UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

PLACE IDENTITY THROUGH PLANT MOTIF ON STREETSCAPES IN THE ROYAL TOWN OF KUALA KANGSAR, PERAK, MALAYSIA

INTAN KHASUMARLINA BINTI MOHD KHALID

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By

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Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

November 2020

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my beloved husband, Mohd Nizam bin Zulkifli for his support throughout this challenging quest for knowledge. Words cannot express how grateful I am for all of the sacrifices you made in supporting me.

To my son, Nazmi Zarif, you are my inspiration to achieve greater success, and to my daughter Nina Zareen thanks for being such a good girl and always cheering me up.

You all have made me stronger, better, and more fulfilled than I could have ever imagined. I love you all, to the moon and back.

Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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November 2020

Chairman : **Professor Osman Mohd Tahir, PhD., LAr. Ts.**
Faculty : **Design and Architecture**

The Malay Royal Towns in Malaysia are the finest examples of the evolution of the early Malay settlements of the 16th century. However, the identity and characteristics of Malay Royal towns are still ambiguous and constantly threatened by inordinate changes due to rapid industrialisation, economic development and urbanization. The extensive urbanization and rapid development in most historic towns have significantly eroded the identity, sense of place and physical attributes of the Malay Royal Towns. In addition to existing historical monuments, which are the pride of the Malay royal town, the peculiarity of their natural heritage factors that indicate the identity of the place are very much required in terms of preservation and enhancement. The scope of this research covers all of the properties which identifies cultural significance mainly representing ornaments through plants motif on the streetscape of royal towns. This study aims to suggest the plant motif most used in ornaments on streetscapes for determining the identity of the Royal Town of Kuala Kangsar, Perak. The main strategy of this research is to employ a case study. The study is designed in four stages which consist of an initial background review of the royal town, its historical development as well as issues and problems identifiable to develop the research questions. A conceptual framework and research methodology shall be developed in the second stage. In the third stage, a research will be conducted in the Royal Town of Kuala Kangsar, Perak. The study shall adopt the qualitative methodological approach in data collection and analysis, whereby data collected are obtained from semi-structured interviews with experts, content analysis and supported with a public survey in Kuala Kangsar. The final results will then be derived from a convergence of the data in an analytical triangulation process. The findings of this study is aimed to provide insights into designing the royal town while taking into account the type of plant criteria which constitutes Kuala Kangsar. Additionally, the finding will also list suitable criteria of plant motif appropriate for the Royal Town Kuala Kangsar, Perak. Hence, special attention should be provided in suggestive plant motif for streetscapes in order to reinforce the place identity of the Royal Town Kuala

Kangsar, Perak. The result will hopefully assist the city council to focus on the plants' character or appearance as motif for streetscape ornaments and furniture to further enhance the identity of the Royal Town Kuala Kangsar, Perak. Finding of this research informs that plant motif is one of the factors that should be highly considered in securing local place identity for streetscapes design of the royal town in Malaysia.

Keywords: Place Identity, Traditional Plants, Plant Motif, Streetscapes, Royal Town.

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Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

IDENTITI SETEMPAT MELALUI MOTIF TUMBUHAN PADA LANDSKAP PESISIRAN JALANAN DI BANDAR DIRAJA KUALA KANGSAR, PERAK, MALAYSIA

Oleh

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Bandar Diraja merupakan bandar contoh dari segi penempatan Melayu awal abad ke-16. Walau bagaimanapun, identiti dan ciri-ciri Bandar Di Raja masih samar-samar dan sentiasa diancam oleh perubahan besar yang disebabkan oleh perindustrian pesat, pembangunan ekonomi dan perbandaran. Perbandaran yang luas dan perkembangan yang pesat di bandar-bandar bersejarah telah banyak mengikis identiti, rasa tempat dan sifat fizikal Bandar Di raja Melayu. Kesan daripadanya, telah menyebabkan terhakisnya identiti, rasa tempat dan sifat fizikal bandar Diraja Melayu. Selain daripada monumen sejarah yang sedia ada, keunikan elemen warisan semulajadi yang dapat menunjukkan identiti tempat juga merupakan kebanggaan bandar diraja Melayu. Skop penyelidikan ini merangkumi elemen yang berkaitan terutamanya motif tumbuhan di pesisiran jalanan Bandar Diraja. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mencadangkan kriteria motif tumbuhan yang bersesuaian untuk menentukan identiti Bandar Diraja Kuala Kangsar, Perak. Penyelidikan ini menggunakan kualitatif kajian kes. Reka bentuk melalui empat peringkat yang terdiri daripada latar belakang awal bandar diraja, perkembangan sejarahnya serta pemasalahan yang dapat dikenal pasti untuk membangunkan soalan penyelidikan. Rangka kerja konsep dan metodologi penyelidikan dibangunkan pada peringkat kedua. Pada peringkat ketiga, penyelidikan dijalankan di Bandar Diraja Kuala Kangsar, Perak. Kajian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dalam pengumpulan dan analisis data, di mana data yang diperolehi melalui temubual separuh berstruktur dengan pakar, analisa kandungan dan tinjauan awam di Kuala Kangsar. Hasil akhirnya telah diperoleh daripada penumpuan data dalam proses triangulasi analitik. Hasil kajian ini mengambil kira ciri-ciri tumbuhan yang mewakili Bandar Diraja Kuala Kangsar. Di samping itu, penemuan ini juga telah menyenaraikan kriteria motif tumbuhan yang bersesuaian bagi Bandar Diraja Kuala Kangsar. Hasil kajian di harapkan dapat membantu pihak Majlis Daerah Kuala Kangsar, khususnya dan pihak yang berkaitan bagi membantu dari aspek pembinaan karekter melalui penggunaan tanaman budaya Kuala Kangsar. Penggunaan

motif berkaitan tumbuhan di landskap pesisiran jalanan yang dapat mengimejkan identiti tempat khususnya bagi Bandar Diraja Kuala Kangsar untuk perancangan masa hadapan bagi membina keselarian dan kesatuan konsep dalam pembinaan bandar di Raja di Malaysia.

Kata kunci: Identiti Setempat, Tumbuhan Tradisi, Motif Tumbuhan, Pesisiran Jalanan, Bandar DiRaja

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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of the Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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I hereby confirm that:
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Background

The search for the place identity is related to the journey of past, present, and future (Mastor, 2009; Syed Iskandar, 2009). Place identity is also known as a living, evolving things, and served as evidence of the manifestation of our local cultures in striving towards civilization (Pask & Fraser, 1993). It is defined as the expression of actions and activities; hence, matters of identity, meaning, and memory remain as critical and consistent conditions of any place (Lynch, 1960). While place identity is a study about place, it interprets the relationship between the environmental characters and people's perceptions about cultural and physical settings. Identity is known as a landmark and a critical element in shaping an identity for a place (Hussain et al., 2014). Moreover, a growing number of researches have shown that place identity emphasized the emotional bonding with places (Giuliani & Feldman, 1993; Pretty Chipuer & Bramston, 2003).

Prior studies have stated this emotional bonding as place rootedness (Tuan, 1980), sense of place (Farnum et al., 2005), place dependence (Stokols & Shumaker, 1981), place bonding (Hammit, Kyle & Oh, 2009), and place attachment (Williams & Vaske, 2003). However, extensive research has also shown that dullness and conformity in the physical elements of locations have caused sites to lose their special identities, characteristics, significance, and emotional associations, among other traits (Altman & Low, 1992; Lewicka, 2011). Then according to Casey (1997), these losses decreased the diversity of locations and strengthened the public's desire for unique locations. The concern for place identity is not a new phenomenon. It has been brought up due to a significant number of place identity issues around the world. Rapid urbanization and globalization contribute significantly to the decline of place identity of royal towns. This can be seen in cases such as the Royal Town of Sutton Coldfield in the United Kingdom (Councillor T. A., 2015), Shenyang Imperial Palace in Beijing (affected as the city underwent massive urban transformation) (Hua.B & Weite.H, 2011; Hao Li, 2013), the Royal Palace of Angkor Thom in Cambodia (the fluctuations of tropical climate have primarily erased the residences), the Bayon Temple (ruined after the construction of the royal capital) (Chandler,& Polkinghorne, 2016).; Ichita et al., 2016), and Petropolis Imperial City in Brazil (which undergone changes in order to adapt the new uses, growth, and structures) (Muniz, 2016).

Malaysia also has a number of royal towns. Among these are as 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 one of these royal towns, which is the Royal Town of Kuala Kangsar in the State of Perak. This town is selected because it is not only once it was the administrative center of the

state but also because it holds the Perak royal heritage, customs, and royal instruments which are important for not only the heritage values but also important tourism resources (Othman, 2017). Kuala Kangsar has been the modern seat of the Perak royal institution for many years. It was founded along the Perak River, which is the main river in the state. The river has much influence on the development of this royal town and its residents since its founding (Sabrizaa & Norhasandi, 2007). The town has also received much influence during the colonial period. As a consequence, the town development, especially its architecture, reflect its past experiences passing through the colonial, post-colonial, post-colonial-national, and post-colonial-global influences (Shamsul & Fauzi, 2007). Nevertheless, according to some studies, most of the historical towns in Malaysia have significantly declined and affected their identity, sense of place, and physical attributes of the Malay royal township (Mohmad Shukri et al., 2018). Moreover, in the context of place identity, Proshansky, Fabian, & Kaminoff (1983) emphasized the idea that self-identity not only is based on individual, interpersonal, and social processes but also included physical environments as well and thus, making a place a fundamental component of personal identity. As an example, the Perak Malay rural residential gardens carry a significant cultural characteristic practiced by the local community (Ismail, Utaberta, Yunos, & Ismail, 2015). Thus, the cultural landscape which extends beyond the physical environment of the royal town is also influenced by the human activities in the surrounding environment to create its place identity. As the Malays of the past is synonym with nature in their everyday life, they rely on natural resources as material as well as with diligence and creativity in producing artworks or objects needed for daily use. Most of these Malay artworks made by part-time artists were both functional and aesthetically pleasing and used plant motifs as a decoration and visual expression of their culture.

Plant motif is one of the elements, which exhibits the uniqueness of Islamic visual art (Syed Ahmad Jamal, 1992; 2000). Previous researchers believed plant motifs selected must adhere to certain philosophies and functions within the location or site (Zakaria, Ahmad & Abd Rashid, 2016). Furthermore, Zulkifli (2000) also stated that plant motif also depicted the natural forms that are diverse but possess the same fundamental structural characteristic. In other words, it is helpful to observe and identify environmental forces that affect the shapes of natural forms.

1.2 Problem Statement

Global tourism has been developing steadily in the last 50 years with 698 million international tourist arrivals recorded from 1950 to 2000 (World Tourism Organization, 2004). For Malaysia, the tourism industry has also contributed immensely in increasing values and cultural understanding as well as improves diplomacy between countries and their people. Tourism has also been a major contribution to Malaysian economy with the travel and tourism economic sector contributing MYR 89 Billion to its GDP. In relation to this cultural heritage has been identified as one of the contributors to tourism growth.

Cultural heritage is defined as a creative expression of a people's existence in the past, near past and present that has been passed through generations (UNESCO World Heritage Sites, 2007). There are eight types of cultural heritages: i) archaeological sites and museums, ii) architecture, iii) art, sculpture, crafts, galleries, festivals, events, iv) music and dance, v) drama, vi) language and literature study, tours, events, vii) religious festivals, pilgrimages, and viii) complete (folk or primitive) cultures and sub-cultures (Abd Aziz & Abdullah, 2011). However, labeling a site as a cultural heritage site is not enough. For example, even though the town of Kota Lama Kanan which is located in the District of Kuala Kangsar in Perak has significantly become a historical and cultural landscape heritage tourism destination, there is still a need for improvement from the aspects of road signs, facilities, services, the involvement of communities, and accessibility. These not only will ensure that the natural environment is being protected but also improve the quality of life of the local community and their values. Therefore, the local community needs to be educated on the cultural and historical resources and the conservation and maintenance of the area (Abd Aziz & Abdullah, 2011).

Place identity evolves from local tradition and customs. These should be jealously 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 towards rapid urbanization within heritage valued areas such as the royal towns in the country (Wan Ismail et al., 2018). As a result, it will continuously affect valuable elements of identity and characteristics of these towns and their valuable heritage contents (Shukri et al., 2018; Harun, Fairuz & Nordin, 2015). As for the Royal Town Kuala Kangsar, the town 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 (Harun et al., 2015; Musa, 2015). New developments have somewhat affected the town's visual character. These include the lack of uniformity in development, lack of continuity in streetscape elements especially from the main road entrance road to the town as well as 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 seat of the Perak royal institution.

Previous studies highlighted the importance of the town's visual character as a royal town in the growth of its tourism attractions (Othman. H., 2017). However, over the years, there has not been much tourism development in the town due to the limitation of space and elimination of the town specific boundaries in keeping the royal enclave as a tourist attraction (Othman.H, 2017; Che Pa et al., 2012). Furthermore, uncontrolled development allowing the modern buildings and renovations of old buildings and structures using non-traditional elements and more modern structural components in line with new building technologies and materials have further added to the erosion of the town's visual identity. These developments have contributed to the erosion of the town's original place identity and the Malay heritage identity without anything being done to mitigate this decline. To add to all these problems, apathy on the royal and cultural characters among the Malay communities themselves

has further led to the lack of interest on the problems (Samsudin et al., 2018). Even though the main motivation of this study deals with development of the town's royal heritage as a tourism resource, it also intends to promote the awareness and appreciation of these resources. It is hoped that this study will aid in the town's preservation, enhancing community pride as well as to revive the sense of place and identity as suggested by Abd Aziz & Abdullah (2011).

In response to the gradual loss of Malay cultural identity, positive efforts have been implemented by the government to encourage the awareness of the spirit of nationalism towards the identity of Malay such as by re-introducing and transferring past knowledge to the present and future generations. As voiced out by Mohamad Tajuddin (2006), it is very essential to discover the changes and dynamism of place identity. Apart from re-introducing and transferring past knowledge, there is also a need to investigate the role plant characteristics play in enhancing the royal town's place identity. This is in light of past actions where direct borrowing and duplicating foreign ideas in the town visual embellishment elements without concerns of their origin have resulted in the gradual disappearance of local traditions.

The interest in creating place identity for the royal town was expressed even in the early stage of the town development. It was again mentioned in the draft local plan for the Kuala Kangsar District. According to the Director of the Town and Regional Planning Department in MPKK, there is a need to strengthen the image of Kuala Kangsar as a 'Royal City." However, this requires efforts to address some important issues, namely i) lack of uniformity in the development of the town, ii) lack of identity at specific areas such as the streetscape elements on the main avenue leading to the Iskandariah Palace, and iii) lack of identity and proper image of streetscape elements at the main gateway into town.

MPKK aimed to improve this royal image by reinforcing the town image as a royal town, promoting practical and profitable economic development, and to enhance the town's position as an international tourist destination. The Council outlined a number of initiatives to achieve this goal. Among these are i) renewal of spaces in the town to enhance its image as Royal City of Perak, ii) strengthening the image of Protocol Road (starting from PLUS highway intersection in Talang up until Bukit Chandan). Several proposals have been made to upgrade other large and small towns in the vicinity of the royal town, as well as the conservation of heritage buildings, including landscaping, pedestrian walkways, gate, and beautification of the main streets. In addition, it also involves the royal town signage, lighting, a central arch, landscape theme, pedestrian walkways, and street furniture.

Previous studies have found that the development of roads in historic places is more focused on the influence of tourism factors. This is because, cultural heritage tourism affects historical sites. These include, the socioeconomic impact of tourism on the World Heritage Site (Kausar, 2010) and the impact of tourism on traditional communities (Adachi, 2015). Kuala Kangsar has many prominent royal and heritage city artefacts. These include buildings and structures associated with the Perak

Sultanate. The Department of National Heritage documented some 20 heritage buildings and 20 tombs in the town. Most of these heritage structures are hundreds of years old with a few of them more that a millennium old.

In order to enhance the image of a royal town, both the royal city and historical city elements need to be integrated especially at strategic parts of the town. These include at key entry points into the town and places with high population concentration. Meanwhile, the building architecture needs to be more efficiently preserved. According to Shaffee & Said (2011), heritage architecture manifested a specific pattern of life, ideas, and the cultural values of the Malays. Hence, it is essential to understand how the visual elements and its significance to properly preserve the town place identity. The focus of this study clearly shows the importance of the socio-cultural element in shaping the originality of place identity through plant motif for streetscapes. Hardscapes motif inspired by native plant are used traditionally in the Malay community and it is also symbolized the facade of historical buildings in Kuala Kangsar. Thus, it is important to enhance plant motif as a symbol of a place identity on streetscapes. Plant motif on streetscapes play a vital role in enhancing the individual experience, visual image of the city identity and help to increase socio-cultural interaction of the Royal Town.

1.3   Research Gap

Malaysian royal towns had developed since the 16th century. This is because they are significant to the country's unique intangible and tangible heritage identity. However, the identity and characteristic of these towns will continue to fade away if they are continuously threatened by rapid urbanization (Mohmad Shukri et al., 2018; Harun. N.Z et al., 2015) and improper planning and modernization (Samsudin et al., 2018). Thus, there is a need to reinforce the place of identity of these towns in order to preserve their existence. One of the benefits of having Royal Towns is that their physical attributes will add diversity to the urban identity while acting as the representation of the original identity of the local culture in Malaysia (Mohmad Shukri et al., 2018). The Malay way of life is well-known for their culturally-rich heritage and inherited values, which were shaped by their beliefs and norms through their daily activities. Cultural landscape is essential in understanding the history and culture of a place (Mansor, et al., 2013). The culture, politics, and daily activities of the people are vital factors helping to shape the physical environment of early settlements in Malaysia (Mohd Hussain, et al., 2012).

The Malaysia's National Heritage Act 2005 highlights the conservation of heritage artefacts including national heritage, natural heritage, tangible and intangible cultural heritage, and related matters. The Act defines conservation of heritage items to include preservation, restoration, reconstruction, rehabilitation, adaptation, or any combination of the said conservation methods. The aim of preservation, as stipulated in the Act, is to stop any deterioration, decay, or state of dilapidation and provide structural safety and well-being (National Heritage Act, 2005). Serious efforts to protect these significant cultural landscape components need to be carried out due to

their significance. However, these still receive little attention by the authorities and local peoples (Mansor et al., 2013). Therefore, it is imperative to revive the cultural landscape heritage of the royal towns in Malaysia. One of the ways is to provide appropriate streetscapes as it will broaden the current management system as well as to ensure stewardship of the urban landscape.

In regards to heritage elements of streetscapes, a number of prominent local scholars have identified Malay understanding of the decorative art, especially motif, through the application of a particular symbol to interpret their culture and the way of life (Abdullah, et al., 2015). The identity of a place can be developed using specific motifs. A motif refers to recurrent or repeated thematic elements and it is closely related to the pattern (Ocvirk et al., 2002). The patterns of the Malay traditional architectural embellishments are considered as part of invaluable Malay heritage, and they are a component of historical and cultural importance. The Malaysian Handicraft Development Corporation or Kraftangan Malaysia (MHDC, 2009) identified the Meandering Clouds (Kerawang) motif as representing the Malay way of life. It is as a way to depict emotion, beliefs, and thoughts; and the manifestation of God. Traditional Malay motifs are easily attributed to places when they are used as ornamentations. Thus, human intervention and perception influence the place and reflects the integrated pattern of human behavior (National Heritage Act, 2005). Based on that, culture and heritage are vital to understand the community and develop more meaningful places for the present and future generations (Rashid, 2015). The potential role played by specific motifs in place identity motivates this study to focus on their influence on the streetscapes of Kuala Kangsar town to enhance its Royal Town character and identity.

1.4   Research Questions, Aim and Objectives

The main research question of this study is: "How can place identity of royal town of Kuala Kangsar, Perak be enhanced through plant motif on streetscapes?" Therefore, this study focuses on three critical issues related to this question:

a) What are the plant criteria that constitute the place identity of the Royal Town of Kuala Kangsar, Perak?
b) What is a suitable plant motif for the Royal Town of Kuala Kangsar, Perak?
c) How place identity of the Royal Town of Kuala Kangsar, Perak will be recognized through plant motif on streetscapes?

Asking these questions leads the study to achieve its aims, which is;

To suggest the plant motif on streetscapes for enhancing the place identity in the Royal Town of Kuala Kangsar, Perak.

Accordingly, the research objectives of this study are:

a) To identify plant criteria that constitute as place identity for the royal town of Kuala Kangsar, Perak
b) To analyze suitable plant motif legibility for the royal town of Kuala Kangsar, Perak
c) To propose streetscape plant motif criteria for place identity of Royal Town of Kuala Kangsar, Perak

1.5 Significance of the Research

This research investigated the types of suitable plants, set up the criteria of relevant plants to be developed into motifs, and finally developed criteria of plant motifs suitable in enhancing the Royal Town of Kuala Kangsar place identity through its streetscape elements. These can guide relevant parties to use plant motifs in enhancing the town image as the seat of the Perak Sultanate. In addition, the outcomes of this study will contribute to:

a) The importance of the royal town identity for improving urban elements and the liveability of the communities;
b) The enhancement of the town development and consequently improving its tourism potentials and economic growth;
c) Guide future planning of the town development by taking into consideration the sustainability of the meaning, form, and function of plant motifs so as to develop the sense of pride for the royal patronage;
d) Protect plants and improve environmental values through an appreciation of their motifs in the town development.

1.6 Research Methodology

This study employs the significant research strategies, namely, a case study. This is due to the exploratory nature of the investigation. The first strategy explores the theoretical aspects of the subject. It focuses on developing a conceptual framework describing place identity through plant motif on streetscape for the Royal Town of Kuala Kangsar. The data were analyzed and validated using the triangulation method as suggested by Creswell & Clark (2007). It helped to ensure validation of the research. Finally, the main findings are discussed with reference to the conceptual framework.

1.7 Scope of the Research

This research focuses specifically on the Town of Kuala Kangsar in Perak, which is the only royal town in that State. A review of previous historical documents revealed

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that the design of the floral motifs explained the creative inspiration, the embellishment and cultural value of the plant selections. Although creativity and meanings are essential components of built environment identity, their influences are the reason why specific plant motif is chosen as decorative elements on streetscapes. Meanwhile, this study requires an in depth exploration of the social and cultural components of identity. Nevertheless, the social and the cultural elements requiring creativity to achieve excellence in plant motif development are not specifically investigated on their own in this study. The study only focuses on Perak Malay culture in general and on the royal town as the study location. Therefore, the recommendations resulting from the outcomes of this study may only be relevant for the Perak royal institution and specifically for the Perak State.

1.8 Definition of Terms

According to Davies and Jokiniemi (2008), 'motif' is classified as a significant design element featured in one of the architectural components as one of the indigenous Malay art traditions and its application in Malay traditional architecture ornaments (Sheppard, 1986; Mohd Ismail, 1986; Raja Tun Uda, 2000; and Mohamad Tajuddin et al., 2005). Several architectural ornaments are influenced by plant motifs. The selection of plant motifs is based on the appropriateness and composition, characteristics, uniqueness, and properties of plants such as for food, medicinal values, plant status, and the spirit of the plants (Mohd Pakarul, 1980; Muhammad Afandi, 1995). More than 20 types of plants motifs have been identified and used including '*Jari Buaya*', '*Kerak Nasi*', '*Ketam Guri*', '*Pucuk Paku*', '*Bunga Teratai*' and '*Kangkung.*' These plants have unique characteristics and can be found easily growing in their natural surrounding (Raja Fuziah & Abdul Rahman, 2000).

In the context of this study, a plant motif refers to a single organic or geometric style that becomes the main basic shape to produce a pattern. A 'pattern' known as an abstract design of lines, dots, forms, as well as a combination of one or more motifs in a variety of design for surface decoration. Apart from being the traditional art for surface decoration, plant motifs have been shown to still maintain the characteristics of traditional culture and customs that have existed since hundreds of years ago (Hussain, 2006).

Figure 1.1 : A single branch of floral motif produces a floral pattern through the combination of more than one of the single motif (Haziyah, 2006: Motif Alam dalam Batik dan Songket Melayu)

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This study has chosen the Perak Malay culture as the parameter, while the plant and its motifs are utilized as a 'tool' to elaborate on the implicit and explicit meanings towards enhancing place identity of the Royal Town Kuala Kangsar through its streetscapes. Ismail (1986) stated that plant motif is an art form that signifies the regional identity, character and culture of society as it possesses a functional and ornamental value which reflects the uniqueness of the culture and the national identity itself (Kostof, 1985; Ahmad, 2011). For example, an emerging branch of a plant must be featured as appeared from behind or below the original branch, which represents that the elderly must be given precedence (Mat Sulaiman, 2002). In view of these statements, this study began with the analysis of the cultural philosophy of the Malay society concerning the plant criteria that can be developed into plant motifs for streetscapes and place identity of Kuala Kangsar Royal Town. As stated by Mastor (2009), the search for place identity is related to the journey of past, present, and future. Hussin (2009) explained the process of creating the motif by the designer can reflect the idea and feel of the creator, as the designer takes into consideration the environment, time, situation, and his or her own experience.

This study has identified the criteria for streetscape plant motifs that can help to enhance the Royal Town Kuala Kangsar place identity by using local images that are rich in philosophical elements and symbolic meanings. Also, the criteria of plant motifs are the closest medium in the Malay society, which reflects the local cultural value and norms of the society. From the micro aspect, which is cultural, philosophical, interpretation of the selection and criteria of the plant motifs in the Malay culture can be expressed not only through the physical aspect alone. In fact, several studies have been carried out in several contexts such as i) religion, kinship and the relation towards harmonious life of the Malay society (Harun,2004); ii) design elements of wood carving which comprised the features of plants such as branches, twigs, tendrils, flower buds, leaves, flowers and fruits (Mohd Sabrizaa, 2007), and iii) skilful technique by craftsman involves the perforation and incision to create various forms of plant motifs (Kamaruddin, Z. & Said,I., 2010). Thus, the interpretation of motif criteria and the philosophy of the meanings in the construction of motifs can be expressed or visualized through plant motifs and used as a tool to deepen knowledge of place identity.

1.9 Thesis Structure

This thesis is organized into six chapters as follows:

Chapter 1 introduces the background of place identity of royal towns which is the main topic of this research. This chapter then presents the problem statement, research questions, research objectives, the definition of terms, and outlines the overall organization of the thesis.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature on place identity and the concept of royal town. It discusses the theories and thoughts on place identity through streetscape plant motifs in general and also specifically concerning the Royal Town of Kuala Kangsar. This study also reviews the plants concerning plant motifs and the relationship with the essential elements of streetscapes in visualizing the identity of a place. The last section of this chapter come up with the conceptual framework of this study.

Chapter 3 describes the research methodology adopted in this study. This includes the research design, synthesis of the research framework, and data collection techniques. This study used a qualitative case study involving semi-structured interviews involving experts in the field of plant motifs (skill practitioners), policymakers, and professionals, content analysis and supported with questionnaire survey include public in the Royal Town of Kuala Kangsar dealing with the research topic.

Chapter 4 presents the findings of this study elicited from the semi-structured interviews with experts and and the results of the public survey.

Chapter 5 provides a detail discussion of the results from the data analyses in an attempt to satisfy this study's three research objectives. It also presents the validation procedure through triangulation of the data sources and guided by the study conceptual framework.

Chapter 6 is the conclusion and recommendation for further studies which can be applied as a basic guideline for designing streetscape plant motifs to highlight place identity for the Royal Town of Kuala Kangsar. Other than those, the chapter also explains the limitations of the current research and suggests further recommendations for future research. Finally, it discusses the significant contributions of this study to the body of knowledge and its practical implications for the study site.

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LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

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I K M Khalid, O M Tahir, N A Ismail, Z Muslim (2020). The Distinctiveness of Plant Characteristic in Reinforcing the Place Identity for Royal Town of Kuala Kangsar, Perak. IOP Conf. Series: Earth and Environmental Science (409) pp 1-8

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