



## **PLANT ELEMENTS REINFORCING THE SENSE OF PLACE IDENTITY OF THE MUSLIM MALAY ROYAL TOWN**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Due to a lack of secure identity following the new developments in a Muslim Royal Town of high-tech modernization in the twentieth century, the craft maker created any motif with an unknown purpose. As a result, the original character of the location will be tarnished, and the image will vanish. This paper aims to identify the qualitative responses of the plant elements reinforcing the Muslim Royal Town of Kuala Kangsar, conducted semi-structured interview participants based on purposive sampling, including professionals, policymakers, and skilled practitioner's categories. The data was analyzed through qualitative coding using Atlas ti 8.0. The significant findings reveal that the flower, the color related to the flag, leaf, and types of plant, tendril/meandering cloud, the shape of the plant, and an element of the plant on a Perak Coat of Arm reflected the royal Muslim town. This finding contributes to assessing the details of the plants' motif representation to assist the city council in preserving the unique and valuable historical heritage for the place image of the Muslim Royal-Town of Kuala Kangsar, Perak.

### **KEYWORDS:**

Plant elements; Sense of Place; Identity; Muslim; Royal Town

### **INTRODUCTION**

Malaysia is among the countries facing the globalization of the building and development transformation. The building transformation would influence the image of the place. Consequently, it will cause the loss of its identity, the weakening of its meaning, attachment, and place experience [1]. The situation is similar in Royal Town, Kuala Kangsar, Perak, Malaysia, nearly eroded by uncontrolled urban development and modernity. Because of the rapid pace of globalization, local characteristics are rapidly fading and being replaced by more generic ones that can be found almost everywhere on the planet [2].

Moreover, the identity and characteristic of Malay Royal towns is still unclear and threatened by tremendous changes due to rapid industrialization, economic development, and urbanization [3]. Consequently, these changes affect important aspects such as the identity, sense of place, and visual representation of the Malay Royal Town [4]. Botschen et al. [5] propose participatory place branding practices to bring the established and intended place brand to the surface to develop a contemporary place by incorporating a related element. Khalid, I. K. M. et al. [6] proves the significance of the royal plants and the distinctiveness of traditional plants, which are intended to be the townscape element's identity. The

plant element includes any plant part used as a subject matter for adornment in a landscape setting. Therefore, this paper aims to identify the plant materials reinforcing place identity in the Royal Town of Kuala Kangsar.

Malaysia has several royal towns. Among others are the Bandar Maharani / Muar (Johore), Kota Bharu (Kota Bharu, Kelantan), Kuala Terengganu (Terengganu), Seri Menanti (Negeri Sembilan), Klang (Selangor), Arau (Perlis), Anak Bukit (Kedah), Pekan (Pahang), and Kuala Kangsar (Perak). This study focuses on the Royal Town of Kuala Kangsar in the State of Perak. This town is selected because it not only acts as the State's administrative center in the past but also holds the Perak royal heritage, customs, and royal instruments. According to Othman [7], this Royal Town is essential for the heritage values and valuable tourism resources.

However, over the years, there has not been much tourism development in Kuala Kangsar because of the limitation of space and the elimination of the boundaries to keep Royal Town Kuala Kangsar as a tourist attraction [8]. Furthermore, based on direct observation, it is due to the lack of uniformity development, no continuity of streetscape elements from the main road to the town, and entrance to Iskandariah Palace of the Royal Town (Figure 1).

Previous research also indicates that the uniqueness of the royal town of Kuala Kangsar is essential as it visualizes and portrays the value of the royal cultural heritage and the existence of the monetary institutions [7].



Figure 1. Iskandariah Palace  
(Source: Author)

Plant material is one of the elements closely associated with the life and culture of the Malay royal community. The fragrant plant is believed to represent paradise, which is said to have a pleasant fragrance [9]. However, a part of the plant has beneficial to people. The major parts of vegetation, such as flowers, shoots, fruits, seeds, roots, and calyxes, became the basic motives for creating patterns [10]. It can be utilized to create patterns for decorations in creating or enhancing the identity of a place. Each part of the plants has uniqueness and beauty, inspiring craftsmen to adorn hardscape elements such as streetscape and architectural structures in a Royal Town. Hence, it can avoid the similarities of places that do not provide uniqueness and identity.

#### ISSUES AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

Malaysia, in general, has shown limited interest and funding in preserving heritage cities. It shows in the planning decisions insensitive to preserving heritage values and properties (Kuala Lumpur Draft Structure Plan 2024 & Kuala Lumpur City Plan 2020; [11]). In their research and publications, Shukri S. et al. [3], Wan Ismail W. N. et al. [12], and Zamil Z., et al. [13] have discussed the issue of preserving city place identity through physical attributes and historic significance in a Malay Royal Town as well as the physical characteristics and qualities of the Royal Town. Nor Atiah et al. [14] discussed the influences of the cultural heritage landscape element representing human personality and behavior. The importance of traditional landscapes for maintaining the value of identity and the attractiveness of landscaping is also discussed by Ivanova. et al., [15], highlighted the issues of preserving historical heritage gardens. Therefore, the local community needs to be educated on the cultural and historical resources and the conservation and maintenance of the area, as well as reinforcing the identity of a place.

Nowadays, industrialization in cities is viewed as a significant problem in Malaysia. It has contributed to rapid urbanization within heritage-valued areas such as

the royal towns in the country [16]. As a result, it will continuously affect valuable elements of identity and characteristics of these towns and their valuable heritage contents [3][4]. As for the Royal Town Kuala Kangsar, the town's local authority, the Kuala Kangsar Municipal Council (MPKK), has reported that the town is losing its royal character due to the growth of industrialization, uncontrolled development, and modernity [4]. In addition, new developments have somewhat affected the town's visual character. These include the lack of uniformity in development and lack of continuity in streetscape elements, especially from the main road to the town and from the town entrance to the main palace, the Iskandariah Palace. Due to these issues, the town needs to be given due attention to avoid the loss of its unique identity and heritage as an important identity of the Perak Royal Institution.

#### PLACE IDENTITY

Places are not only for people but also indirectly preserve culture and heritage through their physical form, activity, and meaning of place [17]. The study of place found a significant relationship between place and identity. Place identity refers here to the contribution of place to one's identity through the meanings and values symbolized by place features. Place identity pays particular attention to aesthetic quality. Southworth & Ruggeri [18] agreed that aesthetic and imageability include social considerations, the discourses, and the meaning shared by the local people. Danaci [19], in a study about a cultural landscape, divides aesthetics into two categories – the formal and the symbolic. The formal aesthetic is described as natural characteristics; forms, proportions, rhythm, scale, level of complexity, color, lighting, and shadowing. On the other hand, the symbolic aesthetic is the potential symbolic meaning for the people. These are expressed consciously or unconsciously to the people for the symbolic meaning in the built environment through the identity of the place or group.

Place identity evolves from local traditions and customs. These should be guarded and preserved, especially in view of the rapid growth of industrialization in the area. Nowadays, industrialization in cities is viewed as a significant problem in Malaysia. It has contributed to rapid urbanization within heritage-valued areas such as the royal towns in the country. As a result, it will continuously affect valuable elements of identity and characteristics of these towns and their valuable heritage contents [3] [4]. The specific object's image develops the town's identity and characteristics. The imagery of a specific object and the city is formed based on experience [20]. Thus, the experience of the people of the town will influence the visual appearance of the town. It includes image formation based on the traditional background, for example, the choice of the traditional plant that may represent a place's identity through the plants' elements. The place identity framework can be seen in Figure 2.

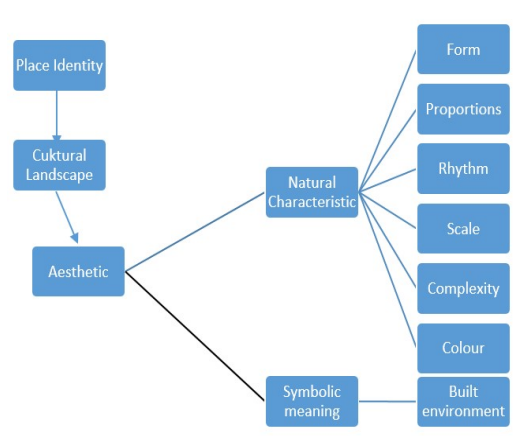


Figure 2. Place Identity framework (Created by author)

**THE PLANT ELEMENTS**

Plants are an essential part of human life. They are beneficial to people. The part of a plant plays an essential role for a Malay craft maker as a subject matter for embellishment on their craft. A plant is made up of primarily four parts. They are roots, stem, leaves, and a flower. Each part of the plants has its uniqueness and beauty inspired by craftsmen to create adornment for hardscape elements such as streetscapes and architecture. Normally, the plant element inspired craftsmen as a subject matter for embellishing the local craft.

**THE MEANING OF PLANT ELEMENT**

Traditional Malays believed that the medicinal properties of plants could also be incorporated through their depictions in artworks such as carvings. People who own these art pieces are believed to benefit from the power of the art depictions. These plant parts include the flowers, roots, leaves, fruits, bark, and seeds [21]. The landscape concept for Kuala Kangsar is based on a historical royal town concept (Local Plan Kuala Kangsar District 2020). Thus, the National Landscape Department has developed guidelines for landscape replanting appropriate to the royal town. These include the types of ornamental plants that take into account plant parts such as tree trunks, as well as twining roots. This root is also known as the *sulur paut* or *kerawang*, or *sulur bayung* by Malay traditional craftsmen. In addition, plants with attractive colors and fragrant flowers are also considered in selecting decorative motifs for local craft designers.

Special emphasis is given to flowers used in the daily lives of various communities and have special

meanings to each of these different communities [22]. Healing plant parts depicted as motifs in Malay traditional art include flowers, roots, leaves, fruits, barks, and even seeds [21]. These plant parts include leaves, roots, fruits, stems, bark, and flowers. However, Milow et al. [23] only mentioned leaves and roots as the two most common plant parts used by the indigenous tribes in Peninsular Malaysia. Moreover, Haron & Yusof [24] added that major parts of plants, such as flowers, shoots, fruits, seeds, roots, and flower calyxes, are analyzed and used in motifs to create patterns.

The US Environmental Protection Agency (2012) listed native plants' benefits such as environmental and productivity benefits, aesthetic values, educational and recreational benefits, and economic (maintenance) advantages. Similarly, Idilfitri et al. [25] believed that the aesthetic values of plants lie in the variations of genetic makeup that determine the different physical characteristics in the plants, including the shapes of the canopy, variety of colors, shapes, and size of leaves, flowers, barks, and variety of heights. Furthermore, each part of the plants, from the roots to the seeds and flowers, are endowed with healing properties for the human body and its equivalent part and organs [14]. All the evidence presented so far points to the fact that plants and plant parts are valuable in giving meaning to traditional plants. The importance of plants in the Malay culture is evident when they appreciate each of the plant parts in harmony with the parts of the human body. Therefore, the major parts of vegetation, such as flowers, shoots, fruits, seeds, roots, and calyxes, became the basic motives for creating patterns [10]. It can be utilized to create patterns for decorations in creating or enhancing the identity of a place. Table 1 and Figure 2 show the importance of plant elements in the traditional Malay community.

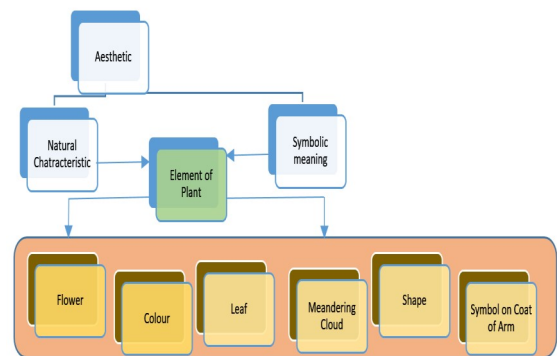


Figure 3. Plant Elements (Created by author)

Table 1. Parts of plant elements in the traditional Malay community [6]

| PLANTS NAME                              | AUTHORS/SOURCES  |                     |                     |                    |                     |                       |             | CATEGORY                                   |
|--|--|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|-------------|--|
|  | Azlan Bahaudin, 2002<br>State Landscape Department<br>2007 | Hafiza et al., 2014 | Haron & Yusof, 2014 | Milow et al., 2017 | Ismael et al., 2015 | Idafitri et al., 2014 | Sabtn, 2011 |  |
| Flowers                                  | ●  |                     | ●                   |                    | ●                   |                       | ●           | Part of plant                              |
| Roots                                    | ●  |                     | ●                   | ●                  | ●                   |                       | ●           |  |
| Leaf (shape/size, colour)                | ●  |                     |                     | ●                  |                     |                       | ●           |  |
| Fruits                                   | ●  |                     | ●                   |                    |                     |                       | ●           |  |
| Bark                                     | ●  |                     |                     |                    |                     |                       | ●           |  |
| Seeds                                    | ●  |                     | ●                   |                    | ●                   |                       |             |  |
| Colour                                   |  |                     |                     |                    |                     |                       |             |  |
| Shoots                                   |  |                     | ●                   |                    |                     |                       |             |  |
| Calyx                                    |  |                     | ●                   |                    |                     |                       |             |  |
| Stem                                     |  |                     |                     |                    |                     |                       | ●           |  |
| Ornament plant                           | ●  | ●                   |                     |                    |                     |                       |             | Ornament/ Historical<br>Royal town concept |
| Medicinal                                | ●  |                     |                     |                    |                     |                       |             |  |
| Sular bayung/<br>kerawang/<br>tendril    |  | ●                   | ●                   |                    |                     |                       |             |  |
| Colourful plant based<br>on state colour |  | ●                   |                     |                    |                     |                       |             |  |
| Heritage plants                          |  | ●                   |                     |                    |                     |                       |             |  |
| Fragrance flower                         |  |                     | ●                   |                    |                     |                       |             |  |
| Shape of canopy                          |  |                     |                     |                    |                     |                       | ●           |  |
| Variety of height                        |  |                     |                     |                    |                     |                       | ●           |  |

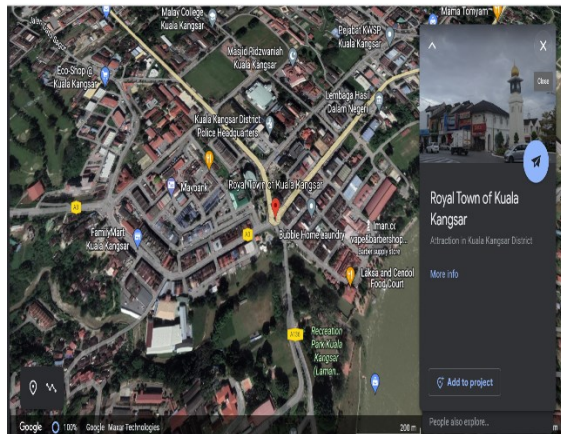


Figure 5. Royal Town of Kuala Kangsar, Perak (Sources: <https://earth.google.com/web/search/Royal+Town+of+Kuala+Kangsar,+Perak+/@4.772081,100.9422119,37.89318283a,1052.44229344d,35y,oh,45t,or/data=CooBGmMSXQoIMHgZMWNhYmQwNDhZDY2NjZiOjB4YzZjMjViyZMiODZhOWQxYhmwgc9NmnBYTQCG6GSQzTTxZQCoiUm95YWwvVG93biBvZiBLdWfSvYsBLYW5nc2FyLlCBQZxJhaxgCIAEiJgoKCTWaV487oRNAEF-RqjIMzhJAGT4ixRRHQVIAId4T-MaoNVIA> (retrieved on 15 October 2022)

METHODOLOGY

The research area is located in The Kuala Kangsar Royal Town, Perak, Malaysia (Figure 4 & 5), which has several streets highlighted as potential tourism interests and holds a unique heritage of the Perak Malay Sultanate. The Street is Bukit Chandan streets; Jalan Taiping, Jalan Daeing Sedili, Jalan Istana, and Jalan Syahbandar. The Royal Town of Kuala Kangsar is located in 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 Perak River's western bank. From Ipoh, the highway passes through karst topography dominated by rounded limestone hills blanketed in unique vegetation that can survive harsh conditions.



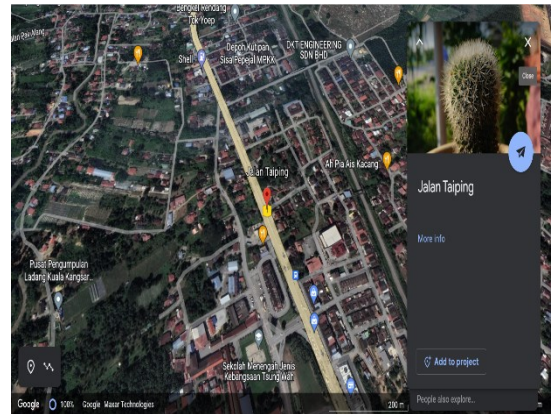
Figure 4. Perak State Map

The method used in this research is qualitative in the form of a semi-structured interview. The participants are categorized into three groups: professionals, policymakers, and skilled practitioners. The interviews were conducted over three months. The respondents answer the questions based on their knowledge, experience, place background, and observation of Kuala Kangsar's environment. This method collects information on every element that influences reinforcing the place identity, which then found the concept of good plant elements for representing an image of the Royal Town of Kuala Kangsar, Perak. This concept includes the decorative element involving the plants and part of the plant that can visualize an image of the place: the traditional plants of Kuala Kangsar, the part of plants as well as the flower, roots, the leaf (color, size, and shapes), fruit, seed, bark, shoots, calyx, and stem. The elements of plants include ornamental plants, medicinal plants, plants based on state color, and traditional plants. The focus is on the streetscapes near Bukit Chandan streets; Jalan Taiping (Figure 8), Jalan Daeing Sedili (Figure 9), Jalan Istana (Figure 6), and Jalan Syahbandar (Figure 7). This study focuses on exploring the context of place identity originality of the royal town regarding the traditional landscape elements through the plant elements as a subject matter to embellish the city's streetscapes. This study identifies the importance of the part of plants used as an image as symbolism to represent the people, background history, and the influences of socio-culture in the plant's selection for the Royal Town of Kuala Kangsar, Perak. Later, the researcher analyzed the connection between the plants' elements with the study area. The plant's essential parts were highlighted, as the objective was to identify the plant element for place identity to enhance the Royal Town of Kuala Kangsar, Perak.



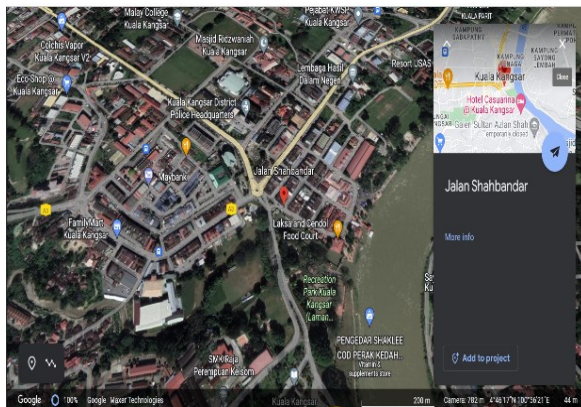
**Figure 6. Jalan Istana**

(Sources: [https://earth.google.com/web/search/Jalan+Istana,+Kuala+Kangsar,+Perak/@4.74579731,100.94319122,81.18658703a,7601.23500068d,35y,189.31388277h,0t,or/data=CooBGmMSXQoiMHgzMWNhYmRhNzEyMzliZjlxOjB4YjI3OTY1YTUxOGRjMjQzMxlr5AS3\\_oSQCGiLoVe-zxZQCoISmFsYW4gSXNoYw5hLCBLdWfYSBLYW5ncFyLCBQZXJhaxgBIAEiJgokCVSEPrQf\\_hJAEYJND14H9BJAGVIBgE8jPVIAYGshjRpPFIA](https://earth.google.com/web/search/Jalan+Istana,+Kuala+Kangsar,+Perak/@4.74579731,100.94319122,81.18658703a,7601.23500068d,35y,189.31388277h,0t,or/data=CooBGmMSXQoiMHgzMWNhYmRhNzEyMzliZjlxOjB4YjI3OTY1YTUxOGRjMjQzMxlr5AS3_oSQCGiLoVe-zxZQCoISmFsYW4gSXNoYw5hLCBLdWfYSBLYW5ncFyLCBQZXJhaxgBIAEiJgokCVSEPrQf_hJAEYJND14H9BJAGVIBgE8jPVIAYGshjRpPFIA) (retrieved on 12 October 2022)



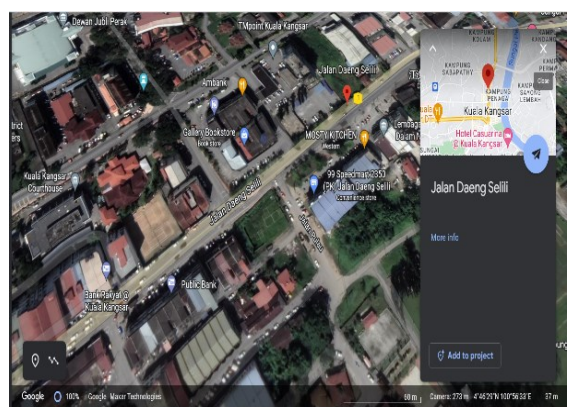
**Figure 8. Jalan Taipung**

(Sources: <https://earth.google.com/web/search/Jalan+Taiping,+Kuala+Kangsar,+Perak/@4.7723925,100.9233519,46.75860919a,1052.44175867d,35y,323.94993448h,45t,or/data=C04BGmQSXgolMHgzMWNhYmNmMDAwZmJmNzVmOjB4MTNkMjkzOWIwYjQoZDgwZBnlSzWp7hYTQCHETJEyGdtZQCoJsmFsYW4gVGFpcGluZywgS3VhbGEGS2FuZ3NhciwgUGVvYyYwYsYAIaBliiYKJAnrASBR8hoTQBGYfkf9YhcTQB1ZhtoxbjxZQCfFnmaXCTzQA> (retrieved on 14 October 2022)



**Figure 7. Jalan Shahbandar**

(Sources: <https://earth.google.com/web/search/Jalan+Shahbandar,+Kampung+Penaga,+Kuala+Kangsar,+Perak/@4.77216,100.942872,38.0770357a,1052.44215782d,35y,0h,45t,or/data=CqEBGncScQoIMHgzMWNhYmQwNTA2MDMxMTA3OjB4ODZiYWE5MmYwNDQ2NzAxMRkxQHMocRYTQCEaFModWDxZQC0zSmFsYW4gU2hhaGJhbRhcwS2FtcHVuZyBQZw5hZ2EsiEtYWxhIEthbmdzYXIsIFBlcmFrGAIGASimCiQSec8SvoIEoARYTzdjTAREoAZkl-yM307WUAheijpPoo6WUA> (retrieved on 14 October 2022)



**Figure 9. Jalan Daeng Sedili**

(Source: <https://earth.google.com/web/search/Jalan+Daeng+Selili,+Kampung+Penaga,+Kuala+Kangsar,+Perak/@4.77481568,100.94239007,38.11755585a,332.14239248d,35y,-50.78446881h,44.99542011t,-or/data=CqMBGnkScwoIMHgzMWNhYmQwYXNjNjMxMzZDgzOjB4NTQ3ODFhY2QyNTE2YTUjNjRnRmFqMjBxOTQCEaFModWDxZQC04SmFsYW4gRGFlbmCGU2VsaWxpLCBLdWfYw5hZ2EsiEtYWxhIEthbmdzYXIsIFBlcmFrGAIGASimCiQSec8SvoIEoARYTzdjTAREoAZkl-yM307WUAheijpPoo6WUA> (retrieved on 12 October 2022)

The collected information was further categorized and analyzed in three main areas; data concerning the place identity of the royal town, information concerning the factors related to plant and their relationship with place, the authenticity of the plants as an image of a place, and the plant motif symbolize the identity of the royal town Kuala Kangsar, Perak.

The data analysis procedure consists of four stages; preparing data for analysis; exploring the data, analyzing it, and presenting the data analysis. Each step of the analysis consists of a detailed process of developing the results, as shown in Figure 10.

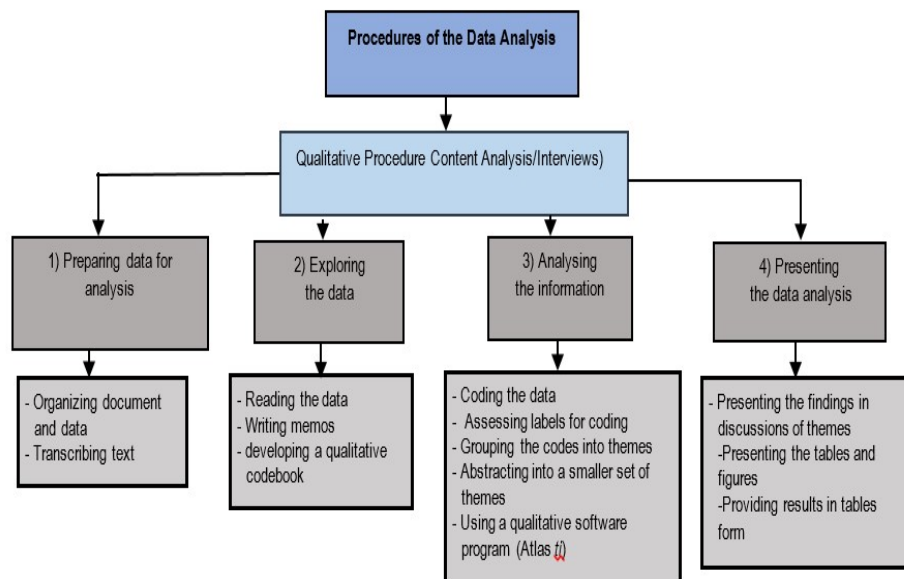


Figure 10. The Process of the Data Analysis

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

### THE ELEMENT OF THE PLANTS WITH SPECIFIC MEANING

Plants are composed of many parts, and each part of the plant has its own beauty and significance. Therefore, respondents were asked to give their opinions on the aesthetic values of some of the plant elements they feel are interesting and can be considered the focal point for the royal town. As a result, the respondents noted six plant elements that can contribute to strengthening the identity of the study area. These are shown in Figure 9.

#### i) The Flower

Sometimes the choice of which flowering plants to grow in memory of someone is very clear. Specific tales are associated with flowers and plants (SP1, SP2, PM1, PR1, PR4, PR5). The special character of certain plants lies in their flowers. All respondents agreed that the flower needs an attractive presentation to visualize the plants' distinctiveness for the royal town. The respondent believes certain flowers will bring back the ancient Royal Garden's nostalgia, especially the Royal Perak Sultanate Kalumpang Flower. The uniqueness of the shape of this flower-like bell, with the attractive red velvet color, is one of the reasons this flower has been chosen. Additionally, one respondent said this was the favorite flower of the late Perak Sultan Azlan Muhibbuddin Shah (PR1, PR5). As one of the interviewees said;

*"The craft maker used that flower (Kalumpang Flower) as a subject matter for decoration. It is also used at houses, castles, and mosques as an embellishment. So, that means that flower has been recognizable even though people still don't know the secret of the benefit of that flower." (PR3)*

#### ii) Colors Related to Perak Flag

Certain plants have colors that can be associated with Perak State. Respondent noted that yellow,

white, or black plants could represent the Perak State colors. The white color, such as Melur Flower, is the traditional flower representing the Perak Royal Sultanate. It is because this flower grows in the traditional Royal Garden (PR4, PM1). However, the respondents reveal that the bright color of the flower would be considered growing in villages in the State. Nevertheless, plants, in general, are beautiful and can beautify the whole township. One of the respondents reported that;

*"For the whole of this town, late Tuanku like focus on beauty for the whole area." (PR4)*

#### iii) The Leaf and Type of Plants

The leaves of some plants can cure certain ailments and are considered Malaysian indigenous herbs. Some respondents mentioned that some plant leaves could be eaten as a raw salad (ulam) besides having medicinal value. The plant's aesthetical value, especially the leaf part, visualize as an ornament of the Kuala Kangsar. The Local craft is the pottery known as Labu Sayung. The Batel or Sireh and Pegaga leaves have been chosen and are well known in the Malay tradition as a multi-purpose plant. It has meanings to the Malay community;

*"That is it...leaves. This is the leaves (while showing the leaf motif at labu sayong). Yes! This is the leaves sometimes the leaves have been used as a medicinal for traditional people such as Pegaga leaf." (SP1)*

#### iv) The Tendrils/ Meandering Cloud

Some distinctive plant parts, such as tendrils and roots, are adapted as an ornament and visualized on a motif. The tendrils and roots from the bean plant ornament around the Kuala Kangsar Royal Toan on the bridged element, arch, and the Ubudiah Palace (Figure 11). One of these is the Sulur Bayung which is taken from the tendrils of the climbing bean plant. This type

of plant chooses from the traditional plants used by the villagers, especially in Malay society. It is also categorized under the food plant. The design based on this subject matter applied to the formal royal attire as a decoration motif, the palace, the interior decoration of the palace, and the Kuala Kangsar surrounding the hardscape element. A large number of the respondent indicated that:

*"emm..for Perak usually they symbolize with a pattern of shoots, either from bean plant shoot..emm..Usually like that, more traditional."(SP3)*



Figure 11. Ubudiah Mosque  
(Sources: Author)

#### v) The Shape of Plants

The shape of certain plants has its own aesthetical value in the eyes of the designer. It includes the flower, the leaf, the flower bud, and the fruit. This shape has been changed through the artist's impression according to the meaning and ornament objective to show a place's identity. Respondents suggested that the formal forms are better suited to the purpose. It includes the entire leaf shape, as well as the overall shape of the plant. They made this suggestion because the town is a formal royal town and, in the Malaysian context, is closely related to Islam and official government affairs (SP1, SP2, SP6, PR1, and PM2). Meanwhile, other respondents opined that the shape of leaves should be fashioned in the form of royal regalia such as the Keris, Star, and Crescent Moon (PR3, PR5, SP3, and PM1).

One of the respondents reported that:

*"When we look at the Bucida tree, the shape of the tree shows a formal view. That tree looks neat for the royal town. Moreover, that is suitable for imaging the royal town because of the yellow color of the leaf."(PM1)*

#### vi) Plant Elements on Perak Coat of Arms (Jata) Reflecting Pride in the Royal Patronage

Respondents suggested flowers with certain colors can be used to embellish the royal town. In particular, they mentioned the yellow leaves of the *Mengkudu Siam (Pissonia Alba)* (PM5). Others suggested white flowers of plants like the *Kerak Nasi* and the *Bunga Tasbih (Canna Generalis)*. Some other plants have

red flowers, while others have a combination of red and yellow flowers (PM1, PM2, PR1, PR2, PR4, PR5, SP2, and SP5). The state element criteria can guide the choice of plants suitable for the town based on the town's local culture, heritage, and history. Yellow is prominent as it represents the royal family color, which can be seen in the magnificent Istana Kuning (Yellow Palace), which symbolizes the Malay royal institution (PM1, PR4, PR1, SP3). The comment below illustrates this aspect;

*"Here (refer to Kuala Kangsar) mostly plant Bucida trees, that tree like an oversea tree, but the color of the leaf, suitable for the royal town." (PM1)*

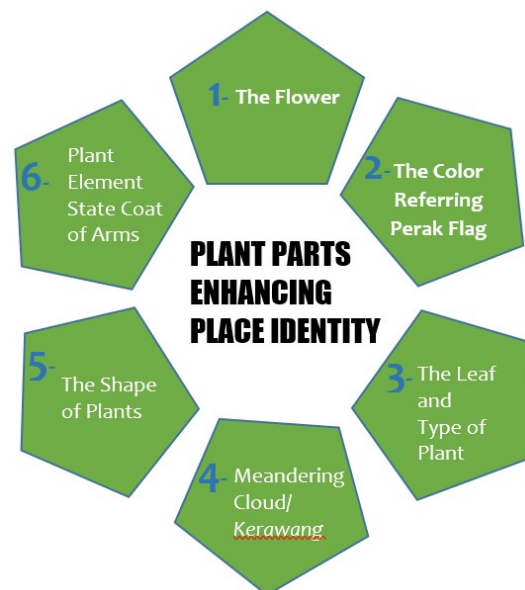


Figure 12. The result of Plants Elements Reinforcing Identity of Muslim Royal Town

### SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSION

#### THE PLANTS ELEMENT INDICATING MEANING

Plant parts associated with meaning are listed as having an attractive flower color; having a unique tree form; having an attractive flower shape; having a good fragrance that can bring back the memory of the plant; plants having colors associated with a place such as yellow, white and black of Perak flag and the plant planted in the palace garden.

#### i) The Flower

Place identity involving plants also depends on the uniqueness of the plants, their meanings to the local communities, and their colors related to the place. However, in the case of this study area, the choice of plants would also depend on the taste of the Royal Highness, the Sultan of Perak. Lotus flowers (Nelumbo) are selected based on the color and shape of the flowers. White represents the reigning Sultan of Perak, Yellow the Raja Muda, and black represents the color of the Raja DiHilir (Interview with PR1 and PR5). Thus, the white color of the lotus flowers can represent His Royal Highness the Sultan and has been

used as a subject in the Kuala Kangsar gold embroidery craft. In addition, the lotus flowers are also used for their medicinal properties. Although the lotus is not indigenous to Malaysia, it is native to other Asian countries such as India and Vietnam (Interview with PR5). Furthermore, this plant has been used in local communities' daily lives since long ago and has a special meaning to them [22].

**ii) The Leaf**

This study found that meanings can be associated with the leaves of plants. Some parts of the plant are important for the gold embroidery makers in their crafts. In this case, they used the whole leaf as a subject matter for the craft. The leaf represents the richness of the royal institution. The use of the yellow color of the gold thread represents the royal color as well as a color of the Perak State flag. Idilfitri et al. [25] believe that the aesthetic values of plants lie in the variations of genetic makeup that determine the different physical characteristics in the plants, including the shapes of the canopy, variety of colors, shapes, and size of leaves, flowers, barks, and variety of heights.

**iii) The Tendrils or Meandering Cloud**

Study respondents commented that plants with unique characters have the highest position on the list. Most respondents agreed that the Sular Bayung/Kerawang/Meandering cloud has such a position in the list of plants for selection. The Kerawang motif in Kuala Dhal Mosque is inspired by plant parts such as the trunk. It created an overlapping cloud feature. Also, an image of a place created from flower shoot motifs is used to embellish building architecture in the study area. Kerawang carvings on the full-length windows in traditional Malay houses function as a ventilation grille and, together with the high roof, help to ease the passage of air and shed off heavy rainfalls. The meandering cloud adorns the archway into Kuala Kangsar town. The motif of *Kerawang* used in the building foyer is influenced by local and regional culture.

**iv) The State Coat of Arms**

Respondents highlighted the element on the Perak Coat of Arms as one of the identities for the Royal Town of Kuala Kangsar, Perak. The themes identified in these responses are as follows; i) the Paddy Flower as it appeared on the State Coat of Arm. Danaci [19], stated that the symbolic aspects relating to the nature of the interaction with place influence the development of emotional bonds. They provoke feelings to raise consciousness or influence behavior, if not immediately, then possibly in the future. The unique characteristic of the landmark visually plays an important role in promoting cities and distinguishing it from other places in the region.

**v) The Colours referring to the State Flag**

Color plays an important role in the Perak royal

institution. Respondents agreed that the colors of the state flag – white, yellow, and black should be included whenever the royal institution is involved. Symbolically, the color white represents the Sultan (the ruling king), yellow represents the Raja Muda (the next in line), and black represents the Raja Di Hilir (the most junior king). This three-hierarchy royal system is unique to the Perak Sultanate. Flower, leaf, or trunk color can be used to guide the selection of suitable plants for place identity. Nevertheless, choosing suitable plants also needs to consider the taste of His Royal Highness posited that visual attributes such as color, signage, and symbol may influence place identity at night, while Embaby [26] suggested that color, texture, and tone can be used to unify a design.

Based on the research discussions, it was concluded that the plant element is an important component in reinforcing the Muslim Royal Town of Kuala Kangsar's identity. The study shows that the plant's physical characteristics, such as flower color, tree form, flower shape, fragrance, and color associated with a place, are essential in creating a unique sense of place.

Moreover, the research found that the plants' meanings also reinforce the town's identity. The lotus flower, for instance, represents the reigning Sultan of Perak and has been used as a subject in the Kuala Kangsar gold embroidery craft. Meanwhile, the Sular Bayung/Kerawang/Meandering Cloud is a unique character with a high position in the list of plants for selection. Using the yellow color of the gold thread and the Perak State flag color in craft and plant selection also reinforces the town's identity. Additionally, the state coat of arms and the state flag's colors are crucial in identifying the Royal Town of Kuala Kangsar. The paddy flower on the Perak Coat of Arms represents the town's identity, and the state flag colors represent the royal institution's hierarchy.

In conclusion, the study highlights the importance of plants' physical characteristics, meanings, and associations with a place in reinforcing the Muslim Royal Town of Kuala Kangsar's identity. The findings suggest carefully selecting plants can strengthen the town's sense of place and uniqueness.

**CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, this study aims to identify the qualitative responses of the plant elements reinforcing the identity of the Royal Town of Kuala Kangsar and the Perak Sultanate. The study found that the choice of plants for place identity depends on various factors, including the taste of His Royal Highness, the Sultan of Perak, the unique characteristics of the plant, and the meanings associated with the plant parts. The flower, leaf, tendrils or meandering cloud, state coat of arms, and colors of the state flag were identified as the key plant elements that reinforce the identity of the Royal Town of Kuala Kangsar. These elements are aesthetically pleasing and have cultural and symbolic meanings associated with the place, the Perak



Sultanate, and its people. The study highlights the importance of plants in reinforcing the identity of a place. It suggests that selecting suitable plants should consider both the aesthetic values and the cultural and symbolic meanings associated with the plant parts. The findings of this study may provide insights for landscape architects, urban planners, and designers in selecting suitable plants for reinforcing the identity of a place. Further research could investigate the potential use of plants in reinforcing the identity of other places with different cultural contexts.

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