidentally matched the number of outer gates during the Sultanate period as mentioned by a Chinese account [4]. However, this research is focusing specifically on the main gate of Melaka Sultanate and its relationship with the main gate of A'Famosa. In the legend of the municipal plan depicted in Figure 1(e), the main gate of A'Famosa is referred to as 'das grosse thor' or 'das grosse tor' in German, meaning 'the large gate'. In Figure 1(f), it is described as 'de grote Poort' in Dutch, which translates to 'the Great Gate'. The main gate of A'Famosa was larger than the south gate that exists to this day.

The composition of Figure 2(a), (b) and (c) below represents the proposition of the position and orientation of the Melaka Sultanate Bridge had it existed during Dutch Melaka in 1744 & 1791 and current geo-location.

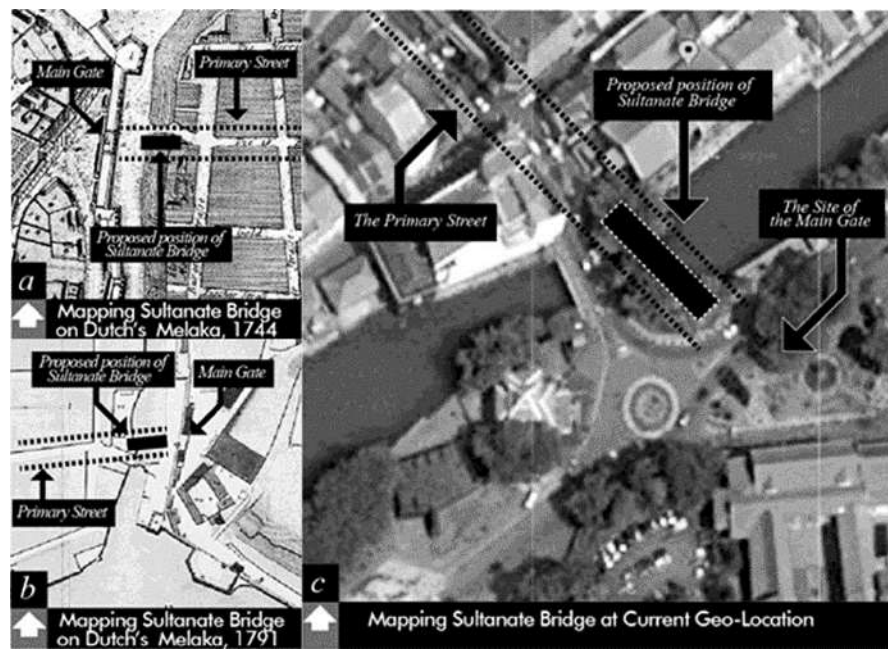


Fig. 2. Mapping of the Sultanate Bridge

Recent study has also mapped the alignment of the primary street of Upeh during the Sultanate period, the sultanate bridge and Sultanate gate based on the current geo-location of Bandar Hilir, Melaka. This mapping is possible because the Dutch Melaka municipal plans were drawn with accurate measures relative to modern days accuracy as seen in Fig.2 (a) and (b). The dotted lines demonstrate the straight path between the primary street, the proposed position of the Sultanate bridge and the proposed position of the Sultanate gate; that is consistent with historical text of Chinese, Portuguese and Malay [11]. Fig. 2(c) demonstrates the proposition and orientation of the Sultanate bridge in the current geo-environment of Bandar Hilir Melaka in comparison to the current Tan Kim Seng bridge. This alignment simultaneously suggests the proposition of the Melaka Sultanate gate; coincidentally, at the position of the main gate of A'Famosa [11].

This study goes one step further to evaluate the proposition of the location of the Sultanate gate with an immediate question “where is the route that connects the gate and Sultanate Palace”. This question has the lead because the route should be able to accommodate another 6 gates before reaching the Sultanate Palace.

2. Research Methodology

This research was carried out with specific motivation that is to understand and reconstruct the primary gate of the Sultanate. The study is characterised by the nature of qualitative and exploratory research; and obtains its big picture by gathering, observing, studying, assessing, and analysing the sultanate Melaka gate primarily based on historical record as underlying premise in developing its case. The research began by collecting and analysing textual descriptions regarding the gate from eyewitnesses' accounts in building the overall perspective. Technically, this study uses two different frameworks for analysis: the first is the narrative framework developed by Czarniawska [13]. This approach involves examining and interpreting the narratives surrounding the Sultanate primary gate, which can provide valuable insights into its historical and cultural significance. By analyzing these narratives, the researcher can gain a deeper understanding of the gate's roles and impacts within the community.

The second framework employed in the study is the Visual Anthropological framework proposed by Collier [13]. This framework emphasizes on the visual data collection, identifying and analysing visual representations in understanding and interpreting cultural phenomena. By applying this framework, the researcher is able to systematically analyze the visual elements of the historical records related to the gate, uncovering additional layers of meaning and contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of their significance. Overall, this study

combines narrative analysis and the visual anthropological framework to explore the Sultanate Melaka gate by leveraging historical visual records and eyewitness accounts, the researcher aims to reconstruct the sultanate gate through its historical contexts and socio-cultural aspects.

2.1. A Narrative Analysis Framework

The study incorporates a narrative analysis framework to examine and analyze descriptive clues regarding the form, position and orientation of the Sultanate gate. These clues are derived from various ancient texts from Malay, Arab and China, which are relatively contemporary to the Sultanate period. The narrative analysis framework consists of three main phases, as shown in Table 1:

Explication	Explanation	Exploration
Standing Under	Standing Over	Standing in for
Reproductive Translation	Inferential Detection	Existential Enactment
Reconstruction	Deconstruction	Construction

Table 1. Narrative Analysis Framework.

i) Explication phase: In this phase, the researcher acts as a "semantic reader" and carefully examines the descriptive views of the gate present in the ancient texts. The researcher takes notes and simplifies the information, aiming to identify consistent patterns while recognizing discrepancies and contradictions. The goal is to build a specific perspective and construct a coherent worldview related to the subject matter and research objectives.

ii) Explanation phase: The researcher adopts an objectivist approach during this phase, studying the historical texts in terms of their "external structures" or employing "external criticism." This involves asking questions such as "why" and "how" to understand the motives and intentions behind the texts regarding the sultanate gate. The researcher takes on the role of a critical or "semiotic reader," considering the authors' perspectives and conducting rhetorical analysis to uncover the underlying interests that influenced the creation of the knowledge within the texts.

iii) Exploration phase: This phase pushes the researcher to take a stance on strategic historiographical aspects of the historical texts. Through careful readings, which are typically conducted at least three times, the researcher implicitly and explicitly supports certain interpretations. Drawing from the big picture obtained through the previous phases, the researcher begins the narrative analysis process by "connecting the coherent dots" and cross-referencing with the findings from the visual anthropological analysis.

By employing this narrative analysis framework, the researcher aims to derive a comprehensive understanding of the Sultanate Melaka. This involves carefully examining and analyzing the historical texts, considering the authors' perspectives, and identifying underlying interests and motives. The narrative analysis is complemented by the visual anthropological analysis, creating a holistic approach to the study of the sultanate gate.

2.2. A Visual Anthropological Analysis Framework

In the study, the draft findings from the narrative analysis were cross-referenced with a collection of municipal plans from the Portuguese, Dutch, and British periods in Melaka. This cross-referencing process employed the visual anthropological analysis framework proposed by Collier [14], which involves four stages as shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2. A SIMPLIFIED FRAMEWORK OF VISUAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

Stage	Activities	Concerning
Stage 1	1. Observe	overtones and subtleties
	2. Discover	connecting and contrasting patterns based on feelings and impressions
	3. Make Notes	(carefully) identifying the images which considered data
	4. Write all questions	Triggered in the mind may provide important direction for further analysis
Stage 2	1. Make Inventory	or a log of all your images
	2. Design Inventory	that reflect and assist your research goals
Stage 3	1. Structure the Analysis	based on specific questions; measure distance, count, compare, information may be plotted on graphs, listed in tables, or entered into a computation
	2. Produce Detailed Descriptions	connecting and contrasting patterns based on feelings and impressions
Stage 4	1. Search Meaningful Significance	by returning to the complete visual record to the data in an open manner. Write details from structured analysis in context
	2. Respond Again	to the data in an open manner. details from structured analysis in context
	3. Re-Establish Context	view images in entirety, then write the conclusions as influenced by this final exposure to the whole

i) Examination stage: In this stage, the municipal plans were carefully and openly examined both individually and as a whole. This process aimed to transform the intangible textual understanding derived from the narrative analysis into something tangible. The gate depicted in the plans not only appeared in various forms, with slight variations in their locations and orientations, but also demonstrates strong pattern, common denomination and anomaly. The collection of municipal plans provided different levels of detail and information. Some plans had labels but fewer elements, while others were rich in elements but lacked labels. The researcher followed Collier's emphasis on spending time "playing" with the visuals, individually and collectively, arranging them chronologically or in different configurations until they began to reveal patterns. This allowed for the establishment of relationships between individual visuals and the larger whole.

ii) Digital inventory stage: In the second stage, the focus shifted towards creating a disciplined approach to digital inventory. This involved titling and indexing the visuals and paying attention to their creators. It should be noted that the recorded year for each historical visual might not necessarily reflect the year of its creation but rather the year of its publication or recording.

iii) Structured analysis stage: The third stage involved a more structured analysis of the visuals. Detailed descriptions, classification, and measurements were derived based on the research goals. This stage aimed to extract specific information from the municipal plans, organizing and categorizing them in a systematic manner.

iv) Search for meaningful significance stage: In the fourth stage, the study aimed to search for meaningful significance within a relatively more inclusive visual record. Patterns observed within the contextual information were examined to understand the gate's relationship with the surrounding municipality. The analysis included more than fifty municipal plans from the post-Sultanate period in Melaka.

By incorporating the visual anthropological analysis framework, the study combined the insights from narrative analysis with the examination of the municipal plans. This comprehensive approach allowed for the exploration of both textual and visual sources, enhancing the understanding of the colonial Melaka fortress city's most primary gate and its historical context.

3. Findings from Narrative Analysis

It appears that the Portuguese's textual accounts did not specifically mention the existence of the Sultanate gate in Melaka. However, Chinese, Arab, and Malay accounts do provide clear references to the existence of the Sultanate gate. Ma Huan's description of the Melaka city wall mentioning four outer gates, each furnished with a watchtower and a drum tower, indicates that these gates were reasonably high and had enough space for the drumming activity. This description aligns with the common practice of having watchtowers on gates in a fortified structure. The presence of watchtowers suggests the defensive function of the gates, allowing for surveillance and monitoring of activities in and around the city. The mention of drum towers indicates the cultural significance of drums in the Melaka Sultanate, possibly used for communication, signaling, or sounds for ceremonial purposes. Moreover, the Malay Annals provide insights into the existence of a main gate at the entrance of the royal compound. This includes the customary codes and practices involving the procession of the ruler and external diplomatic envoys movements in and out of the Melaka royal complex. This main gate was arguably of great importance and served as the focal point as official entrance and exit during diplomatic events and royal processions.

The Malay Annals specifically mention the presence of seven layers of gates leading to the Sultan's palace in the Melaka Sultanate [3]. The way it was described, there were significant spaces between gates. The spaces between gates can accommodate numerous royal Chinese delegates as they move from one gate to the next. This not only gave the idea of the distance between 'pintu kota' (the main gate) and the frontal facade of the palace, but also picturing the royal compound as the most guarded territory in the city. This is among the factors which favor the idea that the Sultanate palace was once on top of the Melaka hill.

This phenomenon suggests a hierarchical and multiple layers of fortification system within the royal compound. The primary gate of the Melaka Sultanate is believed to have been a significant and imposing structure, considering the customary law during Melaka Sultanate because the Sultan would be mounted on an elephant in ceremonial processions when entering or leaving the royal compound. The fact that Sultan riding on an elephant during royal processions, provides insights into the significance and grandeur associated with the primary gate of the Melaka Sultanate. The presence of elephants further emphasizes the importance of accommodating their size and movement in the design of the gate.

The study also takes into consideration the account of Ibn Battuta, a medieval Muslim traveler who visited Melaka in 1345, as translated by Gibb [15]. According to Ibn Battuta's observations, elephants were commonly used for carrying loads during the Melaka Sultanate era. He also mentioned that the Melaka Sultanate fortress was constructed of hewn stone and had a gate wide enough for three elephants to pass through. The wide gate was likely designed to accommodate the passage of elephants, which were commonly utilized during royal processions and ceremonies. Indeed, based on the descriptions, it is evident that the construction of the Melaka Sultanate's fortress and gates was strong and robust. The use of hewn stone in the construction of the fortress city indicates a durable and solid structure. Furthermore, the mention of elephants passing through the gate suggests that it was designed to withstand the impact of weight and force associated with the movement of these large animals. The gate's strength would have been essential to ensure its stability and longevity, considering the regular use of elephants for transportation and ceremonial purposes during the Melaka Sultanate era. The strong construction of the gates not only served the practical purposes, such as providing access to the royal compound, but it also conveyed a sense of power, prestige, and security associated with the rulers of Melaka.

4. Findings from Visual Anthropological Analysis

In the study, the draft findings from the narrative analysis were cross-referenced with a collection of municipal plans from the Portuguese and Dutch Melaka. It is understandable that the absence of municipal plans from the Sultanate Melaka period necessitated the exploration of available plans from the colonial periods. By examining these plans, the study aims to identify and analyze traceable markers that provide strong evidence of the remnants of the Melaka Sultanate tradition within the colonial municipal plans. The municipal plans from the Portuguese and

Dutch periods serve as valuable sources to investigate and understand the historical development and transformation of Melaka, including any elements that may have been influenced by or inherited from the Melaka Sultanate. These plans provide visual representations of the city's layout, especially the positioning relationship of streets, bridges, gates and route to the palace during the Sultanate period. By carefully analyzing and interpreting the colonial municipal plans, the study seeks to identify specific markers or patterns that can be attributed to the tradition and heritage of the Melaka Sultanate. Overall, the utilization of Portuguese and Dutch municipal plans in the study allows for the exploration of tangible evidence and traces elements in the tradition from the Melaka Sultanate within the colonial urban fabric. These markers serve as the foundation to build the case and provide a deeper understanding of the historical connections between the Sultanate era and subsequent colonial periods in Melaka.

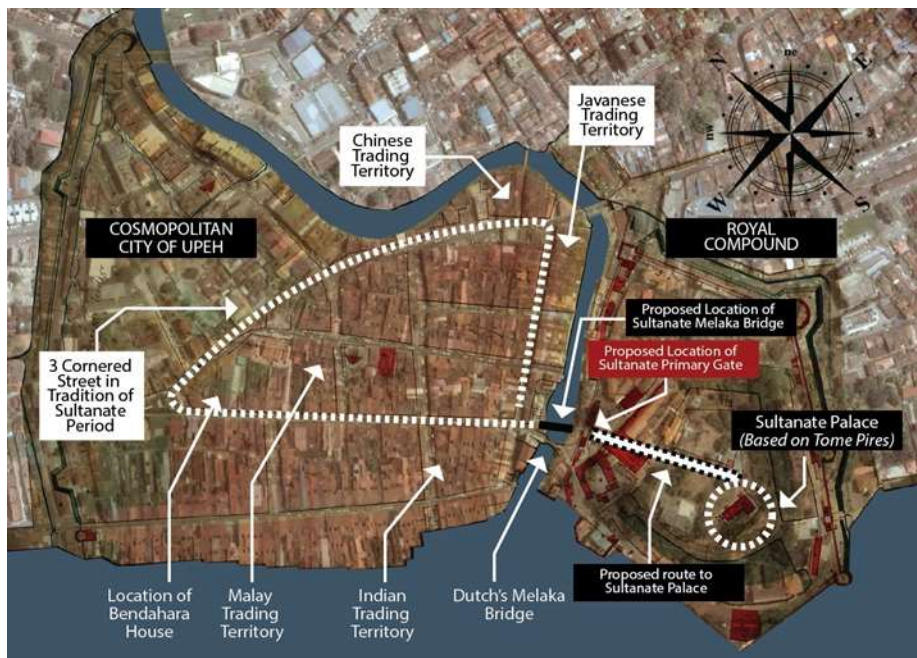


Fig. 3. Mapping the tracible municipality of Sultanate Melaka within the grid of Dutch Melaka municipal plan and current geo-location.

The above visual is a mapping of Dutch Melaka municipal plan and satellite image of Bandar Hilir. The darker part of the visual is the Dutch Melaka 1791 municipal plan. Generally it displays the cosmopolitan city of Upeh and the Royal compound. The position of trading territories (warehouses) of the Malay, Indian, Chinese and Javanese appears preserved in their original names based on Eredia Melaka municipal plan [8]. It is important to note that the Indian, Chinese and Javanese territories 1613 (which surround the Malay trading territory) were untouched during the 1511 war as they cooperated with Portuguese administration [14]. Therefore, the 3 cornered streets remain as the municipal grid in the tradition of the Melaka Sultanate era [10].

The above Dutch Melaka bridge appears to deviate from the primary fortress gate which was phenomenal across the colonial Melaka periods. Recent study however demonstrated and proposed the position of the Sultanate Melaka bridge connected to the primary street at the same time reaching the primary fortress gate of A Famosa [11].

To strengthen the proposed position of the primary gate of Sultanate Melaka, this study investigates the site of St Paul Hill (Melaka Hill) within the compound of remnants of A Famosa. The investigation was carried out especially in reference to the most detailed and among the earliest Portuguese municipal plan of 1563. Three routes spanning down from the top of Bukit Melaka were identified as the prospects that match the historical description. The route from the primary gate of Sultanate Melaka should be able to accommodate another 6 gates before reaching the Sultanate palace. It also should demonstrate practical slope as the Sultan of Melaka mounted an elephant in royal possession descending down the hill. None of the routes matches the criteria except the route shown in Fig.3.



Fig. 3. The proposed route to Sultanate Melaka palace from the primary fortress gate at current geo-location.

A drone was used in the investigation to capture footages and images at the site as the visual anthropological analysis processes. This investigation was done in view of Tome Pires’s perspective that the location of Sultanate Melaka palace was on top of Melaka Hill as seen in Fig.3 (a). At the moment, St. Paul Church is situated in this place. As a result, the above Fig. 3 shows images of a specific route that match the criteria to be the pathway from the site of Sultanate Palace spanning down to the proposed location of the primary Sultanate gate. This route demonstrates a practical slope for elephants in royal possession to descend and long enough to be able to accommodate another 6 gates before reaching Sultanate Palace. What is more interesting is this route demonstrates the alignment of the proposed Sultanate gate, the proposed Sultanate bridge and the primary street of Upeh in a relatively straight line as seen in Fig.3(d). In Fig.3 (b) and (c), images show that the Dutch Stadthuys buildings appear blocking the pathway and at once disorientedly interrupts the municipal grid of Sultanate Melaka. In conclusion this study is in the stance that the proposed position of the primary Sultanate Melaka gate has a strong case.

4.1. Precedent from Kota Kuala Kedah

A precedent of the fortress gate of Kuala Kedah was brought into this study to see the traceable form and elements of ancient Malay architecture especially as a stone built construct. Laterite stone is known to be a popular construction material during the Sultanate Melaka era.

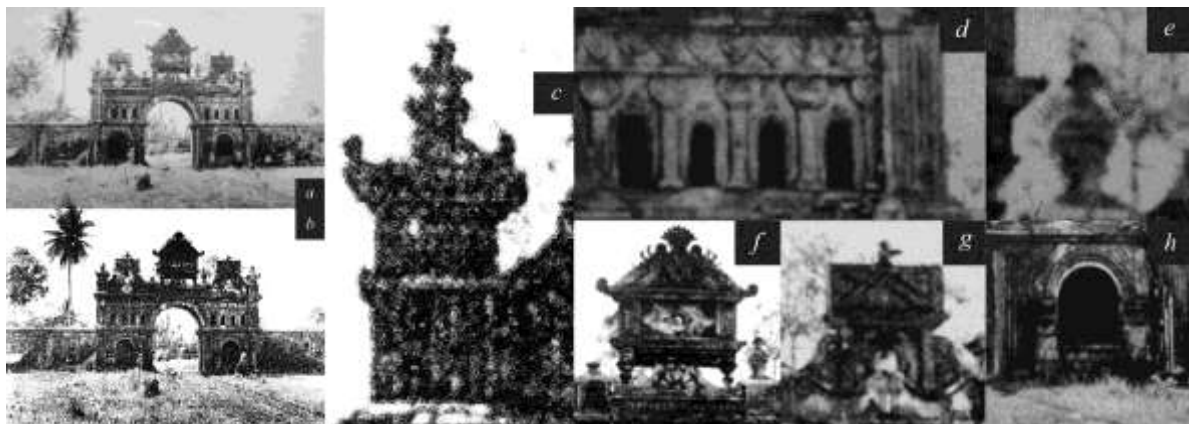


Fig. 4. Ancient Gate of Kuala Kedah; Malay Architecture and Motif (Nasir A.H. (1990) Kota-Kota Melayu, D.B.P., Kuala Lumpur, p.134-135)

Fig.4 presents an ancient Malay fortress gate of Kuala Kedah, which served as an entrance to the palace of Sultan Abdul Hamid Halim Shah during his reign in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This gate is a reconstruction of an older version that was damaged during a civil war in 1771 and completed in 1780. The inclusion of this figure in the study aims to explore not only the nature of ancient Malay gates but also to examine traces of Malay motifs on stone, considering the historical use of laterite stone during the Melaka Sultanate period. It is uncommon to associate large stone-built structures with the ancient Malay world, as timber-built structures were more prevalent and widely inherited throughout generations. The expertise in stone construction in ancient Malay architecture seems to have faded over time, with limited historical documentation and rare museum exhibits on the subject.

Fig.4(b) is a contrast-enhanced version of the original one, allowing for a closer examination of the shapes and details of the gate's construction. One notable aspect is the tall and wide entrance, which the study associates with the typical land vehicles of ancient Malay rulers, often elephants. The stone motifs on this gate exhibit intricate details, although they differ from the traditional Malay motifs commonly found on timber structures. The rectangular forms of the three towers resemble the manifestation of roofing, while various-sized arches can be observed (Fig.4(b), and (d)). The presence of cornices enhances the appearance of these arches and other vertical and horizontal sub-structures.

Among all the sub-structures on the gate, Fig.4(c) particularly caught the researcher's attention. This sculptural form bears resemblance to the tradition of the Sultanate of Melaka and resembles the typical "Batu Acheh" or "Acheh stone," which is commonly associated with tombstones originating from Acheh in Northern Sumatra. The use of Acheh stones in Peninsular Malaysia can be traced back to the Melaka Sultanate period in the 15th century and continued until the 19th century. Fig.4(c) showcases two layers of headers, a curly shoulder resembling the Achehnese flower known as "boengong awan si tangke," frame panels on the middle body section, and a floral pattern at its base. However, it does not precisely resemble any investigated Acheh tombstones in this study.

Fig.4(c) provides the basis for this study to explore the usage of Acheh stones beyond their conventional context as tombstones. It suggests that Acheh stones can carry symbolic meanings related to Muslims' relationship with their creator. This is also reflected in modern-day Muslim tombstones, where some of them manifest the shape of a mosque dome. It is the tombstone that attempts to imitate religious symbolism, specifically the domed mosque, rather than the mosque imitating the shape of the tombstone. The inclusion of the ancient gate of Kuala Kedah and the analysis of its architectural features and stone motifs contributes to the broader investigation of the use of stone and the presence of Malay motifs within ancient Malay architecture, particularly during the Sultanate of Melaka period.

5. Impression Of Sultanate Melaka Gate

The visual representation depicted in Fig. 5 below conveys the impression derived from the research findings concerning the stone construction of the primary gate of the Melaka Sultanate.

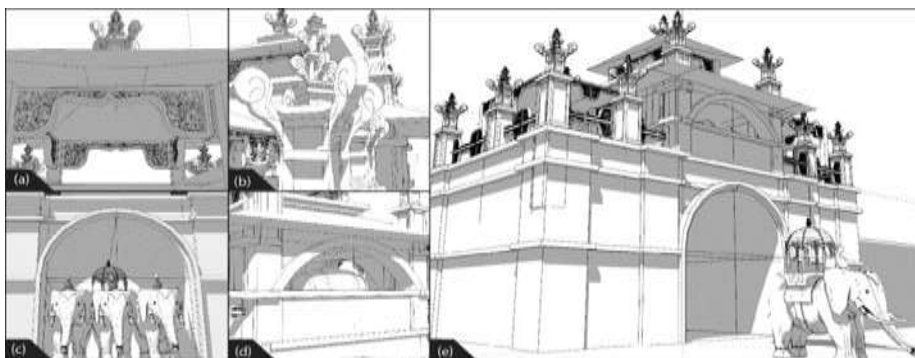


Fig. 5. The impression of the primary gate of Sultanate Melaka

The measurements of the primary gate of the Melaka Sultanate were determined based on the scale of a site known as 'de grote Poort' in Dutch, meaning 'the Great Gate' in English, as indicated in the Dutch Melaka municipal plan of 1791. A similar site referred to as 'Das grosse thor' or 'das grosse tor' in German, translating to 'the large gate' in English, is also mentioned in the Dutch municipal plan of 1744. These large, boxy structures are evident in various colonial Melaka's municipal plans, including the Portuguese Melaka city impression of 1563, suggesting their existence predates the Portuguese era in Melaka.

In Fig.5 (c), the image illustrates the proportional comparison between the opening of the primary gate and the size of an adult Asian elephant. The width of the gate opening, suggested to be 20 feet, is based on Ibn Batuta's historical text, which mentions that the gate is wide enough for three elephants to pass through. The height of the

opening measures 17 feet, which comfortably accommodates the combined height of a royal hut mounted on an elephant.

Fig.5(e) presents a reconstruction impression of the primary gate of the Melaka Sultanate, while Fig.5(b) showcases the utilization of Batu Aceh or Acehese stone, which was inspired by the ancient fortress gate of Kuala Kedah. Additionally, Figure 5 (a) displays a proposed additional timber structure adorned with traditional Melaka wood carvings.

The space on top of the gate is also equipped with drums as pictured in Fig.5(d). The gate is given a roofing structure for shades as this gate is also meant as a watch tower as mentioned by Chinese text. Melaka weather should not be taken for granted. The blazing sun of Melaka's tropical climate is a significant factor. It is almost impossible for humans to be stationed at the watchtower without shelter [16].

CONCLUSIONS

It is indeed intriguing that Portuguese historical texts do not specifically mention the gate of the Melaka Sultanate, despite their detailed descriptions of various constructs as markers, especially in the 1511 war narrative. Based on Chinese historical accounts, the compound of Sultanate Melaka has 4 outer gates, all equipped with a 'watch and drum' tower. The primary entrance of Sultanate Melaka, of which has 7 layers of gate as described in Malay Annal provides an opportunity for this study to examine the location. This primary gate is a pathway from Sultanate Palace to Sultanate bridge and the cosmopolitan city of Upeh. It is interesting to find out that the proposed route demonstrates the relationship of the proposed position of the Sultanate gate, the proposed position of Sultanate bridge and the primary street of Upeh in a relatively straight line. This strengthens the case on the position of the primary gate in this study. It appears that Tome Pires' perspective that the sultanate palace was located at the top of Melaka hill is very likely more accurate. This is in comparison to Eredia's perspective. If the Sultanate palace was located at the foot hill, there would not be enough space to accommodate 7 layers of gate.

The fusion of both narrative analysis and visual anthropological analysis provides integrated and more comprehensive investigation on both historical textual and visual sources, enhancing the understanding of the primary sultanate Melaka gate and their historical context. The utilization of Portuguese and Dutch municipal plans in the study allows for the exploration of tangible evidence and traces of the Melaka Sultanate tradition as markers within the colonial urban fabric. These markers serve as the foundation to build the case and provide a deeper understanding of the historical connections between the Sultanate era and subsequent colonial periods in Melaka.

The ancient Malay fortress gate of Kuala Kedah provides an opportunity as precedent to the primary gate of Sultanate Melaka in the context of stone-built construction. Given that the main gate serves as the front façade of the Sultanate of Melaka property and sultan mounted on an elephant passing through in and out the royal compound, its size and aesthetic is likely to be vast and lavishly embellished. If the Melaka Sultanate possessed a primary gate of such significant size, it would suggest the presence of a larger defensive structure, such as a city wall or fortress, that the gate served as an entry point for. A gate of considerable dimensions would typically be part of a fortified perimeter, providing access control and serving as a defensive measure against potential threats. Thus, it is reasonable to infer that the Melaka Sultanate likely had a fortified city with a substantial defensive wall encompassing it, with the primary gate serving as a crucial component of its defensive architecture.

The finding of this study poses a significant implication to the mainstream historical understanding on the origin of A Famosa. It appears the primary gate of Melaka Sultanate existed as a part of A Famosa fortress. On the other hand, the primary gate of A Famosa at the same location appears to have not been built in the preference of Portuguese and Dutch Melaka. Based on the impressions and municipal plans this gate appears neglected across colonial Melaka periods, sealed (without door leaves), no network of streets leading or passing through it, and there were buildings behind the main gate during the period Portuguese Melaka era. The immediate question is, if this primary gate of A Famosa belongs to Sultanate Melaka, who is the original builder of A Famosa?.

Research Ethics

This research has obtained the approval from the Research Ethics Committee (REC), Multimedia University [approval number: EA0332021]

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