

COLONIAL GARDEN CHARACTERS OF HILL STATIONS :
A CASE STUDY OF PENANG HILL, MALAYSIA

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DEDICATION

To my parents, Che Amat Zulkifli and Habsah Will
who have given me the strength and determination to succeed;
and who always knew it was possible.

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ABSTRACT

The importance of the study is to establish the colonial garden characters which was the most prominent features of Penang Hill . Penang Hill was built by the British for sanatoria and resort that portrayed and symbolized the cultural and social image of the Europeans. Picturesque and romantic atmosphere harmonized with natural surroundings were setting of Penang Hill during the colonial days. A garden compound was an important element in every bungalow where cultural activities and social interaction occurred. The garden elements are attributed to the cultural and historical heritage of Penang. It gave symbolic meaning with specific design, arrangement, appearance and content of cultural meaning for Penang Hill. The garden of Penang Hill whether appreciated for aesthetic qualities or cultural meaning is a valuable component in the heritage. The precedent studies on the English garden were adequate to convey its gardens' characters. The studies on the garden restoration principles and procedures served as the precedents studies in establishing methodology for the research. The outline of research methodology includes historical research/literature review, oral history interview and site observation. This research will look at landscape as historical artifact that evokes nostalgia, character and identity of colonial garden at Penang Hill. The data will describe and define the character and establishment of the colonial garden. Historical research and site observation are set, in order to describe condition and appearance of the site with clear concept, character, elements and garden features. The historical records from various sources are used to find the past condition, particular past events and changing pattern of Penang Hill's garden. The findings are categorized into two attributes that contribute to garden characters : physical and non-physical. There are five main findings can be drawn from this research : views and topography; garden design; plant materials; architecture and the memories.

ABSTRAK

Karektor taman kolonial merupakan gambaran utama di Bukit Bendera dan merupakan tujuan utama penyelidikan ini dijalankan. Bukit Bendera dibina oleh kerajaan Inggeris bertujuan untuk di jadikan kawasan rehat dan tempat mengawal penyakit tropika atau dikenali sebagai ‘sanatoria’. Landskap di Penang Hill (Bukit Bendera) digambarkan sebagai ‘picturesque’ dan ‘romantic’ semasa zaman kolonial. Landskap kolonial ini diseimbangkan dengan keadaan semulajadi dan hutan tropikal yang terdapat di sini. Implementasi rekaan landskap di sini adalah berdasarkan budaya, latar belakang dan sosial masyarakat barat ketika zaman itu. Halaman adalah merupakan elemen penting bagi sesebuah bunglo, di mana pelbagai aktiviti budaya dan sosial berlaku di sini. Taman yang direka membawa nostalgia, memori dan menggambarkan imej dan suasana seperti di England. Elemen-elemen yang direka di dalam taman menyumbang kepada rekaan, susunan ruang, gambaran dan nilai budaya dan menjadikan taman sebagai elemen utama bagi Bukit Bendera. Taman sebagai simbol dan warisan yang merupakan komponen yang bernilai di dalam pembangunan sesebuah masyarakat. Ianya dinilai samada dari sudut estetika atau nilai budaya yang tinggi. Matlamat utama kajian ini adalah bagi mengukuhkan karektor taman kolonial di Bukit Bendera dengan membuat kajian terhadap pembangunan stesyen tanah tinggi melalui dokumen-dokumen sejarah. Kajian terhadap pembangunan taman-taman Inggeris di era yang sama (abad ke 18 dan 19) akan menyokong dan memberikan gambaran sebenar taman-taman berkenaan. Beberapa contoh proses pemuliharaan taman dijadikan panduan bagi memantapkan metodologi kajian kes. Kajian sejarah dan lawatan dilakukan bagi mengenalpasti konsep, karektor, elemen-elemen taman kolonial. Penemuan bagi kajian ini akan dibahagikan kepada dua : keadaan fizikal dan bukan fizikal taman. Penemuan bagi kajian ini dipersembahkan di dalam bentuk penulisan dan gambaran bagi menonjolkan pengukuhan taman Inggeris tersebut. Penemuan kajian di dalam mengukuhkan karektor taman kolonial adalah : pemandangan dan topografi; rekabentuk; senibina; tanaman dan nostalgia.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Hill stations originated from the Netherlands East Indies and the British India in the early nineteenth century (Aiken, 1994). The term of hill station was for sanatoria or change of air (Aiken, 1986; 1987; 1994; 2002; Kennedy, 1996; Kenny, 1997; Shennan, 2000). The hill station is an area that was located at heights of nearly 10,000 feet above the ground level (Kennedy, 1996). The area was a place where Europeans developed for their exclusive place (Aiken, 1994; Freeman, 1999; Chatterji, 2003; Crossette, 1998; Kennedy, 1996; Kenny, 1997). The hill stations symbolized Europeans' power (Kennedy, 1996; Kenny, 1997; Chatterji, 2003) and social life (Aiken, 1994; Kennedy, 1996; Kenny, 1997; Shennan, 2000; Chatterji, 2003).

These small 'imperial belvederes' (Aiken, 1986; 1987; 1994; 2002) located in isolated area (Aiken, 1986; 1987; 1994; 2002; Kenny, 1997; Buda, 1985; Crossette, 1998) had offered temporary refuge from the humid of tropical climate (Aiken, 1986; 1987; 1994; 2002; Butcher, 1979; Chatterji, 2003; Freeman, 1999; Jordan and Caro, 1996; Kennedy, 1996; Kenny, 1997). The 'belvedere' is an Italian term for the fine view (Hunt, 1992). Refuge according to Appleton (1975) is an environmental condition, situation, object or arrangement conducive to hiding

or sheltering. The hill stations being described as sanatorias (Aiken, 1986; 1987; 1994; 2002; Kennedy, 1996), health resorts (Butcher, 1979; Crossette, 1998; Freeman, 1999) and holiday retreats (Crossette, 1998; Shennan, 2000) reinforces the idea of class and ethnic colonization (Aiken, 1986; 1987;1994; 2002; Kenny, 1997) in Asia.

These sanatorias and health resorts stretched from India, Simla (Shimla), the “Queen of Hill Stations” (Aiken, 1986; 1987;1994; Chatterji, 2003; Crossette, 1998) was summer capital of India before independence and now the capital of Himachal Pradesh (Aiken, 1994; Chatterji, 2003). Another Indian hill stations were Ootacamund, Mussoorie, Naini Tal, Darjeeling (Aiken, 1994; Allen, 1975; Chatterji, 2003; Crossette, 1998). Nuwara Eliya was the highest city in Sri Lanka developed by British (Freeman, 1999). Penang, Sapa and Dalat of Vietnam was originally built by French and Bogor, Indonesia (formerly known as Buitenzorg) was built by Dutch (Savage, 1984). American built Baguio in Philipinnes (Aiken, 1994; Freeman, 1999) and inscribed in the World Heritage List as “8th Wonder of The World”. The style and atmosphere of these European or American hill stations were copied in the colonies (Crossette,1998) and created cool retreat as reminders of England, closer to home (Aiken, 1986; 1987;1994; 2002; Crossette, 1998; Kenny, 1997; King, 1974; Shennan, 2000).

The British established four hill stations in Malaysia are Penang Hill, Maxwell Hill, Fraser’s Hill and Cameron Highlands (Aiken, 1986; 1987;1994; 2002; German, 1926; Kennedy, 1996). All these four hill stations were small and modestly developed (Aiken, 1986; 1987;1994; 2002). None of these hill stations except for Cameron Highlands have grown and developed since the end of colonial period, 1957. There were numerous proposals for their developments (Aiken, 2002). Cameron Highlands, the only colonial hill station in Malaysia had experienced appreciable growth, mainly for commercial and agricultural development (Aiken, 1994; 2002).

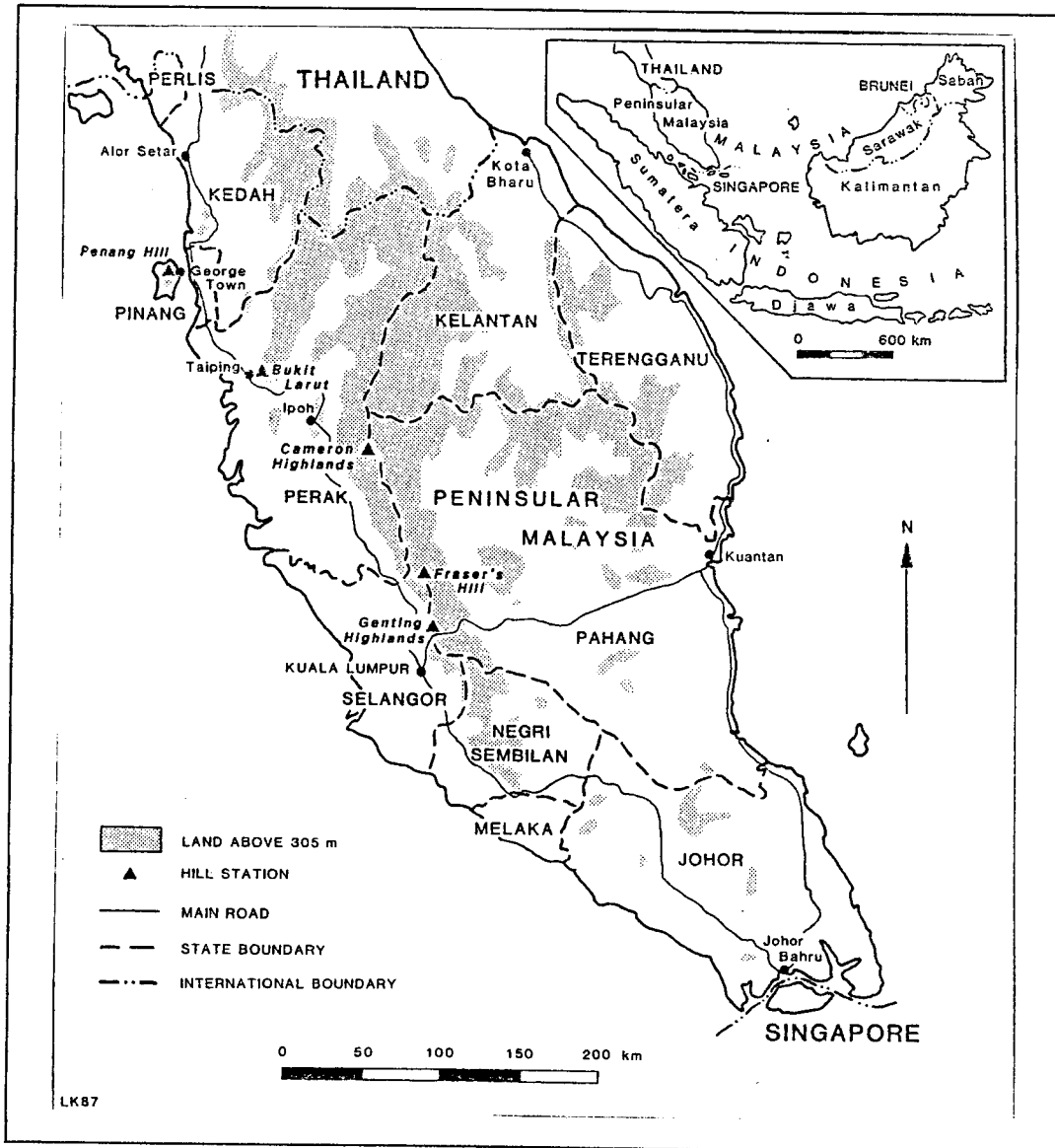


Figure 1. 1 : The Hill Station of Malaysia (Source : Aiken, 1987).

1.1 Background of Case Study

The case study, Penang Hill is situated on the third highest peak of Penang Island (Pulau Pinang), Malaysia at 2,495 feet (760 m). Pulau Pinang also called, as Prince of Wales by Francis Light was the fourth presidency of East India Company on 1786 (Aiken, 1987, Davies, 1962; Low, 1972). Historically, Penang Hill was the oldest hill station in the British Empire and built in the late eighteenth

century (Aiken, 1986; 1987; 1994; 2002 ; Nazima and Mohamed, 2002; Peng et al, 1991). The peak has been identified as a pleasant location during the nineteenth century and be accessed by funicular railways and roads (Peng, et al, 1991; Granroth, 2002).

Penang Hill was known as the Government Hill, Great Hill, The Hill (Aiken, 1986;1987; 1994; 2002) and Bukit Bendera or Flagstaff Hill, where in the early days was site of beacon (Aiken, 1994; 2002;The Penang Museum, 1986). The general area of Penang Hill is a complex of hills and spurs (Peng et al, 1991). Aiken (2002) stated that slopes, river and sensitive granite-derived soil characterize Penang Hill area.

The important heritage and historical aspects of Penang Hill as suggested by Peng., et al (1991) are :-

- i- Cultural and natural features that express the Hill's historic character.
- ii- Relationship between buildings and open spaces.
- iii- Pre-war buildings and their appearance (interior and exterior).
- iv- Historic surroundings of buildings.
- v- General historic of Penang Hill.
- vi- Views and vistas.
- vii- The Hill itself as a backdrop of the city, Penang Island.

In addition, Aiken (2002) determined Penang Hill's cultural heritage as :

- i- A culture that reflects the historic character and evolution of landscape;
- ii- Cultural values and attachment of the place;
- iii- Written and pictorial records of landscape and culture.

These statements revealed Penang Hill as a special place. The place evoked the image of natural beauty and historical significance (Aiken, 1986; 1987; 1994; 2002; Granroth, 2002; Nazima and Mohamad, 2002).

This research dealt with the main character of the hill stations, garden compound. Compound or 'garden', provides external space around the house for leisure (King, 1974). The garden has been an important aspect of the hill stations' landscape (Aiken, 1986; 1987; 1994; 2002; King, 1974). The garden became an integral part of the European cultural heritage (Aiken, 1986; 1987; 1994; 2002; Chatterji, 2003; Eldowney, 1980; King, 1974). The Europeans attempted to recreate little England called 'home' (Aiken, 1986; 1987; 1994; 2002; Butcher, 1979; Eldowney, 1980; Freeman, 1999, German, 1926; Scrivenor, 1931; Sim, 1946; Shennan, 2000) by remaining familiar features and characters of the architecture, landscape, social and culture that segregated from other races (Aiken, 1986; 1987; 1994; 2002; Chatterji, 2003; Eldowney, 1980; King, 1974).

Since 1960's, Penang was marketed in Europe as one of few tropical resorts in Asia with direct first flight access (Bukit Pinang Leisure, 1990). Aiken (2002) stated that more than 3.25 million visited Penang in year 1998 and generated Penang Hill into a tourism destination. The Penang Island Structure Plan of 1987 (MPPP, 1987), development of Penang Hill was quoted as :

“ Penang Hill shall be designated as an area of special characteristics. Its natural vegetation, topography and character as a hill resort must be maintained and conserved and development shall conform to and not destroy these special characteristics. Penang Hill shall be enhanced as a hill resort by improving and increasing the various lookout points and by the establishment and improvement of paths and walkways, gardens, natural areas and other facilities ”.

(MPPP, 1987 : Section of Penang Hill)

The statement indicates the main intention of the government to improve, maintain and enhance special characters, heritage and historical aspects of Penang Hill.

Penang Hill is one of the colonial legacies that still provides venue of enjoyment for both locals and foreign visitors (Nazima and Mohamed, 2002). In order to restore, maintain and enhance special characters of Penang Hill, the

government needs to establish its landscape's characters. Conceptually, landscapes have a holistic and complex character, which bridge natural and cultural aspects (Tuan, 1974). This research will analyze the bungalow compound, which was one of the main characters and cultural artifacts in Penang Hill as also determined by Aiken (2002).

Penang Hill was a product of colonial that represents the society with taste, character, lifestyle and value (Aiken, 1986; 1987; 1994; 2002; Crossette, 1998). The hill station portrayed an idea, a point of historical reference (Crossette, 1998) and social interactions (Aiken, 1986; 1987; 1994; 2002; Chatterji, 2003; Crossette, 1998; Eldowney, 1980; King; 1974). Penang Hill reveals something that the country inherited and demonstrated some differences from other nations (Crossette, 1998; Nazima and Mohamad, 2002).

In view of heritage diversity, it is reasonable that Penang Hill brings different things to different culture and heritage (Nazima and Mohamad, 2002). The significance and fact of Penang Hill was largely a product of colonialism (Crossette, 1998; Nazima and Mohamad, 2002) and our historical heritage (Aiken, 1986; 1987; 1994; 2002; Nazima and Mohamad, 2002; Peng, et al, 1991), that need to be conserved or restored. As a tourist attraction, the Hill requires careful planning and further involvements from various organizations in order to protect its unique historical cultural and natural heritage for the present and future generations.

The constraints of this research is the limitation in descriptive data about the bungalow gardens of Penang Hill and Aiken (1986; 1987; 1994; 2002) only made few comments about the gardens during the colonial time. In order to strengthen the contents of this research, an oral history interview and site observation were carried out. The process of inventory and analysis was based on descriptive and pictorial data.

1.2 Research Problem Statement

The composition of Penang Hill's atmosphere has greatly changed since the end of the colonial period (Aiken, 2002; Peng, et al, 1991). Penang Hill itself has changed very little over the past fifty years or more (Aiken, 2002). As reported on several newspapers (Figure 1.2 and Appendix A) which witnessed that several bungalows were abandoned and need to be repaired or required a complete rehabilitation.



Figure 1.2 : The New Sunday Times reported on 19th September 2004 about an abandoned bungalow, the Crag Hotel in Penang Hill. The Crag Hotel built by the famous Armenian hoteliers, The Sarkies Brothers. After government leased the building to the Uplands School (International School of Penang) until 1977, the building been neglected. In 1999, the site became a location for the Oscar-winning French film “Indochine”. (Detailed report on Appendix A).

In addition, the most controversial plan proposal for the development of Penang Hill was in the year of 1990 (Aiken, 2002; Peng et al., 1991). The development proposal was drawn up by Berjaya Corporation (Aiken, 2002; Peng et al., 1991) with two hundred rooms hotel on the site of former the Crag Hotel, a condominium development, a cable car linking the Botanic Garden to the hill station, a shopping and entertainment complex and theme parks (Aiken, 2002; Bukit Pinang Leisure, 1990; Peng et al., 1991). The project has not gone ahead because of opposition by an organization called 'Friends of Penang Hill', whom stated their opposition of the projects in a book called 'Penang Hill : The Need To Save Our Natural Heritage' (Peng et al., 1991). The book intended to protect natural and cultural heritage of Penang Hill.

Recently, on 17th February 2003, Penang Hill Company Hotels and Restaurants Sdn. Bhd had signed memorandum of understanding with the Penang State Government on project involving the restoration of government's bungalows; Convalescent, Woodside, Hillside, Fern Hill and Strawberry Hill (The Penang Hill Company, 2003). The project is still in progress and Penang Hill Company was targeted to be completed within three years (The Star, 2003). Although there are many proposals from various organizations, the most important issue or aspect is to bring back the glorious days of Penang Hill and for the posterity.

Davies (1962) stated that the British regarded Penang as a health spot during the colonial days and declared as the healthiest in India. Why is it important to establish the landscape character of Penang Hill especially its garden compound? Landscape character is an important element that express the unique sense or spirit of place (Antrop, 2004; Hunt, 1992; Tuan, 1974). The character defines the identity of Penang Hill (Aiken, 1986, 1987, 1994, 2002; Nazima and Mohamad, 2002) . Antrop (2004) stated that the distinguished landscapes contribute to local or national identity.

1.3 Research Questions

The research questions will focus on defining the garden character of Penang Hill's bungalow compound that also evolved historical research and site observation. The research questions evolve around the idea, concept, style of Penang Hill garden design; the significant elements of garden that portrayed colonialism; the special character of garden; and nostalgias and memories that can influence the mental image of garden.

The questions were designed to answer the identification of Penang Hill's garden in order to establish its characters. The data that are collected from historical research, oral history interview and site observation will help to establish the garden characters. The materials that characterized Penang Hill as an English garden and portrayed the ambience of England formed and analyzed. Whenever the English gardens have influenced the development of Penang Hill, the basis of the whole principles and theories of the English garden should be applied and conceptualized in its gardens.

The answer of questions of this research will depict the establishment of the colonial English garden in the eighteenth and mid-nineteenth century during its glorious time. The questions for this study are as follows :-

- i- What was the idea, concept or style of garden design of Penang Hill?
- ii- What was the mental picture that attached to the place or special characters of the garden?
- iii- What were the elements of the garden?

1.4 The Importance of Research

The English garden was the most significant image that Penang Hill besides its post-war buildings of colonial era. The gardens provide a setting for period buildings, evidence of the past and of social and culture change (The Burra Charter,1999). Penang Hill's gardens shall be classified as historic garden. Its garden was an integral part of European cultural heritage (Aiken, 1986; 1987; 1994; 2002). Penang Hill as an established hill resort during colonial (Aiken, 1986; 1987; 1994; 2002; Penang Gazette, 1923; German, 1926; 1995) has an ability to fulfill the criteria as historic garden.

According to Singh (2000) as she referred to The Historic Sites and Monuments of Canada (HSMBC), an independent body stated in the first report in June 1975, there should be six criteria in considering of historic garden:

- i- The significance work of art or product of creative mind;
- ii- The garden that possesses in a pronounced form of characteristic qualities of period;
- iii- Was designed by a significant landscape architect or designer;
- iv- Whether or not the garden has been associated with figures or events of national historic significance;
- v- Whether it contains plants or of outstanding botanic significance;
- vi- Whether it represents some regional or national ecological significant noting that prime consideration is the aesthetic significance.

The Hill was recognized as one of the finest sanatoria of British colonies (Penang Gazzette, 1923). The gardens were the product of British (Aiken, 1986; 1987; 1994; 2002; Chatterji, 2003; Crossette, 1998 ; King, 1974) who brought an idea, took determination and effort to design the hill as substitute to England (Aiken, 1986; 1987; 1994; 2002; Crossette, 1998 ; King, 1974; Kennedy, 1996).

1.5 The Aim of The Research

The aim of this research is to identify Penang Hill's garden characters. The identification and establishment of the characters cover three bungalows' compound : the Bel Retiro, the Tea Kiosk (Strawberry Hill) and the Crag Hotel. This will consider as an effort to establish the character of English colonial garden compound that beautify Penang Hill during the colonial era.

This research draws from the period of the British colonial settlement in Penang Hill, late eighteenth century until the end of the colonialism in the nineteenth century.

1.6 Objectives of The Research

The following objectives are formulated to achieve the aims of research :-

- i- To analyze the three bungalow sites for its landscape character during colonial period.
- ii- To identify the landscape characters of Penang Hill based on historical research and physical evidence.

1.7 Outline of Research Methodology

This research is to identify and develop landscape character as alternative restoration processes of landscape hill stations in Malaysia. The chronological

development of this research entails historical research, observation and evaluation of bungalows and gardens' significance and integrity of landscape style designed. The findings of this research intend to provide the establishment of landscape's colonial English garden of that era, according to principles, philosophy and techniques. It will also establish the guidelines for restoration of the gardens at Penang Hill.

1.7.1 Literature Review

The main goal of this exercise is to study the chronological development of hill stations in Asia and Malaysia in order to explore the synchronization of landscape development of each hill stations. The significance of the studies is to obtain in-depth understanding of hill stations' garden character.

As part of the literature review, historical research is an important aspect of the research method in order to identify the garden character of bungalows compound at Penang Hill. The historical research entails a study and review of bibliographies, books, journals, newspapers and other materials that contribute to the identification of garden character of Penang Hill.

The literature review compares the gardens' elements of each hill stations in Malaysia and India that have similarity in period of development. This exercise is to gain the depth, breath and wealth of garden compounds' design principles in order to establish the garden character of Penang Hill. In addition, old photographs and paintings included in this exercise will form part of primary data. These materials contribute as evidence to define the original layout of the garden.

1.7.2 Oral History Interview

Ziesel (1981) stated that interviewing the respondents (who experienced of the past) is to uncover historical data, and must taken into account the gliding events which take place over time. This method is a supporting element to strengthen the evidence of historical research and literature review. The oral history interview is an attempt to provide a place for interviewee to tell his or her history as he or she remembers it, and for the interviewer to ask questions that stimulate memory (Department of Oral History, 1998).

1.7.3 Site Observation

In order to ascertain about some notable aspect of the site and garden features, a site observation method was conducted. The observation will be based on literature review and oral history interview. The original plans of the bungalows for the case study are not available. In order to get a better evaluation of the study area is by observing and recording the historical elements left on site.

1.7.4 Findings and Recommendations

In this research, the findings will be depicted by descriptive and pictorial data. Physical and non-physical features will define the characters of the bungalow. The physical features include topography and view; garden design and furniture; plant materials; social, culture and activities; and architectural aspects. In

addition, the non- physical attributes are expression from individuals who had visited the place.

1.8 Organization of The Thesis

Chapter 1 of this research includes brief introduction to the overall structure of this research. The context and background structures show the research problem statement, the aim and purpose of the research, outline methodology and organization of the thesis.

Chapter 2 provides the overall reviews of chronology development of colonial hill stations in Asia and Malaysia. The literature review will cover an overview of historical research of hill stations in Asia and Malaysia. This exercise is to study and determine the genesis and purpose of development of the area. It is important to determine the similarities and differences between its landscape styles, value and historical aspects. The sources of evidence are documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations and physical artifacts. Documentation includes letters, memorandas, agendas, administrative documents, formal studies, journals, newspaper cutting and other articles appearing in the mass media. Therefore, archival records include photographs, engraving, pictures, drawing, maps, charts, surveys data, personal records and written description of the place. Besides, this chapter also includes historical context of Malaysia hill stations such as the significance of landscape; the evolution of landscape; component of hill stations; social and leisure and; architecture and garden.

Chapter 3 is the section contains the study on the English Landscape of the eighteenth and nineteenth century in England. This is important in order to look at in detail the meaning, style, design, culture, character, identity and significance of English Landscape. These will help to capture the character of the study area.

Chapter 4 provides a methodology and analysis of the research. This will establish the appropriate techniques and methods in this research.

Chapter 5 is a chapter of findings and discussions of the research. This will entail into clear understanding of findings and discussions of an overview of the whole content of research.

Chapter 6 is the final chapter that concludes the findings of the research and establishment of Penang Hill's colonial garden. The findings will form the basis for guidelines for restoration of compound area or garden of historical bungalows on Penang Hill.

The suitable treatment of these gardens is believed to provide depth, richness, inspiration and aesthetic enjoyment. Antrop (2004) stated that special places and monuments received a symbolic value and act as landmarks that allow orientation in time and space. The gardens of Penang Hill as Yahner (1997) coined is tangible evidence of the past that give depth meaning and sense of time. The English colonial garden of Penang Hill is believed to serve as historical reminders and symbols, provide recreation and establish distinguishing features that define a community physically.

The ideas or recommendations listed, could comprise some items on future research agenda; as the primary ideas or ingredients for broadening the understanding of Penang Hill and hill stations of Malaysia, which may include :

- i- Exploring the relationship between the culture context of bungalow and its garden;
- ii- Hill stations culture influence of built environment;
- iii- The visual structure of hill stations' landscape – on sequential development of landscape a point of observation towards clarifying the basic visual characteristics of landscape;
- iv- Landscape meaning and value according to people's experience – mental image of hill stations landscape;
- v- Comparative cultural study on hill stations development;
- vi- Landscape or garden restoration of hill stations.

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<http://www.mrbotanical.com>

Krul Book Antiquation _Photographs of Southeast Asia

<http://rds.yahoo.com>

Penang Hill is one of the oldest colonial hill station established by the British during their time in Malaysia. Explored in the late 18th century, a horse trail was cut by the Waterfall Gardens (present day Penang Botanic Gardens) to the summit of the hilly spine of Penang, allowing the British to escape from the chaos of George Town to the cooler climate on the hill. With its misty morning trails, vegetable and flower farms and charming colonial bungalows, Penang Hill (or Bukit Bendera) has been a popular hill resort since the 18th century when visitors were taken up on horseback or special