

# Mapping of Cultural Landscape Resources of Perlis in relation to the Tourism Industry

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**Abstract:** Mapping of Perlis Cultural Landscape Resources related to tourism industry research has discovered and analyzed the role of the cultural landscape in the state of Perlis concerning tourism activities. It documents the resources of the Perlis cultural landscape as a backbone and one of the drivers of the tourism industry in Perlis. Traces of cultural landscape resources are used in this paper to assess the indigenous cultural assets of Perlis that contribute to tourism activities. The research employs semi-structured interviews to elicit the data. In total, 19 respondents were interviewed. Cultural mapping is a tool to identify systematically, record and analyze community resources. It helps to map the existence and the new historical sites, cultural identities, and socio-cultural activities that become the basis of promoting the tourism sector in Perlis. The results of this cultural mapping are documented as resources to be identified by the government and relevant agencies to leverage existing valuable resources for the use of the tourism industry. It becomes an opportunity for the local community, particularly the *Asnaf* group, to benefit and generate income and contribute to their financial stability.

**Keywords:** *Mapping, cultural landscape resources, tourism industry, Perlis, Asnaf*

## 1. Introduction

*Culture* is defined as a human activity that leaves a mark on the face of the earth, and it creates an identity. It is not merely a set of values and practices but a continuous adjustment of values where it is closely related to methods of redefining culture. In contrast, the landscape involves the relationship between humans and places. The European Landscape Convention defines a *landscape* as an area perceived by humans whose environment results from the action and interaction of natural and human factors. The landscape is

also defined as the part of the land where people begin to explore. The concept of landscape is also considered to be the physical location where biological and natural processes take place.

The cultural landscape results from socio-ecological processes that have evolved throughout history, forming high-value sustainable systems [1]. They added that the interface between nature and culture is characterized by conserving and protecting ecological processes, natural resources, landscapes, and cultural biodiversity.

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Further, the cultural landscape is described as human activity on land, and past experiences are the elements that shape the identity, traditions, beliefs, values, norms and cultural meanings of the place. The key to the human heritage of the cultural landscape is towards enriching human identity, developing a sense of place, or belonging and protecting the original culture of a particular community or place. It can be considered a valuable and irreplaceable heritage. Arntzen [2] asserts that a cultural landscape is to preserve heritage traditions and practices, protect local identities and enrich the original culture of a group of people or places. Cultural landscapes consist of unique places that store information about human origins and development through their forms, characteristics, and history of use [2][3][4]. Loures [5] suggests that cultural landscapes give a group of people a sense of place and identity. It is also a process of revealing human contact with the land.

### **1.1 Research Background**

This research has found that Perlis 'existing cultural landscape resources can stimulate tourism activities that affect local financial stability. It is time to understand the importance of cultural landscapes that reveal and sustain the great diversity of interactions between humans and their environment. Cultural landscapes often reflect specific techniques of sustainable land use, considering the characteristics and limitations of the natural environment created within them and the spiritual relationship with nature. Islam emphasizes the importance of the human relationship with the environment, which has been repeatedly described in the Qur'an. Therefore, this study will be the basis for an overall understanding to document through cultural mapping techniques of the existing cultural landscape of Perlis.

### **1.2 Problem Statement**

Current global change processes, such as agricultural intensification, rural neglect, urban areas, and socioeconomic dynamics, threaten cultural landscapes

worldwide [1][4][6]. Thus, there is a growing need for studies focusing on management strategies to conserve cultural landscape resources and assets for natural heritage conservation.

According to Fikri et al. [7], conflicts arise in Malaysian culture faced by the local community itself. A system or management needs to be developed that considers each issue and challenge to maintain, conserve and preserve cultural heritage resources and assets in Malaysia so that the decision-making process can be trusted to optimize cultural heritage value. The common problems and issues faced by the Malaysian cultural landscape are as follows: i. Lack of sense of place and personalization; ii. Damage or loss of buildings of historical significance; iii. Loss of traditional knowledge and scientific information; iv. Isolation of people from their culture; v. The extraordinary pace of development, rural areas are changing rapidly; vi.-deterioration by artificial elements; vii. The tourism industry is influencing the transformation of traditional residential landscape settings; viii. A lack of funding as a cultural heritage asset is widespread [7].

Therefore, the importance of Perlis 'existing cultural landscape is documented as this will be the heritage of the locals in sharing and showcasing their diversity and richness in the community and society. This diversity and wealth will be an asset to the state of Perlis and contribute to the local community's economic resilience and development. Thus, the documentation will impact the overall conservation and preservation of the cultural landscape heritage that reflects the image and identity of Perlis. At the same time will attract others to come and experience supporting tourism activities.

### **1.3 Aim and Objectives**

- a) To understand the importance of cultural landscape resources in Perlis.
- b) To identify the cultural landscape assets that are the tourism products of Perlis.

## 1.4 Research Method

This research employs a qualitative approach. As exploratory research, the data is collected based on primary and secondary data collections. This study uses the state of Perlis as a case study approach in eliciting data, including a semi-structured interview. The purpose of the literature review is to expose the issues, ideas and theories in line with the objectives and goal of the research. a) semi-structured interviews are used as one of the means to obtain crucial qualitative information for this research. The interview discovers the asset and the existing cultural landscape from the public opinions and suggestions. The second step is to process mapping and documenting the information gathered into a map/plan of selected areas/sites. The third steps are in the analysis stage to finalise the significant assets of people, places and environments. Then the mapping (plan) of the Cultural Landscape of Perlis is produced.

## 2. Results and Findings

This section presents the results of a semi-structured interview conducted in three parliamentary areas of Perlis. They are Padang Besar, Arau and Kangar.

### 2.1 Key Findings of the Cultural Landscape of Perlis

In total, 19 respondents were involved in the interviews. 13 were the Asnaf from the three parliaments, Padang Besar, Kangar and Arau. Six respondents from the other sector were directly involved with the Asnaf and tourism industry of Perlis.

The results show that 68.4% of the respondents were the Asnaf, while 31.6% were respondents from other sectors involved directly with the Asnaf and tourism industry of Perlis. 61.5% of the Asnaf were under the category of 'warga emas' that participated during the interviews, and 61.5% were female respondents. Regarding jobs, 61.5% of the Asnaf were self-working, 23.2% had jobs, and 15.3% were not working in any sector.

When asked about the tourist places related to culture in the state of Perlis, the Asnaf have given various answers that

refer to the local situation and their surroundings. It shows they understand and know the local culture still practised.

The next question relates to places or local cultural elements that can be highlighted as new attractions that can contribute to the development of the local economy. The answers show that more new places must be highlighted as exciting places to visit. In the meantime, cultural elements also need to be revived to become a unique attraction for the future. All of these will also contribute to the economic development of Asnaf in the proposed areas.

### 2.2 Potential Asnaf Products (culturally based products)

Based on the answers from respondents who are directly involved in tourism activities in Perlis and two MAIPS officers, there are many more exciting areas and places that need to be considered to involve the Asnaf group as a participant and driving force in the activity. For example, according to RESP1, RESP2 and RESP3, the tourism sector in Perlis for a long time, has proposed several potential tourism products involving the Asnaf group, such as the manufacture of wooden crafts (hulu keris), the preparation of traditional sweets such as *kuih kapit*, *kuih lengang*, *kuih bahulu*, *kuih beras*, *kuih bakar* and *kuih kacang* should be highlighted as a local product of the Asnaf group. This method needs to be seen as not only buyers being able to buy the final product, but visitors need to be exposed to all processes necessary to produce the products. It will add value and further encourage the concept of cultural tourism through the production process of these traditional goods and cakes.

RESP3 suggests that the livestock sector needs to be highlighted as a source of employment for the Asnaf group in Perlis, which can be combined with modern farming methods, and every farmer can carry out animal husbandry activities in their respective farm areas.

There is also a recommendation from RESP6 for the Asnaf group to be involved in producing handicraft products to improve their respective economic standards. Rattan-based

craft products are products that are always welcomed by local, domestic, and foreign tourists. It can also contribute to the economy of the Asnaf family and be part of the community's cultural landscape in the state of Perlis.

According to RESP5, Kampung Seberang Ramai (*Kampung Pelangi*), which has become and has its 'identity', needs to take advantage by adding more products to be more visible and competitive and able to last longer. In addition to the exciting visuals (*warna-warni pelangi*), this village also has traditional cakes (*kuih*) that can be introduced as a cultural tourism product.

Other than the above response, there were many other potentials which the Asnaf shared based on their parliaments. According to 13 Asnaf respondents who were interviewed, more suggestions need to be highlighted as an initial step to strengthen further the cultural landscape's value in contributing to the economy of Asnaf itself. For example, the Kangar Parliamentary constituency, Asnaf 1, suggested that every Asnaf be allowed to plant '*harum manis*' plants around their homes so that they can enjoy the product and sell it to the surrounding area. It can cover the needs of the family. In addition, they hope to be given seedlings for free for this method.

### a) Parliament of Kangar

There were four Asnaf involved in these areas (Asnaf 1-Asnaf 4). The suggestion from Asnaf 1 to plant the '*harum manis*' surrounding their house is a good suggestion for further action. Furthermore, he added that they need the seeds to be supplied. Through a visit to their house, there is an opportunity for them to utilize the area surrounding their house for the "*harum manis*" cultivation. Apart from producing their fruit crops, they can also sell to others.

Asnaf 2 and Asnaf 3 highlighted the potential to introduce eco-tourism (water-based activities) along the Sg Kangar, such as fishing, kayaking, boating, and others. Thus, they will be able to become operators, and some of them can start doing small businesses along the river. Asnaf 2 also

suggested that he needed support (financial and training) to do freshwater fish farming by using a large barrel in their home area for commercialization.

Asnaf 3 showed us that he has the creative skill to do with "bonsai". He added that he needs formal training and financial assistance for further action. Further, he also suggested having "*wau*" activities as one of the attractions.

While Asnaf 4 was a PwDs with visually impaired. She concurs with the idea shared by Asnaf 3 to have "*wau*" activities due to the views and the natural setting of paddy fields in the area. She further adds that there were many culturally based activities such as "*tumbuk imping/emping, wayang kulit and serkap ikan*" usually happening in the area. Thus, these are the activities that should be re-introduced for the benefit of Asnaf, and it will give an attraction for the local and foreign tourists.

### b) Parliament of Padang Besar

For the Padang Besar parliamentary constituency, four Asnaf were involved (Asnaf 5, 6, 7, and 8). Asnaf 5 suggested giving chilli seeds to be planted commercially. He also asked for free '*harum manis*' seeds for the Asnaf group to be planted around the house, as stated by Asnaf 1 in the Kangar Parliamentary constituency. It also concurs with Asnaf 6.

Asnaf 6 and Asnaf 8 suggest that animal husbandry, such as cows and goats on a small scale, should be allowed in the Asnaf group. It is due to the selling price of the livestock and the very high demand not only in the state of Perlis but also in other states in Malaysia.

In addition to the cultivation of '*harum manis*', several other fruit plants can be planted as products of the Asnaf group, namely '*Jambu Madu*' and '*Buah Tin*' (Figs) (Asnaf 6 and Asnaf 7). It can be planted around the home area on a small scale and can be developed from time to time according to the ability of the Asnaf to manage it. They requested to be supplied with "*anak benih pokok Tin*" for free. Asnaf 7 also suggests that '*harum manis*' products can be further diversified, such as processed into juice, ice cream and sweets/candy.

Asnaf 6 and Asnaf 8 suggest that water-related activities can be introduced. It is because the Padang Besar parliamentary constituency has the largest lake in the state of Perlis, Tasik Timah Tasoh. Events such as fishing and boating are activities that can attract tourists to participate. It also has a beautiful view at dusk and early morning (sunset and sunrise). Therefore, the Asnaf group needs to be involved in a small-scale business in the Tasik Timah Tasoh area and sell freshwater fish products such as '*ikan pekasam*' and others to visitors. Apart from that, Asnaf 8 highlighted that rock climbing activities could become one of the attractions at Bukit Mat Kachuk.

### c) Parliament of Arau

For the Arau parliamentary constituency, five Asnaf (Asnaf 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13) were interviewed and shared their ideas on how they can be involved in the culturally based tourism activities that will support their income. Asnaf 9 shared that her house was close to residential areas. Thus, she managed to sell '*nasi lemak*' in the area of UiTM Arau's main entrance to support her income. This small-scale business can be further enlarged by providing financial support to expand the business.

According to Asnaf 10, she would like to suggest planting sunflowers (*bunga Matahari*) because the land is suitable for the plant to grow. She also suggested that other plants like chilli and *harum manis* can be planted surrounding their house for their daily use and sold to the surrounding communities as well (Asnaf 13 as well). Further, she shared that the river in her area can become another attraction for fishing and water-based activities.

Asnaf 11 also concurs with Asnaf 10, which plants '*harum manis*' surrounding their house. Furthermore, she adds that Asnaf groups should be allowed to cultivate paddy fields on a small scale or in groups. It makes it easier for them to work together as paddy farmers and sell the products later. Asnaf 11 (and concurs by Asnaf 12) also suggested that there should be a collection point precisely for Asnaf to gather their products, and that centre also acts as the centre for

Asnaf to sell their product as well. It will attract local and other buyers to come and buy their goods in this centre.

According to Asnaf 12, traditional *kuih* like '*popiah simpul kasih*' is famous in her area. She plans to expand this business to all places in the state of Perlis. Thus, she needs financial support to proceed with the idea. In addition, she suggested for the relevant authority to conduct short-term courses to be given to the Asnaf group, particularly sewing courses and traditional massage (*urutan Perempuan selepas bersalin/berpantang*).

Asnaf 13 stated that she did a small business to sell *kuih*-much in her residential areas. As suggested by other Asnaf, she would like to rent the paddy field to cultivate her paddy. These need financial support and assistance. She also shared that she can turn and prune tiny trees into bonsai. This skill is unique to the Asnaf groups and should be enhanced for further collaboration with another plant nursery in the state of Perlis.

## 3. Discussion

The interviews indicate that all culturally based activities have become increasingly important in the state of Perlis. Most of the respondents from the three parliamentary groups repeatedly described that agricultural-based activity that incorporated their cultural background became the catalyst of the Asnaf group's involvement and participation. Apart from generating a new source of income, it can also help to improve their economy. They believe that their involvement on a small scale will further contribute to the economic development of the family, locally and even at the state level. They also honestly need support from the state government through start-up capital assistance, advisory services, training and guidance. They even need a particular area for the collection of Asnaf entrepreneurs to be distributed to other places more safely.

Apart from agriculture-based activities, there are suggestions from the Asnaf group to engage in ecotourism activities. This activity can allow them the opportunity to venture out as

small entrepreneurs in managing the business in this field. It can also open a new page for the Asnaf group to become local entrepreneurs and be more sensitive to local activities to generate income.

The Asnaf groups should be involved in the craft activities. Thus, it will create a craft network among interested Asnaf in Perlis. There are various local resources to make crafts, which will be a resource for the Asnaf. In addition to forming the necessary crafts, it can improve the skills of the Asnaf group to be more creative and innovative. It is not only able to increase their income, but the method will also raise the dignity and position of the Asnaf group.

#### 4. Conclusion

The research has identified the importance of cultural landscape mapping for the tourism industry in Perlis. The findings demonstrate that characters of the cultural landscape have become the backbone of the formation of the cultural landscape in Perlis. It is confirmed that the cultural connection with the local situation can create a community from the Asnaf group to continue to compete healthily in forming and establishing close and strong cooperation among themselves in the state of Perlis. The selection of the Asnaf group based on the parliamentary constituencies proves that every community from the Asnaf group in Perlis is considered to represent the group and the number of Asnaf. The ideas that the Asnaf group has shared are a significant proposal that needs to be taken seriously by the state government to improve their economic status further. In addition to being grateful for all the donations given, the Asnaf group also hopes for more continued support. They

hope that all the ideas and suggestions can be used for the good of all Asnaf groups in Perlis.

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