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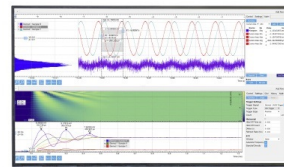
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Rediscovering Local ‘Third Places’ of Kota Bharu, Kelantan Malaysia: The Study of Kedai Pati

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Abstract. This paper attempts to rediscover the temporalities of Kedai Pati and its unchanging relationship with the old city of Kota Bharu, Kelantan. Much of the existence of this locally renowned ‘third place’ interfaces between work and life due to its direct connection with urban development. Kedai pati (‘pigeon stall’) is said to be part of the locality in Kota Baru township for more than fifty years, providing a distinctive experience of nostalgia. Kedai Pati is perceived as a valuable space for the local working men to informally attend on the regular or irregularly. At present day, Kedai Pati still survives with its signature theatrical-service pantry operation, seller-buyer social setting, that is part of a unique ambience considered as Kelantan's cultural heritage. Mapping the remaining locations of the kedai pati around the urban settings of current Kota Bharu Town Centre will indicate the strategic foci of nodal gastronomic places for the public to have access to. Information derived from this work can be useful for future planning and development in both urban and rural Malaysian context.

INTRODUCTION

Kelantan is an eastern coastal state in peninsula Malaysia known for its unique way of life and nationwide fame in its traditional heritage expressed through its local dishes. Much of the exclusivity of the east-coast cuisine stems from the combination of Malay, Thailand or Chinese influences of its ingredients due to its geographical location (e.g. the different types of rice grains from Thailand; the types of fermentation style in their preparation of fish and seafood snacks), and the unlikely places or locations which serve them (e.g. the boot of a parked car behind an abandoned petrol station; under elusive tents in a coconut grove). As the expression of “eating out” or “dining out” has become part of local custom in Kelantan, much of this phenomenon is reflected by the increasing number of places scattered in the city centre of its smaller towns. In addition to the wide range of culinary variety, each site also offers a specific ambience which gives character to the culinary experience. Although many of them have continued until today, Kedai Pati and its place as a social hub are not widely known outside of the State of Kelantan.

Although Kedai Pati has become a part of the Kelantan cultural landscape intrinsically, it is still only acknowledged in a spoken manner, meaning only those who speak the local language know of it. There is a normative theory about the survival of these small premises and how the physicality of its simple architectural construction can remain without significant changes nor further enhancements to function. As agreed by Hanan and Abd Hamid [1], research about Kelantan and its contribution to the Malaysian culture has been focused less, even though it continues to serve a wide variety of traditional heritage food from earlier generations. Kedai Pati classic architecture design and culinary experience is one significant attraction that might be bundled together to facilitate and encourage today’s local entrepreneurship culture as well as the creative industry of ‘Culinary Tourism’(gastronomy). Therefore, the objective

of studying the typology characteristics of traditional Kelantan pigeon stalls (kedai pati) is a basis for further development of traditional-based food stalls. By locating the existing stalls and identifying its defining design character, this study intends to align ways to promote Kelantan as part of a culinary tourism experience.

Background

Defining the appeal of Kedai Pati

Kedai Pati shortened from “*Kedai Burung Merpati*” supposedly derived its name from the resemblance to a typical pigeon coop, often seen in the rural areas and small towns of Malaysia. The attraction of a “modest” food stall for the working-class men is also in reference similar to the pigeon coop as a place “to drop in for a snack before “flying” off elsewhere”. This is an inviting and important characteristic model for a ‘third’ place- a place to go between work and home. The stall owners are part of the appeal, usually ethnically Malay or of Indian Muslim origin; offering bartender-like servings of coffee and tea at a very low cost price, along with a pleasant informal setting to experience local ethnic dishes. As Raji M. suggested, much of the food culture of the past remains to have a strong presence in current operations. As such, there is much about the remaining numbers Kedai Pati’ surviving with its humble, theatrical-service pantry operation that is considered as Kelantan cultural heritage [2].

Literature on Kedai Pati

In the case of Kedai Pati, there have been limited mentions of when they existed except for a small chapter in a book discussing Kedai Pati as Kelantan traditional identity and its role for a social and economic booster for the working class. Winzeler, while discussing the economic growth between ethnic races in Malaysia, had minor observations about Kedai Pati in Kelantan and how it had a hand in the local economic situation in 1950 [3]. Meanwhile, Hamzah and Ismail identified a nature-culture based tourism corridor: a pilot project at Kelantan Darul Naim mentioning this authentic local service [4]. Later on, Ismail had documented Kedai Pati as Malaysian street food documentary and described the nostalgia it leaves behind [5]. The most recent writing found was a final year bachelor thesis being done by Zaidi, which focused on how kedai pati as a social interaction place for communities before and current situations [6]. However, these prior studies have yet to examine the design elements of this type of stall; its average size, shape and if any cultural influences contribute to the basic plan layout of this premise.

A Timeless Place for Nostalgia

Oldenburg had made a more general definition of third place in 1982 as “the space between the first and second places that the citizens are in touch with for any reason, and its improvement leads to the social growth of people” and also as “the host of regular, irregular, voluntary, informal, and fortunately unpredicted gatherings of people out of the territory of the first and second places” [7]. The literature on temporalities of a place usually refers to the characteristics of a place and what it becomes in time. For this study, the concept of place-temporality can be conceived also as an aesthetic experience. What this study is trying to understand is how much of everyday life in Kota Bharu revolves around its own specific food culture, and the importance to recognise long-time established social “third” places as part of its urban fabric.

‘Third’ places in forms of eateries and coffee stalls are places where visitors continue to animate the bustle until after midnight. Kiosks, stalls and other types of more straightforward eatery places have long been credited for contributing highly to the income and development of the local creative economy in Southeast Asian towns including Kota Bharu. Duruz and Khoo, later dubbed the different ways of an Oldenberg’s ‘third’ place, is utilised in multicultural Malaysia and Singapore. The study reveals how eating together ‘transnationally’ was an occurrence theme of their study which focuses on street hawkers and small cafes that purposely organises a fixed number of seatings with an assumption that strangers will “share space” to eat [8]. Although this was suggested to be due to limited allowed spaces (as these informal establishments make use of street corners not designed for congregations), the study noted how this closeness and lack of regard in personal space has quickly become a virtue in these types of eateries. Until today, Kedai Pati has been likened much akin to a social club, a place at which strangers may befriend and have a lively exchange of news and stories or for nostalgia while sipping breakfast or tea [9,3]. The affordability and casualness of its ambience invites all members of the community to be regulars in ‘spending time together in an informal, relaxed, unstructured way’ as they exchange news within their neighbourhood.

Kedai Pati provokes a distinctive experience of nostalgia for the older generations of the working men, particularly at times of early development of the township before World War Two, an ongoing coffee culture that is not going away anytime soon. Scholars Marzuki and Aziz et al. note that despite Kota Bharu's location away from the centre of attractions of Peninsular Malaysia, Kelantan is well known for its natural environments and distinctive cultural heritage which have influenced the development of the tourism industry for generating local economy [10,11]. While previous studies of Kedai Pati focused on the different ethnic influences of the heritage culinary practice, the contribution to economics and tourism, this paper intends to fill the gap in decoding the functional and social aspect from its architectural layout plans. Information derived from this work can be useful for future planning and development in both urban and rural Malaysian contexts.



FIGURE 1. Kedai Pati typical layout plan (Source: Fieldwork, 2020)

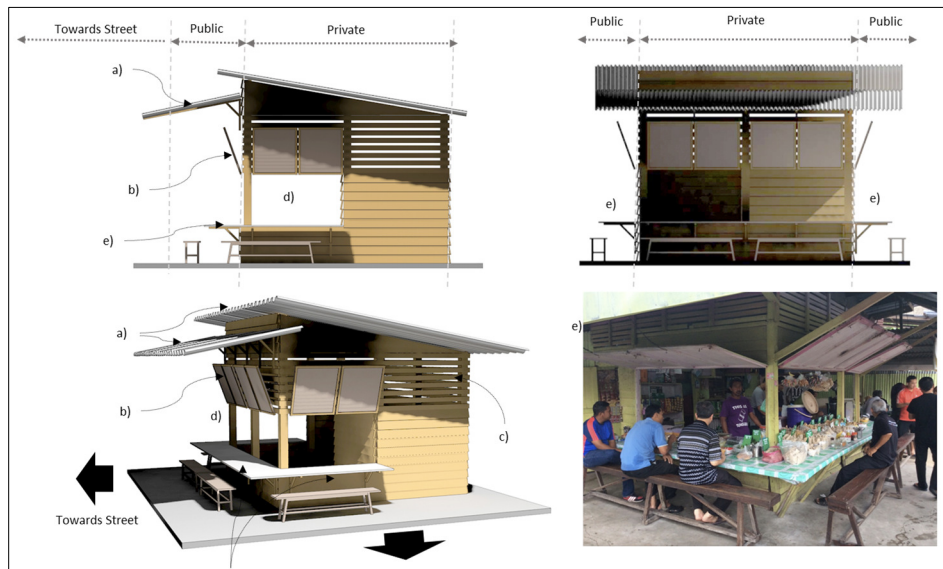


FIGURE 2. 3D Model of a typical type of Kedai Pati showing the different views of the stall and a photo showing it in use (Adapted from Junaidi [13]).

Figure 1 shows the basic layout plan for Kedai Pati based on [12] which consists of four distinctive areas; a preparation area where the trading and order of food takes place-this space usually is attached to secondary smaller storage/kitchenette which also becomes a rest area for the attending trader as it is more private. The third is a tabletop

counter to place for putting the food and beverages, and lastly, the seating area which is commonly equipped with a type of long bench for seating. Meanwhile, Fig. 2 exhibits an example showing the two side elevations, its facade, and an overview of a typical Kedai Pati modelled 3-dimensionally. When looked closely, the model reveals the interactive social focus in the design decision of having three-sided openings surrounding three-quarters of the small stall. It must be noted the location open towards the street, as shown above, is also a form of representation of a time in urban space of Kota Bharu old city, where the relationship of private and public is represented, and openly expressive for embracing the working men. As place-temporality is the temporal aesthetic experience of urban space, this example of place-temporality is represented in Kedai Pati with the way structures engage within urban space from the time it was built [13]. New conceptual dimensions of time-related to places can already be seen in the studies about the evolution of the coffee places towards the hipster-style coffee café. How these attributes define place-temporality as an experience of aesthetic significance will be interesting to see in the long run, as the potential for kedai pati development and evolution does exist [14].

METHODS OF RESEARCH

This study adopted an explanatory historical research method which collected data through the review of the literature, field observations which includes interviews of owners and building surveying. The research for this article was conducted in the historic area of old Kota Bharu (Fig. 3) along the streets includes Jalan Pengkalan Chepa, Jalan Pos Ofis Lama, Jalan Atas Banggol, Jalan Kelochor, and Jalan Belakang Istana as shown in Fig. 4.

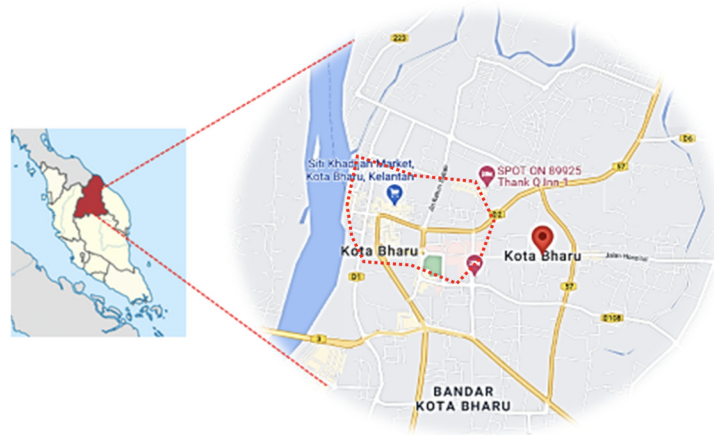


FIGURE 3. Location of Kota Bharu, Kelantan State (Source: Google Map, 2020)

Limitations

The study was conducted between August 2019 till September 2020 amidst the global pandemic which limited data collection through face-to-face direct contact during the Recovery Movement Control Order (RMCO) by the Malaysian government. A total of thirteen identified Kedai Pati stalls contributed towards the accomplishment of this study with a total of three informal interviews with stall attendants following ethical measures strictly allowed by the University.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents the findings of the mapping of remaining Kedai Pati found in the skirts of the Old City of Kota Bharu. The focus on these stalls centres on the evolution of its use over time and history to illustrate how the time dimensions have intertwined the basics of kedai pati. Due to reports of qualitative data, the discussions are directly associated with the results of the findings.

Case Study Mapping

Figure 4 shows the location of Kedai Pati along Jalan Atas Banggol, Jalan Kelocho, Jalan Belakang Istana, Jalan Pengkalan Chepa and Jalan Pos Ofis Lama at Kota Bharu town where the remaining stalls are still operating (Listed in Table 1). Many of these stalls maintain their traditional role as breakfast stalls, usually starting early after sunrise and closing just before lunch, if not just after. What is interesting about the mapping of kedai pati around the urban settings of Kota Bharu town indicates the strategic focus of nodal gastronomic places for public breaking in before they go for work or leisure.

TABLE 1. Number of identified Kedai Pati

Street Locations	Number of stalls/shop
Jalan Atas Banggol	5
Jalan Kelocho	1
Jalan Belakang Istana	1
Jalan Pengkalan Chepa	1
Jalan Pos Ofis Lama	4
TOTAL	13

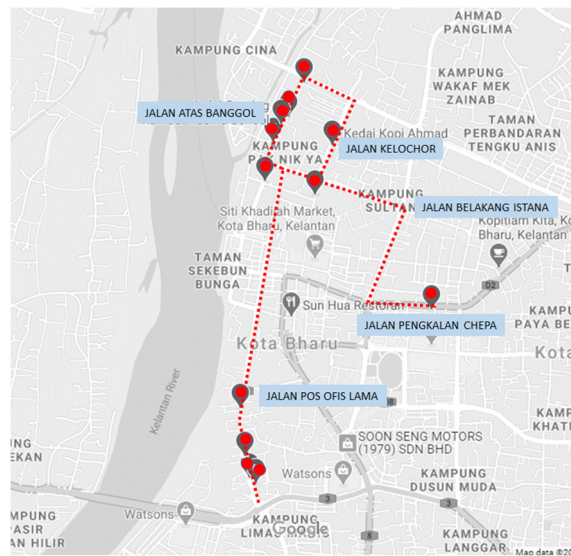


FIGURE 4. Kedai Pati's location (Source: Fieldwork, 2020)



FIGURE 5. Selected examples of the variations of Kedai Pati in Kota Bharu during observation August 2019 - August 2020
(Source: Fieldwork, 2020)

Structure & Construction

Observations in Fig. 5 show the overall layout of all the identified Kedai Pati remains consistent with study by Junaidi [12]. The construction method of choice is by simple post and beam approach, with an extended overhang structure towards the front part of the stall, depending on the orientation of the building erected and street location. Materials used were low grade timber for wall frames, panels, columns and roof rafters. Sheets of zinc was also the choice roofing, fixed onto the rafters for shade. The main difference between these structures were whether they were standalone or part of an existing residential that had been extended into a shop.

What the mapping of existing locations of the Kedai pati illustrates is also the close relationship of private and public place for the Old city of Kota Bharu. How the Kedai Pati represented the working men, and how it openly expresses the need for social. The space provided for the eating area provided with three long benches also indicates proximity for closer verbal exchange between any customers of this place. What this suggests is that this type of stall allows for interaction between groups that might otherwise be cut off from each other.

Cultural Origins, Management

In the case of Kedai pati, interviews revealed that the original owners of these establishments predominantly came from a village in North India who have migrated to Malaya during the British Colonial days and have now gained resident status. This finding is supported by Duruz and Khoo noting that the different hybridity and cultural adaptation for eating spaces do not compromise one's sense of identity [8]. Similarly, to what occurs in the *Mamak* stalls (another known Malaysian ethnic coffee place), how the cultural retention remains among vendors and owners who are Tamil Muslims (despite being married to local Indian or Malay ethnic spouses) that they are still proud descendants of their Indian patronage through hiring Tamil Muslim relatives or Tamil speaking workers from India. Despite already obtaining permanent residency in Malaysia, they still do return to their home country and have large transnational business networks there. However, observations during fieldwork also have noted that only a handful of the trans-generational ownership remain in operation at current. At least two identified in this study are already sold to the local Kelantanese Malays.



FIGURE 6. Kedai Pati operators serving their signature dishes during observation August 2019- August 2020
(Source: Fieldwork, 2020)

Role in Supportive Third Place

An interview with one of the Kedai Pati owners has suggested that the premises of these stalls have likely existed more than fifty years ago. There are avenues for this study to contribute towards tackling poverty issues in Kelantan as studies by Rosenbaum have shown many third places can assist with quality of life and support the local community [14]. For example, the chance to create business opportunities among the local entrepreneurs as well as promote Kelantan as culinary tourism. Fig. 6 shows the different specialty ethnic dishes in Kedai Pati which is commonly served for breakfast.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study helps understand the drivers that contributed to the Kelantanese cultural significance of this type of eating establishment. To conclude, it is precisely the simplicity in the design and structure, its basic function for a business, that is the main role of this humble third place which appeals to the crowd of the Kota Bharu. The objective to locate and document information of the remaining Kedai Pati the stalls that are in business have been achieved. Based on the results, more efforts to preserve the cultural fascination of Kedai Pati can be beneficial for the interest of different stakeholders such as the local Town planning authorities, shop owners or any community members interested in this type of business. Retrofitting public places and exploring new architecture and use of space is also essential. Small design changes can encourage interaction between groups that might otherwise be cut off from each other.

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