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RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE HERITAGE PLANT: THE NOSTALGIA FROM THE PAST ENHANCE THE PLACE IDENTITY FOR THE ROYAL TOWN OF KUALA KANGSAR, PERAK, MALAYSIA

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Abstract

The heritage plants explicit the tradition, belief, history of the people as well as present the culture of intangible attributes of a group or society significant with the landscapes. Local people think that the plant character are equally essential to bring back the nostalgia of the traditional village garden. The study aim to identify the heritage plant characteristics to symbolize the townscape elements in establishing the place identity for the Royal Town of Kuala Kangsar, Perak, Malaysia as a case study. The study methodology involved a semi-structured interview with experts in three categories, namely, professionals, policymakers, and skilled practitioners. The results show that there is significance between the royal plants and the cultural heritage plants, which intend to be the townscape element's identity of the royal town of Kuala Kangsar, Perak. The findings of the study expected to assist the city council in their town planning by proposing the heritage plants' character images in enhancing the identity of the royal town of Kuala Kangsar. Besides, it could apply as a guideline for future developments in the Royal Town of Kuala Kangsar, Perak.

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Introduction:-

Place Identity and Cultural Heritage:

Place not only enhances the community but also preserves its cultural heritage, which consists of a physical form, activity, and meaning (Ujang, 2015). It also helps to clarify and enrich a nation's collective memory and to conceptualize its identity. In other words, it is related to the group of people and nature; convey a unique symbolism and meanings that contribute to the establishment of specific recognition which is rooted in the culture of the people (Easthope, 1999; Hauge, 2006; Hermanowicz, & Morgan, 1999; Peace, Kellaher, & Holland, 2006; Stewart, Liebert, & Larkin, 2004). Beginning with culture through the activities of the people in a particular place, it can develop very attractive and recognizable, unique or specific characters and these can differentiate it from places (Ginting, Nasution, & Rahman, 2017). In terms of identity, Breakwell (1986), emphasize that identity is a dynamic social product of the interaction of capacities for memory, consciousness, and organized construal. Therefore, place

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identity is a study about place interprets the relationship between the environmental character and people's perceptions about cultural and physical settings (Proshansky, Fabian, & Kaminoff, 1983).

Place and Culture:

Lengen & Kistemann (2012), identify the key dimensions of place identity model as behavior, body, emotion, attention, perception, memory, orientation, spirituality, meaning/value, and culture/sociality. Yuen (2005), noted that the values of place identity could provide exceptional experiences such as nostalgia, memory, and the ability to recognize the place. Again, Proshansky et al. (1983), emphasize that the study of place identity will give an impact on other environmental aspects. These include emotions, memories, and a sense of belonging to the physical world, socialization of the self-including objects and things, also the spaces and places. Thus, Tuan (1980) clarifies that culture is one of the attributes of the significance of the place. Therefore, culture is an essential element in creating an identity of place as well as to regenerate an urban space through physical development, economic vitality, and social liveliness (Wansborough and Mageean, 2000). Thus, the appearance of a place influenced by the aesthetic quality, symbolic meaning, the elements of building from the perception of people, and the cultural landscape that highlighted an iconic landscape as the identity to imaging the locality. The shaping of identity involved the cultural factors, which are heritage, nature, and the culture of people (Stewart, Liebert, & Larkin, 2004).

Heritage Plant:

Sharp & Bloom (2011), describes "memorable" as "familiar, well- known, memorable, feel a sense of connection, feel like I know it well, feel a sense of nostalgia, evokes strong memories, reminds about childhood place and associated with some special place from the past." The plants that used for medicinal purposes are the most memorable plant. Nostalgia plants are known and remembered for their function as medicinal plants in traditional Malay medicine, including for healing diseases. They categorized under four categories: shade, official flower, preservation, and medicinal (MARDI, 2005). Meanwhile, the old Malay manuscript, listed the indigenous plants connected with Malay medicine, those planted around palaces and those dominant tree species that are deemed very important. Some plants are used as ornamental plants in the palaces to maintain the value of historical and cultural heritage. Other traditional plants are incorporated into the architectural ornamentations of these palaces. In Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa (1991), mention, Pinang Gading, Gandasuli, Delima, Langsat, Anggur and Betik. This is similarly stated in the Hikayat Inderaputera (2000) and The Traditional Malay Medicine (*Warisan Perubatan Melayu*) (1982). Malay manuscripts such as Bustan Al-Salatin (2009), however, recorded tree types of plants identified as shade plants. Tun Sri Lanang (1977) lists Langsat, Anggur, Buluh, Pinang and Gandasuli. All the plants mentioned in this discussion are listed in Table 1 as cultural plants used in traditional Malay medicine and are adopted as the main subject for the design of motifs in traditional Malaysian craft.

Table 1:- The list of medicinal plants presents as the motif, prepared by I. Khasumarlina, (2016).

AUTHORS/SOURCES	PLANTS NAME	Shafiee & Saied ,2013; Ong, et al (2018); Li & Xung (2016)	Sabran et al., (2016); Ramli et al., (2015); Bahaududin & Abubillah, (2003); Adnan & Othman, (2012); Faisal@Ahmad Faisal & Wahidah, (2012).	Milow et al., (2017); Faisal@Ahmad Faisal & Wahidah, (2012)	Bustan Al-Salatin- The garden of Kings. (2009)	Tun Sri Lanang , (1977) - Sejarah Melayu	Tale of Merong Mahawangsa, (1991)	Tale of Inderaputera (2000)	Traditional Malay Medicine (1982)	CATEGORY
	Bakawali	●								
	Cekur		●							Medicine
	Pandan		●							
	Serai Wangi		●							
	Pegaga		●							
	Mengkudu		●							
	Pinang Gading					●	●	●	●	Utility
	Gandasuli					●	●	●	●	
	Delima						●	●	●	Herb
	Langsat					●	●	●	●	
	Anggur					●	●	●	●	
	Betik			●						Food
	Buluh					●				
	Ara				●					
	Penaga				●					
	Cempaka				●					

Heritage Plant Characteristics Enhancing Place Identify:

In the context of this study, the plants are valuable indicators contributing to aesthetic-visual quality which record the type and degree of human-nature relationship over time. Plants that commonly found in the traditional Malay landscape consist of a variety of herbs, fragrance, fruit trees, and brightly coloured flowering plants (Harun, Mohd Ariffin, & Abdullah, 2017). The traditional Malay landscape gives particular emphasis for different functions of softscape elements (Jaffar & Harun, 2016). The traditional Malay landscape expresses a unique sense or spirit of place (Genius loci) that helps to define place identity (Antrop, 2000). Abdul Rahman Al-Ahmadi (2003), found nine types of the usage of plants that usually appeared in the Malay civilization. These included as; fragrant plants (Mohd Hussain, Hassan, & Mt. Akhir, 2016; Kamil & Yunos, 2015); flowering plants (Salleh et al., 2016; Haron & Yusof (2014); fruiting plants (Jaafar & Harun, 2015; Zakaria et al., 2014); utility plants and herbs (Aziz et al., 2018; Adnan & Othman, 2012) as well as others. More than 20 types of floral motifs applied on the Malay art elements including, 'Jari Buaya', 'Kerak Nasi', 'Ketam Guri', 'Pucuk Paku', 'Bunga Teratai', and 'Kangkung'. These types of plants usually are easily found growing in their surroundings, which owns creativity and artistic style but still maintaining its distinctive beauty (Raja Fuziah and Abdul Rahman, 2000). Therefore, this paper aim to identify the heritage plant characteristics to symbolize townscape elements in establishing the place identity for the case study of the Royal Town of Kuala Kangsar, Perak.

Methods:-

Site Study:

Kuala Kangsar is selected for this study because it is a convenient location; it holds a unique heritage of the Perak Malay Sultanate. It contains a much historic building associated with the royal legacy heritage. Furthermore, the town has officially declared as the Perak Royal City since 1887 (Shen, Farid, & McPeck, 2008). The Royal Town of Kuala Kangsar is located in the State of Perak and situated in the north of Peninsular Malaysia between Ipoh and Taiping. The town today is bypassed by the North-South Highway and has become a backwater of tourism. It is 35km north of Ipoh, the State Capital, and situated on the western bank of the Perak River. From Ipoh, the highway passes through karst topography dominated by rounded limestone hills blanketed in unique vegetation that can survive the harsh conditions.



Fig. 1:- Perak State Map
(Source: Wikimedia.org)



Fig 2:- Royal Town of Kuala Kangsar, Perak
(Source: Google map)



Fig 3:- Dataran Putra
(Source: Author)



Fig 4:- Ubudiah Mosque
(Source: Author)



Fig 5:- Kenangan Palace
(Source: Author)

This study adopts a case study research. Yin's (2003) explanation of the case study has been amended for architectural research by Groat and Wang (2013). In particular, Groat and Wang (2013), believes that a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a phenomenon or a setting, so it is particularly useful in the field of urban design. In this study, all data are collected within the boundary of the Royal Town of Kuala Kangsar, Perak, as a site case. The focus is on the streetscapes near Bukit Chandan streets; Jalan Taiping, Jalan Daeing Sedili, Jalan Istana, and Jalan Syahbandar. This study focuses on exploring the context of place identity, originality of royal town regarding the traditional landscape elements, through the heritage plant as an embellishment of the city's streetscapes. This study identifies the importance of heritage plants used as an image to represent the people, background history, and the influences of socio-culture in the plant's selection and its characteristics.

Data Collection:

This study engaged with a semi-structure interview method. The respondents were twelve local peoples resided in the Royal Town of Kuala Kangsar. They are categorized into three groups consisted of; five professionals, two policymakers, and five skilled practitioners. The interviews were conducted over a threemonths period beginning early August 2017 till the end of November 2017. A total of twelve respondents (nine male and three female) were involved in the interviews and can be grouped according to their professions as shown in Table 2. The respondents were different groups of professionals linked to the study area. The groups include professionals, policymakers, and skilled practitioners. Each respondent was given a code according to their professional group and their number as a respondent in that group. For example, 'PR1' represent the respondent number 1 from the professional group.

Table 2:- Respondents' grouping according to their professions.

Group	Code	Number	Percentage (%)
Professional	PR	1,2,3,4,5	41.6
Policymaker	PM	1,2	16.6
Skill practitioner	SP	1,2,3,4,5	41.6
TOTAL		12	100

This study used a qualitative case study that included a semi-structured interview supported by the literature review. Therefore, to streamline the discussion, first, the respondents were asked to write down their biodata as part of the respondents' characteristics. Then proceeded to give their responses to the several discussion topics prepared previously (Table 3). The type of plants coded based on the name of the plant provided by the respondents until it achieved the saturated data. The respondents answer the questions based on their knowledge, experience, place background, and observation of the Kuala Kangsar environment.

Table 3:- Interview Topics, Questions and Prompt Questions for In-Depth Answer.

Topic	Research questions
The Heritage Plants	i) Can you list the name of plant that you familiar seen here? ii) Where did you see the plants? iii) Can you explain why the plants have been chosen? iv) Is it the plants have related to Kuala Kangsar? Why did you say that? v) Did you think that plants have any speciality? Which part of plant? vi) Did you think this plants related to people here (Kuala Kangsar)? Can you explain why?

Later, the researcher analyzed the written connection of the plants with the place at the end of the interview recorded. The essential parts highlighted, and the objective was to select phrases containing hidden ideas that would support the research and compile them.

Data Analysis:

One of the most challenging difficulties involving case study evidence is data analysis that deals with the amount and variety of information (Yin, 2003, p. 109). According to Yin (2003), these difficulties can be reduced if the research has a general strategy for data analysis. Among all the strategies suggested by Yin (2003), this particular research considered "relying on theoretical propositions." The theoretical proposition obtained in the literature review not only led the data collection process but also helped to organize the data gathered for the research

questions and the data analysis in this study. Therefore, the collected information's were further categorized and analyzed in three main areas, namely, data concerning the place identity of the royal town, information concerning the factors related to plant and its relationship with place, and the authenticity of plants as a symbolism of place identity of the royal town Kuala Kangsar, Perak.

The data analysis procedure consists of 4 stages. 1) Preparing data for analysis; 2) Exploring the data; 3) Analyzing the information and 4) Presenting the data analysis. Each step of the analysis consists of the detail process of developing the results, as shown in Figure 6 below.

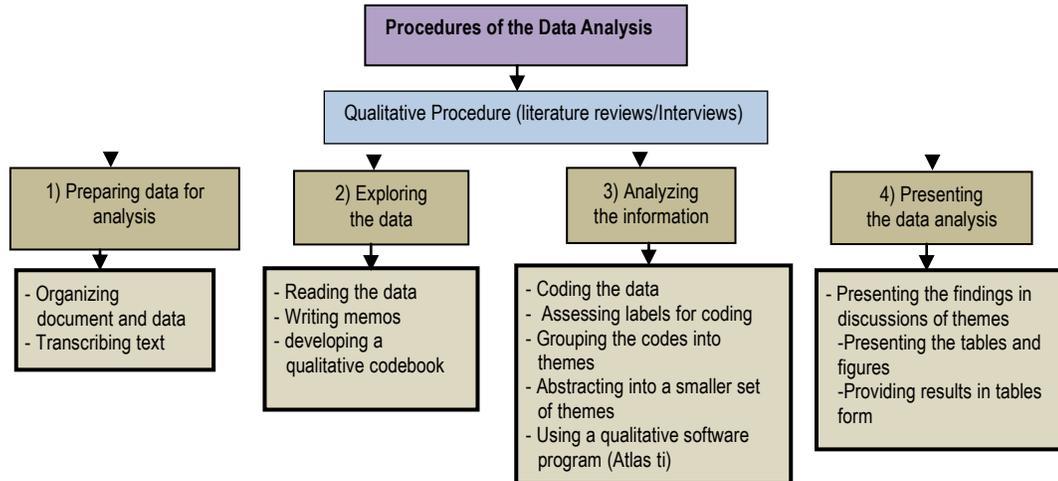


Fig 6:- Data analysis procedure (adapt from Cresswell 2007).

Results:-

City Morphology Component to Identify the Specific Identity

The criteria of the plant will visualize the city morphology components as well as the royal town appearance through the type of plant that related to local people and culture of a place. Therefore, the choice of a specific plant gradually creates the formation of identity.

The Memorable Value of the Plant

Most respondents agreed there is a strong relationship between culture, memory and place identity (PR1, PR2, PR3, PR5, PM1, SP1, SP2). Plants have been used for remembering important events and critical moments in one's life including birth, marriage and death. Plants are also used in many other cultural ways such for medicine, as religious objects, as subjects in mythology, as food, and in many festivals, celebrations, and traditions (SP1, SP5, SP6).

Respondents also selected other plants they believed as having memorable values. The list of memorable plants are the Kangsar tree (23%), Bunga Raya (23%), the Spider Lily (14%), Mangosteen Tree (14%), Bunga Padi (14%), and the Kalumpang tree (12%) as shown in Figure 7. Respondents also agreed that these memorable plants are strongly connected with the culture and some can be considered as heritage plants. Heritage plants with unique characteristics not only attract the locals but outside tourists as well. Meanwhile, some heritage plants are selected by the royalties due to special meanings ascribed to them.

These heritage plants represent Malay tradition and are significantly used for ceremonial purposes, as artistic media to express indigenous traditions, or as herbal remedies and hallucinogenicto fulfill cultural needs and expectations. The respondents' opinions on heritage plants are summarized as follows:

The heritage plants are commonly used by the Malay communities in their daily life. The plants used as food is the most popular to be called cultural plants (PM1, PR3, PM2).

Historically, humans have appropriated plants for numerous cultural applications. Some of the plants served as a symbolic image to represent various aspects of the life cycle, social background and the belief of the specific community. Plants were incorporated into mythology and legends to show their meanings to various cultures (SP1, SP3, PR3).

The distinctiveness of cultural plants in Kuala Kangsar is related with the Perak royalties. These plants are used for rituals and ceremonies. For instance, the royal wedding ceremony of 'Mandi Sampat' for the groom and bride, uses lemon and fragrant flowers (PR4).

In general, cultural plants have significant roles in the lives of people in Kuala Kangsar. These plants are involved in preserving cultural activities by recording information about the horticultural habits of their ancestors, such as knowing the role of the plants in societal activities in general and in particularly their roles in the activities of the Perak royal household.



Fig 7:- The Type of Plants under the Heritage Plants Category (Prepared by; I.Khasumarlina, 2018).



Fig 8: Kangsar Tree

Fig 9: Bunga Raya

Fig 10: Spider Lily

Fig 11: Mangosteen T

Fig 12: Paddy Flower

Fig 13: Kalumpang

Discussion:-

The themes identified in respondent’s responses can be grouped as:

The plants could bring back memories, stories, history and provide the people with a sense of excitement or nostalgia when they think about things that happened in the past. Jaffar & Harun, (2016) mentioned that the traditional Malay landscape gives special emphasis to different functions of the soft cape elements.

The plants are associated with the everyday activities of the people in the study area. Adnan & Othman (2012) stated that common plants species that have values to the local Malay community are used for healing and medicinal purposes, consumption, rituals, utilities and beautification.

The round canopy of the trees, their bright and aromatic flowers, the leaves, and branches configurations are suitable for use in architectural embellishments. On this Shaffee & Said (2013) concur that medicinal plants used by the Malays since ancient time are etched in their memories in the form of carvings.

The type of plant used as a cultural representation of certain people. Participants agreed that several of the plants have memorable values and are labelled as heritage plants for the study area. This is in line with the statement by Idilfitri, Sulaiman & Salleh, (2014) who states that the natural heritage plants contains physical characteristics and aesthetic value elements.

Kangsar Tree (*Hibiscus floccosus* Mast):

The Kangsar tree is closely associated with the study area and is found growing along one of the streams that flow into the Perak. The tree is therefore closely associated with the history of the Perak Sultanate. Almost 50% of the participant agreed that this type of plants is suitable for use to create the identity of Kuala Kangsar because of its significant, memorable heritage value. Historically, the name Kuala Kangsar (Kangsar Estuary) derived from the Kangsar trees which found in abundance growing along the Perak River. The river is significantly associated with the establishment of the Perak Sultanate, and until this day it plays essential roles in several royal rituals and ceremonies such as the installation of His Majesty the Sultan. According to local informants, the legend has it that the name "Perak" was given by Prince Merong Mahaputisat when his arrows fell into the River (Interviewed with PR1, PR5, and PM1). It led him to name the area as 'Perak'. Some of the elements incorporated from nature, including trees and flowers, which only found in the Malay states (Wray, 1903; Ibrahim and Sahaimi, 2005).

Spider Lily (*Hymenocallis caribaea*):

This plant has a unique a character. This plant is listed under the traditional plant category. This type of plants has all the features that are considered attractive. The themes identified in these responses are:

It is a traditional plants used by the people in Kuala Kangsar area.

The plants such as the Spider Lily (*Hymenocallis*) can revive the old memory of traditional Malay garden. Plants commonly found in the conventional Malay landscape consist of a variety of herbs, fragrance, fruit trees, and brightly colored flowering plants(Harun et al., 2017).

The flowers of the Spider Lily are white and thus represent the Perak State flag. Ornament plants highlight their physical characteristics which include shapes of canopies; a variety of colors; shapes, sizes and texture of leaves, flowers, barks; and a variety of plant heights based on the plants' aesthetic values and natural heritage(Idilfitri, Sulaiman & Salleh, 2014) :

Kalumpang Tree (*Sterculia parviflora*):

The Kalumpang tree (*Sterculia parviflora*) can be associated with recognition and distinctiveness. The Kalumpang tree insinuates the meaning of the royal town based on historical background. Local craft makers used Kalumpang as motifs on their crafts to preserve its memory. Also, the Kalumpang flower most likely are related with the Perak Sultanate because its motifs decorated the Sultan Azlan Shah Gallery, Royal Official Suite, and the Royal throne. Plant colors and textures are essential because they can create images and visual impact (Hussain, Yunos, Othuman, Mydin, Utaberta & Ismail, 2015).

Mangoesteen tree (*Garcinia Mangostana*):

Mangoesteen trees considered as 'traditional plants' as well as a food plant for the rural community. The Holy Quran mentioned several plants with pleasant smell, beautiful flowers and fruits as well plant with certain utility functions. (Surah Al-An'am: 99) 'Plant for food' as the memorable value for Mangoesteen trees. Aziz et al. (2018) reported that the Grapefruit, Mangoesteen, Coconut, and Pomegranates (*Delima*) listed as the fruit plants by rural folks. Portraying the 'heritage' image for the place to bring back the nostalgic feeling. It is supported bySharp & Bloom (2011)when they mentioned that familiarity, memory, and nostalgia, evokes strong feelings and remind people of the past associated with the particular place. Along this line of reasoning, Shaffee & Said (2013) agreed that some of the medicinal plants used by the Malays since ancient time recorded in their memory through the Malay decoration arts.

Bunga Raya (Hibiscus Rosa-Chinensis):

Respondents also examined the Bunga Raya (Hibiscus Rosa-Chinensis) and agreed that it a cultural plant with a memorable character. On this Sharp & Bloom (2011) mentioned that familiarity, memorable character, and sense of nostalgia evokes strong memories, remind one of a place and associated with a particular area from the past.

Bunga Padi (Rice Flower):

The Bunga Padi (Flower of the *Oryza sativa*) Paddy Flower is the food plants have the memorable character. (Jaffar & Harun, 2016) mentioned, the traditional Malay landscape gives particular emphasis for different functions of softscape elements such as utility plants and herbs (Aziz et al., 2018; Adnan & Othman, 2012)

Conclusion:-

The findings of the study show that the three prominent physical characteristics of the plants provide the intimate connection between trees, people, and places to emphasizing the enduring value of the Royal Town Kuala Kangsar. The component has interconnection with each other where can emphasizing the place identity of the Royal Town of Kuala Kangsar, Perak. The appearance component, which is the color, the texture, and the type of the plant, give the harmonious effect of the place. Those plants are, Kangsar Tree (*Hibiscus floccosus* Mast), Spider Lily (*Hymenocallis caribaea*, Kalumpang Tree (*Sterculia parviflora*), Mangoesteen tree (*Garcinia Mangostana*), Bunga Raya (*Hibiscus Rosa-Chinensis*) and Bunga Padi (Rice Flower) categorized under the heritage plants.

Besides, the feature of the heritage plant act as storytellers and memory-keepers for the historical background and to preserve the place memory. Although it told from the perspective of the heritage plant, the nostalgic tone serves a specific purpose, which is to present a private and intimate connection between the particular plant and the local people of Kuala Kangsar. The traditional plants may use as an iconic landscape, through highlighted the uniqueness of flora, the beneficial and the real character the plants equally essential to bring back the nostalgia of the traditional village garden. Hence, it is vital to re-introduce the heritageplants through planting design to highlight as a character to reinforcing the place identity of the Royal Town of Kuala Kangsar Perak.

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