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Preserving the Characteristics of Urban Heritage: An insight into the concept of Malaysian Royal Towns

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Abstract
Royal towns in Malaysia are the finest examples of traditional Malay towns, which are strongly associated with the long history of Malay Sultanates in Malaysia. This study aims to identify the significant characteristics that perhaps homogenously shared by the Malaysian Royal Towns to be inferred as the symbol and identity of the place. The study begins with thorough literature reviews of historical Malay manuscripts for some insights into how the traditional Malay towns were during the early 14th to the 19th century. From this, the study managed to identify three prominent characteristics that shaped the whole physical images of Malaysian Royal Towns. These characteristics are known as the king's palace, traditional Malay settlements known as kampongs and lastly, traditional Malay fortification system. Nevertheless, these characteristics are being threatened due to improper planning and modernisation of the Royal Towns. A conventional conservation approach, however, seems insufficient to address the whole idea of a Malaysian Royal Town. These identified characteristics, in this case, are interrelated and thus required in-depth study of each Royal Town to investigate the traditional knowledge lies within the culture and a new comprehensive in-depth method of conservation and preservation in order to sustain the image of the place as a cradle of the Malay civilisation.

Keywords: Royal Towns, Urban Heritage, Traditional Malay Towns

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1.0 Introduction
The existence of 'Royal Towns' in Malaysia is significant to our unique intangible and tangible heritage identity. Nevertheless, these heritages will be diminishing throughout time without any proper actions taken to protect them. Given this situation, the Malaysian government has actively listed at least 35,000 units of heritage buildings; most of them were built before the World War II in almost 265 urban areas in Malaysia. Some of the buildings were used to be in worse condition, and most of them were classified as the vernacular Chinese shop houses (Syed Zainol Abidin, 1995). The 'Royal Town' existences in Malaysian cities found was not so much promoted and unclearly defined locally. Therefore, led by the National Heritage Department, more buildings that associated with multi-diversity local cultures have been gazette and recognised as heritage buildings. In fact, some of these identified buildings are connected to our long history of nine (9) traditional Malay sultanates that existed in modern Malaysia. These buildings were royal palaces, mosques, mausoleums, traditional Malay fortification system and traditional kampongs that located in a unique Malay traditional city known as the 'Royal Town'. However, in nowadays context, continuous debates of what is a 'Royal Town', its characters and identities are the major concerns for many researchers, planners and historians. This is because the overall idea of what is a 'Royal Town' has not clearly been

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defined and recorded. It is important to preserve these royal towns, as they are testament to the greatness of the monarchy system of the Malay Royal Institution (Muslim et al., 2013). Thus, these hiccups contribute to non-holistic approaches in preserving the identity of Malaysian Royal Towns.

Therefore, the main objective of this paper is to discuss the relevance of three (3) important physical elements, namely, the royal palaces, traditional Malay fortification system and traditional settlements (known as kampongs) in portraying the image of Malaysian Royal Towns in nine cities, namely as Arau (Perlis), Anak Bukit (Kedah), Kuala Kangsar (Perak), Klang (Selangor), Seri Menanti (Negeri Sembilan), Muar (Johor), Pekan (Pahang), Kuala Terengganu (Terengganu) and Kota Bharu (Kelantan). The term 'Royal Town' represents a unique concept that relates to the Malay civilisation. It can be solely perceived as an urban setting that has a sense of 'royalness' or the presence of the *sultan* or king resided and integrated into the whole philosophical concept of the urban planning. Proclamations of a place to be a 'Royal Town' mostly by a king's decree, such as Muar Town, the Royal Town of Johor Modern Sultanate. In this case, His Majesty Sultan Ibrahim ibn Almarhum Sultan Iskandar had proclaimed Bandar Maharani (Muar Town) as a Royal Town, during his birthday celebration in 2012. Apart from the Johor Sultanate, Malaysia is homed for eight traditional Malay polities, and all of them have their own distinctive Royal Towns. These Royal Towns symbolised their royal seats and a '*daulat'* concept - a spiritual concept represents the mutual interaction between a king and his subjects. According to the PLANMalaysia (previously known as the Federal Department of Town and Country Planning), there are officially six (6) Malay states had proclaimed their royal seats as the Royal Towns. These states are Perlis (Arau), Perak (Kuala Kangsar), Selangor (Klang), Negeri Sembilan (Seri Menanti), Johor (Bandar Maharani, Muar) and Pahang (Pekan). The Malay states of Terengganu (Kuala Terengganu) Kedah (Anak Bukit) and Kelantan (Kota Bahru), however, their royal seats are equivalent to other neighbours Royal Towns in term of roles and functions, but only without a formal proclamation.

This Royal Town concept is a unique identity inherited from the previous Malay sultanates that used to be established across the Malay Archipelago. The Melaka Sultanate, for instance, was the finest example of how Malay Royal Towns were in the 14th century. It was a centre for Islamic teaching propagations, Malay culture and etiquette, economic and power for the sultanate (Adil, 1973). Unfortunately, lack of proper documentation and colonialization occurred after the fall of Melaka in the 16th century contributes to the diminishing roles of a Royal Town as what it should be (Adam, 2016). This is still happening to many forgotten historical places associated with the local Malay Sultanate as most of them were not recorded and described in the proper ways of documentation. Thus, aspects such as local elements of the place, urbanisation characters and local activities that used to enliven the place could only be traced from foreign accounts and descriptions. This information somehow is not accurate to capture the real essence of the Malay traditional Royal Towns' characteristics. This research used the qualitative technique to explore the concept of Malaysian Royal Town. Series of the site visit to nine (9) existing Royal Town purposely for site observation, documentation and inventory reveal the local concept of Royal Towns. There are three (3) prominent characteristics that shaped the whole physical images of Malaysian Royal Towns namely as the king's palace, traditional Malay kampongs and lastly, traditional fortification system selected through library research process.

1.1 Definition of Malaysian Royal Towns

A royal town is defined as a town that has high value in terms of historical and cultural significance, and shows a strong relationship between the growth of the community and the development of the urban landscape, especially in terms of the built elements (Royal City Comprehensive Plan, 2009). Locally, the 2nd National Urbanisation Policy (NUP) report prepared by PLANMalaysia (2016) described the 'Royal Towns' locally as towns with special features and functions under the 'Tourist Town' category. Formally, it is believed that the concept of the Royal Town was introduced in the late 18th century in order to segregate the authority between a local ruler and colonial dictatorship. Syed Zainol Abidin (1995) provides an insight into some understandings regarding these problems. He views that a historical and old town or a city needs to integrate the existing intangible and tangible values in its local planning and development. The place has to portray its outstanding local identities such as diversity of cultural and local activities, customs and local heritage and being able to highlight its distinctive urban form features such as buildings, landscape and spaces.

In addition, Lynch (1960) proposed five (5) different elements that could be raised during this identification process. He pointed out that elements namely paths, nodes, edges, districts and landmarks are very important in understanding the spirit of the place, especially in the urban areas. However, his theory needs to be supported by the local insights as the urbanisation process in the Malay civilisation is different from the Western culture. Therefore, Idris et al. (2010) believe that other elements are known as nature and the local environment, people and place interaction and geographical location of the place are equally important with the other proposed elements. Harun, N.Z. (2015) proposed to understand the physical pattern of the urban fabric in detail, understanding of the urban townscape elements may help the researcher. These listed elements could be part of the framework process in identifying the image of the Malaysian Royal Towns.

2.0 The Characteristics of the Malaysian Royal Towns

The research draws a similarity of Malaysian Royal Towns with the traditional Malay towns, to provide a fundamental concept of a Royal Town. Existing Malay manuscripts such as the Malay Annals, *Bustanus Salatin* and *Tuhfat al-Nafis*, described that geographically and physically both of these two urban settings were immersed to one another. According to Arbi (1985), the traditional Malay towns were at one point, consist of Sultan's palaces, aristocrats' residential areas, royal mosque and being surrounded by a group of Malay traditional kampongs. In fact, most of them were located to nearby rivers and water, reflecting their roles as the maritime centres and traditional harbours. These ideas, supported by Hamid (1988) cited in Dilshan et al. (2010), while he listed several numbers of 'Malay Town' such

as Kota Bahru, Kuala Terengganu, Pekan, Johor Lama, Bandar Maharani, Klang, Kuala Selangor and Kota Setar. Harun and Jalil (2012) identified Kota Bahru, Kuala Terengganu, Alor Setar, Johor Lama, Pekan, Kuala Dungun, Muar, Kelang and Kuala Selangor as '*Bandar Kuala*' (Estuaries Town). The term '*Kuala'* and '*Muara'* were repeatedly used as name of place in Malay Towns which it relates to the river estuary area. Some of them were already recognized as the Royal Towns.

These traditional Malay towns according to Dilshan et al. (2010) were founded by the Malay rulers. This study managed to see a similar pattern of urban morphology that associated some of these traditional Malay towns with the seats of various Malay Sultanates in Malaysia. For instance, Pekan, Kelang and Muar are some of the Royal Towns that physically known to possess many unique characteristics of traditional Malay towns. However, with the Sultan's decree, these cities were upgraded into a new royal status, reflecting their roles as the Royal Towns. The basic unit of urbanisation in the Malay culture started from a clustered of houses that identified their community as a kampong. Normally, the kampong was located to nearby water resources such as rivers that are later becoming a traditional fishermen village. A group of these kampongs evolved into a small town known as *pekan*. This small town or locally known as '*Pekan*' begins to attract other people from nearby areas, will be a good place for people to market their traditional products and sources from the hinterland. As the time passed by, this place became more vibrant with daily and economic activities, and due to its strategic location, it becomes famous among the traders and merchants. Since the traditional Malay polities benefited from maritime activities, this place later was being developed into the sultanate's capital and royal seat. Other royal buildings such as palaces, mosques, mausoleums, open area and fortified with walls to protect the place from intruders' invasions. The cosmopolitan yet traditional settings of the Malay cities and later Royal Towns have become the distinctive characteristics of the place. According to Syed Zainol Abidin (1995), there are six (6) main characteristics of a traditional Malay city or a Royal Town, which are:

a) Palace as a symbol of king's authority
b) Traditional Malay kampongs that served as community and residential areas
c) Traditional Malay fortification system
d) Mosque as a centre of Islamic teaching propagations
e) Traditional market as a place for economic and social interactions
f) Water bodies such as rivers and seas- mode of transportation and food source

There are nine Royal Towns in Malaysia has been visited severally in order to recorded, observed and reconfirmed the existences of significant characteristics on site. Nevertheless, this paper will only highlight three major characteristics of Malaysian Royal Towns, which are the king's palace, traditional Malay kampongs and traditional Malay fortification system. The reasons are 1) some of the characteristics has started to be diminished due to improper planning and development 2) no comprehensive study discussing these characteristics from urban planning's perspectives and lastly to identify to the relationship of these physical characteristics in strengthening the image of Malaysian Royal Towns.

2.1 Palace

A palace represents the king's presence in the Royal Town, either spiritually or physically. According to *Sulatus Salatin*, the first Melakan king, Parameswara decided his subjects and followers to build for him a palace that could be seen from far and in a very magnificent look. This probably was some of his political strategies to strengthen his authority and sovereignty of his new laid kingdom. In fact, this was very common for the house of Melaka's descendants to build more grandeur and majestic royal palaces from their forefathers. Sultan Mansur Shah, the sixth ruler of Melaka, resided in a very sophisticated Malay palace, with its magnificent pillars were painted with gold and adorned with precious gems that impressed the foreigners and locals (Adil, 1973). Unfortunately, it will be quite impossible for many historians, architects and planners to visualise this opulence and richness look of the palaces due to their non-sustainable material construction, which was using timber. Only in the 18th century, most of the Sultans' palaces across the Malay Archipelago started to be built using bricks and mortars, a modern technique introduced by the colonials. The architecture, appearance and materials of a king's palace were highly inspired by colonial-touch but heavily blended with local taste and culture (Rahmat, 2008). Malaysia is homed for some palaces that belonged to nine (9) different royal houses. These palaces have their functions mainly to cater formal and informal occasions, related to each sultanate and its subjects. Table 1, shows the list of the existing palaces, their location and status that are representing their specific roles for the sultanates.

Table 1: The list of palaces around Malaysia

State	Capital state	Royal town	Palaces	District	Functions
Perlis	Kangar	Arau	Istana Arau	Arau	Official Palace
			Istana Perlis	Kuala Lumpur	Retreat Palace
Kedah	Alor Setar	Anak Bukit, Kota Setar	Istana Anak Bukit	Alor Setar	Official Palace
Perak	Ipoh	Kuala Kangsar	Istana Iskandariah	Kuala Kangsar	Official Palace
			Istana Kenangan	Kuala Kangsar	Royal Museum
			Istana Kinta	Ipoh	Royal Residence
Selangor	Shah Alam	Klang	Istana Alam Shah	Klang	Official Palace
			Istana Bandar Jugra / Alaeddin	Kuala Langat	Official Palace (Before Istana Alam Shah)
			Istana Bukit Kayangan	Shah Alam	Royal Residence
			Istana Mestika	Shah Alam	Retreat Palace

			Istana Melawati	Putrajaya	Retreat Palace
N.Sembilan	Seremban	Seri Menanti	Istana Lama Seri Menanti	Kuala Pilah	Royal Museum
			Istana Besar Seri Menanti	Kuala Pilah	Official Palace
			Istana Hinggap	Seremban	Retreat Palace
			Istana Munawarah	Seremban	Royal Residence
Johor	Johor Bahru	Bandar Maharani Muar	Istana Besar	Johor Bahru	Royal Museum
			Istana Bukit Serene	Johor Bahru	Official Palace
			Istana Pasir Pelangi	Johor Bahru	Royal Residence
			Istana Tanjung	Muar	Retreat Palace
			Istana Sri Lambak, Kluang	Kluang	Retreat Palace
			Istana Shooting Box	Segamat	Retreat Palace
Pahang	Kuantan	Pekan	Istana Abu Bakar	Pekan	Official Palace
			Istana Mahkota	Kuantan	Royal Residence
			Istana Abdul Aziz	Kuantan	Royal Residence
			Istana Pahang	Kuala Lumpur	Retreat Palace
			Istana Sri Udara	Temerloh	Retreat Palace
			Istana Seri Angkasa	Cameron Highland	Retreat Palace
			Istana Hinggap	Kuala Lipis	Retreat Palace
			Istana Kota Beram	Pekan	Royal Museum
Terengganu	KualaTerengganu	KualaTerengganu	Istana Maziah	Kuala Terengganu	Official Palace
			Istana Badariah	Kuala Terengganu	Retreat Palace
			Istana Syarqiyyah	Kuala Terengganu	Official Palace Royal Resident
Kelantan	Kota Bahru	Kota Bahru	Istana Balai Besar	Kota Bahru	Official Palace
			Istana Jahar	Kota Bahru	Royal Museum
			Istana Telipot	Kota Bahru	Royal Residence
			Istana Kota Lama	Kota Bahru	Royal Residence
			Istana Negeri Kubang Kerian	Kota Bahru	Official Palace
			Istana Mahkota	Kota Bahru	Royal Residence
			Istana Batu	Kota Bahru	Royal Museum

The status of the palaces varied according to their function and location. Most of the official palaces for the nines (9) hereditary Malay rulers are located in their Royal Towns except for Johor. Interestingly about Johor, the Royal Town of Johor is located in the northern part of the state. Regardless its status as the Royal Town, it only served as a symbol rather than function. Most of the royal ceremonies are conducted in both palaces of Istana Bukit Serene and Istana Besar in Johor Bahru, specifically in both palaces of Istana Bukit Serene and Istana Besar. This probably due to the historical value of Johor Bahru that strongly associated with the establishment of Johor Modern Sultanate in the 19th century by Temenggong Daeng Ibrahim. The official palaces served as the centre of political and cultural of the sultanate, and a symbol of Sultan's sovereignty. Usually, royal ceremonial functions, such as a coronation, royal weddings, royal funerals, royal guest receptions and state's occasions taken place within these palaces. These ceremonial events took place not only in the palace but also surrounding area including *padang* (communal ground area), courtyard, perimeter road (protocol road) and plaza nearby palaces. In addition to these palaces, there are secondary palaces that served as the royal residence. The Sultan's household and family members occupy this type of palace. In some case, this palace located within the same compound with the official palace. It was common for the Sultan to provide his households with different palaces according to their ranks and status within the royal circle (Matheson, 1989).

In *Tuhfat Al- Nafis*, a Malay manuscript written in the 19th century, briefly described how the Sultan of Johor-Riau awarded his offspring with palaces and villages due to their significant contributions to the Sultanate. In fact, this is almost similar to nowadays situation, as some of the crown princes from the existing Sultanates have their royal residences, separately located from the official palaces. On the other hand, almost every district in the states of Johor, Selangor, Pahang and Terengganu has its retreat palace. The retreat palace purposely built to accommodate Sultan and his households during their royal tours and private retreats. In contrast to other palaces, the retreat palace somehow is smaller in scale and usually located in the centre of the district's capital. Some of these retreat palaces, especially in Johor Sultanate, used to be old government quarters and buildings that were purchased by the royal families and later, converted into the royal buildings. In several Malay states, the Sultans commissioned to transform many of old and historic palaces into their state's royal museum. The museum exhibits royal regalia, memorabilia and personal items belonging to the recent rulers and their predecessors. The establishment of the royal museum helps to connect the subjects with their rulers as well as

to promote royal tourism, especially in the Royal Towns. In addition, the museum itself creates a sense of belonging and pride for the people as it represents the mutual interaction between the king and his subjects.

2.2 Traditional Malay Settlements - Kampongs

A kampong is the smallest unit of community settlement in Southeast Asia. According to Widodo (2010), kampong may *'refer to the area on the riverbank near the landing point and on the path to the settlement a bit further uphill from the waterfront'*. Such organic settlement nowadays may surround by urban area (known as an urban village) or in a rural area. An establishment of an early Malay kingdom and Malay Sultanate in the archipelago could be traced from the group of house expansion into a group of kampongs and later into a bustling capital city of the kingdom. In the early stage, the kampongs were populated to nearby rivers and sea as most of the populations were engaged in fishing and maritime activities. This could be influenced by the geographical location and physical attributes of landform across the archipelago. These *hilir* kampongs also operated as an important hub to distribute forest resources gained from the hinterland to traders and merchants (Kathirithamby-Wells, 1993). According to the Malay Annals, most of the populations in these *hilir* kampongs were sea gipsies, and they were the most loyal subjects to the maritime empires such as Srivijaya and Melaka Sultanate. Due to their significant contributions and loyalty to the kingdom, their statues were elevated by inter-marriage with the Malay aristocrat families and to some extent, the royal households.

It was common during those time; the villages were divided according to the occupant's status, rank and political influences. For instance, in many traditional Malay cities, the kampongs can be divided into two different categories based on their political and cultural hemispheres (Tajudeen, 2005). The kampongs that located within the inner walls of the city belonged to high ranks officials known as '*Bendahara', 'Temenggong', 'Laksamana'* and *'Shahbandar'.* These were the most four important ranks reflected the social hierarchy status in Melaka Sultanate. The kampongs were populated by their loyal followers and had their distinctive laws system that binds the whole community in the kampongs. In the royal capitals such as the Sultanate of Malay Pattani, many of houses in these kampongs were almost lavishly decorated, reflecting their status, but still can't compare with the majestic look of the king's palace (Noone, 1948). Nevertheless, for the commoners, their houses were more simple and modest. In *Hukum Kanun Melaka,* a legal laws for the Melaka Sultanate, the commoners were not allowed to build a house with certain architectural elements that represented the status of Melaka's aristocrats and royalties (Ahmad, 1984). Therefore, their houses' architecture and space planning were standardized. Their houses were clustered within unclear boundaries and sometimes sharing a same common space such as a front yard. The main route used to connect the houses in the kampongs with other places such as markets, mosques, *madrassah* (Muslim religious schools) located in the heart of the kampongs. Each kampong had their traditional organisation observing the local laws and *adat* (norms) among the villagers. The kampongs were headed by a chief man, assisted by selected elderly who were experts in the local laws (Wiryomartono, 2013). They were the protectors of kampong's adat and sort of moral behaviour of the people. Interestingly, most of the villagers came from close-knit family members that later formed a community of the kampong. In addition to this, most of them shared similar expertise in a specific profession and profoundly their kampongs named after their profession. In terms of planning, these kampongs usually located at outer walls of the king's compound or capital. Abundant fruit orchards, paddy fields and farms, surrounded the kampongs and provide the city population with continuous food supplies. However, these kampongs used to be vulnerable during a period of hostilities and famines. This was due to improper fortification system to protect the kampongs and their occupants from these issues.

2.3 The Malay Fortification System

Next, fortification system was pivotal for a traditional Malay town. Nasir (1990) stated that the Malay forts purposely built for military needs, a centre of political power, and as a defence against internal and external confrontations. It was common for many early Malay kingdoms from the Indianisation period in the 11th century to the establishment of Islamic Melaka Sultanate to strengthen their capitals with defensible walls made up from materials such as bamboo, stones and mortars and logs. The fortification system was equipped with numerous and latest version of long-range cannons produced by the locals or imported from different parts of the world. This is clearly described in the Malay manuscripts such as the Malay Annals and the History of Pattani Darussalam, where both rulers from the sultanates are ambitiously arming their capitals with the strongest and modern long-range cannons.

The Malay fortification system uniquely consists of several layers of walls, and in some cases, made up from a series of stockades and earthworks. During the chronicles of war between Melaka Sultanate and Portuguese in the 16th century, the Portuguese were having difficulty to penetrate into the city of Melaka. The reason was due to continuous resistance from the Melaka warriors stationed in many stockades along the main access to the city centre. However, the whole ideas of how traditional Malay towns being surrounded by many strong fortified walls are very tricky to be visualised in nowadays situation. Almost all of the mentioned fortification structures were diminished or destroyed due to colonialization and continuous wars between several kingdoms in the archipelago especially from the 15th to 19th century. Theoretically, there is a difficulty in describing the meanings and characteristics of the Malay fortification system from the Western perspectives due to unavailable precise and accurate terms to represent this concept. In the Malay civilization, the Malay fortification system can be divided into three different terms, known as *'kota'*, '*kubu'* and '*bandar'.* The '*kota'* is a fortified palace complex; fully equipped with several royal buildings and features such as '*Balai Penghadapan', 'Balai Besar'* and '*Balairung Seri'* (these buildings are almost similar to the nowadays coronation room, hall of royal assembly and hall of commoner). In addition to these unique spaces, the royal palace is erected and connected to these spaces, providing exclusive access to the Sultan. Other elements such as the royal garden, king's mosque and noble houses are commonly been found in the king's citadel.

The *'bandar'* or city proper basically plays a significant role in pumping the fortune to the kingdom. It is a centre of economic and social interactions among the king's subjects. Nevertheless, it is usually surrounded by a series of earthworks or palisades, as its fortification system. Major elements in the *bandar* are the market, commoners' and traders' houses, food storage for the whole city,

warehouses, community mosque, open space and other elements that used to support the people's activities (Ahmad, 1984). Most of the *bandar* was located in nearby ports or rivers, as most the kingdom' economic highly depended upon maritime activities.
The *'kubu'*, or fortress is a centre for military activities. The size of the fortress depends on its roles as well as its location. Prior to colonialization, the Malays were highly regarded as the highly skills seafarers and traders. Thus, most of their wealth and fortunes came from a very sophisticated maritime trade route connecting both the East and the West. To secure this profitable industry, the rulers commissioned fortress' construction along their trading posts. The reason is to keep their trading posts from being plundered and attacked by their rivals. The fortresses were the first defensive system that protecting *bandar* and its inhabitants as most of them commonly built next to one another.

3.0 Discussion

The route of preserving and conserving the identified characteristics required thorough methods that able to safeguard all of these remaining outstanding elements. This method needs to include different conservation approaches either maintenance, preservation, restoration, reconstruction, readaption and others. These approaches aim to sustain all the physical elements for the future generations. Apart from these conservation, tourism approach could be used to enhance the sustainability of historical and heritage sites. The well-being of these elements in displaying the identity of Malaysian monarchs and their historical legacy play a significant role in boosting tourism development and tourist experience. A new concept of tourism based on the royal identity need to be introduced as this will provide an added value to the Royal Towns. Existing old palaces such as Istana Jahar (Kota Baharu, Kelantan), Istana Kota Beram (Pekan, Pahang), Istana Kenangan (Kuala Kangsar, Perak) and Istana Lama Seri Menanti (Seri Menanti, Negeri Sembilan) are some of the premier products that could help to promote this royal tourism industry. The adaption process of the buildings from a very exclusive area to a public space provide a meaningful experience for the tourists. Visitors could explore and feel the lifestyle, etiquette and royal culture that somehow are always being misinterpreted due to lack of information and exposure. The museums too, are among the good platforms for the monarchs to establish and renewing a mutual interaction between him as the king and his people. Emotionally, people will feel closer to their monarch as they are being exposed to the daily life of their king via this unique experience.

A well preserved traditional Malay kampong, on the other hand, provide an opportunity for the tourists to immerse into a charm, the traditional way of the Malay community. In contrast to the royal museums, the kampong's identities are focussing on the intangible values of the Royal Towns. A typical traditional kampong usually encompassed several unique features such as its pristine landscape, local wisdom, and how the kampong is reflecting a mutual relationship between the people with their surroundings. It is probably sort of living museum that displaying the daily life of the people, their expertise and local-based products. Co-existence of kampong and royal palaces is significantly determine the character of a royal settlement. Several traditional kampongs located in the Royal Towns of Kuala Kangsar, Pekan and Seri Menanti possed these unique identities. Kuala Kangsar is well-known for its famous '*labu sayong'*, a fine clay-based bottle gourd produced by a kampong named Sayong, within Kuala Kangsar. This bottle gourd was used to store drinking water and currently famous as the local tourism product. Pekan in contrast is famous for its traditional weaving industry known as '*Tenun Pekan',* produced by several kampongs in Pekan. It is similar to *songket*- weaving process but believed to be brought by Buginese royalties to Pahang as part of their royal attire. Thus, it has become the symbol of Pekan and its people. Seri Menanti, the Royal Town of Negeri Sembilan offers a very distinctive experience as it is the cradle of '*Adat Perpatih'* in Malaysia. The '*Adat Perpatih'* is a matriarchy based customary laws, practised by the local people of Negeri Sembilan. The system itself projecting the richness of Seri Menanti, a Royal Town that heavily influenced by the '*Adat Perpatih'*.

The traditional Malay fortification system, however, is among the vulnerable elements of the Royal Towns. It is already disappeared in many of the Royal Towns due to several factors such as colonisation, a series of hostilities, land acquisition with the uncontrolled development and extreme weather condition. Neither a stone wall citadel nor a basic Malay traditional stockade is barely survived due to these conditions. Such situation may led to the disappearance of the traditional Malay fortification system through time. We could only visualise the architecture, form and design of the system based upon the surviving Malay manuscripts and foreign records. According to the Malay Annals, it was common for many traditional Malay towns to be fortified with the best material that they could have, to protect their states during warfare. The stone blocks were the best material that could be found, followed by many layers of walls made up of sturdy and a big sized log. Living things such as trees and animals were long disappeared due to improper and insufficient conservation treatment. Therefore, excavation, reconstruction and restoration methods are the best ways to the recovery the Malay fortification system and technology.

4.0 Conclusion

This paper is addressing three (3) important keywords in parallel to the outcomes of the Malaysian Royal Towns Convention in 2013, which are:

1) To propose a capable approach to preserve and conserve the heritage values that have been treasured as the identity and legacy of Malay Sultanates in Malaysia.
2) To propagate the king's palace as the cradle of the Malay culture, social values and heritage. Thus, this requires a strong commitment to preserving the traditional Malay settlements, especially that located nearby to the palace. Their unique elements, for examples, traditional architecture and landscape setting, as well as socio-cultural and economic activities, need to be protected and prospered.

3) To strengthen the significant roles of Islam and Malay culture as the identity of the Royal Towns. This will include the propagation of the Malay culture, social and economic development as a strategy to increase the growth of tourism industry in the Royal Towns.

Thus, these resolutions could provide a framework for the authorities and the experts to be more sensitive towards the planning and development of Malaysian Royal Towns. A better understanding of the existing characteristics and identities of the Royal Towns will ensure these places are well preserved and conserved for the future generations. The Royal Towns are the symbol of the legacy of both Malay ruler and his subjects in portraying the concept of '*Raja dan rakyat berpisah tiada*' or 'King, and his subjects remain as one' into the context of local planning and urban development.

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