

## Conservation Strategies on the Abandoned Towns in the Former Tin Mining Towns in Lembah Kinta, Perak

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Received: 15<sup>th</sup> June 2022

Final version received: 01 Aug 2022

This paper focuses on how the conservation of abandoned towns in the former tin mining town in Malaysia which could contribute to safekeeping Malaysian cultural heritage entity in order to regenerate cultural heritage entity. Pekan Papan, Perak has been chosen as a case study due to its distinctive characteristics as an early tin mining towns and its historical significance of Malaysia's economy activities and its attribution to mix culture heritage. The qualitative method based on Case study research will explore, identify and evaluate the tangible elements in the selective former tin mining old towns as a cultural heritage resource by reviewing the definitions and concept of physical characters and cultural value in attributes to the identity of a place. The recognition of people towards the presence of distinctive elements, from the understanding of the built forms and its activities will enhance the unique characteristic which could be identifiable, recognized and remembered by people as an essence of heritage, worth to conserve and to regenerate the cultural heritage value.

**Keywords:** Cultural Heritage, Former tin mining towns, physical character, Conservation

### 1. INTRODUCTION

This research aimed at exploring the potential of conserving former tin mining towns which have distinctive characteristic and historical value in Malaysia as a cultural heritage resource. In order to achieve this, several objectives are set which the main objective of this paper is to explore the significant and distinctive characteristics of former tin mining towns in Perak which worth to be conserved from the physical characteristics of the townscape in ex-tin mining area as a potential value towards urban conservation and to regenerate cultural heritage tourism. The resulting and findings on the tangible elements in the townscape will be categorized from the identification of the distinctive characteristics of the physical

characteristic of the old towns comprising of the urban structure and architectural features

The formation of former tin mining towns in Perak have contributed in pioneering the economic and transportation development in Malaysia from its tin mining activities which started in 18th centuries. The immigrant of Chinese to work in tin mine have derived to the openings of tin mining towns in Perak. (Esmawee 1995). The formation of the tin mining towns could be reviewed from the history of the tin mining in Malaysia since 1848, where tin was discovered in Larut district in 1850s which formed towns such as Taiping and Larut Matang. The first tin rush in Larut happened 1861 where tremendous rise of the international price of tin which derived Chinese immigrants to open a smaller tin mine in uncultivated land or borrowed

indigenous Malay Land in Kinta District. As a result, new tin mining towns was opened in 1877 and 1880s under the rules of Malay Sultanate. In 1882, tin rush happened by the 'European Company' which formed Tin Mining Company and raised towns such as Tambun, Ampang Tanjung Rambutan, Menglembu, Chemor, Kampar and Tanjong Tualang as mining centers. The decline of tin mining operation have linked to the collapse of world tin market in 1985 which led to the abandonment of mine sites and its township in Perak. Old Towns such as, Gopeng, Papan, Temoh, Lahat, Tambun, Ampang, Tanjung rambutan, Menglembu, Chemor, Kampar,Chenderiang, Tanjong Tualang, Pusing,Kota Bharu and Siputeh were amongst the ex-tin mining towns which were left in abandonment and dilapidated conditions due to the development of new township and residential area.



Figure 1: The historical map of tin mining towns in 18th century through roads and railway tracks and towns in Lembah Kinta, Perak. Source: Perak Heritage Society.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous research, journals, writings, case studies and books were identified which relate to

the aim and objective of the research Three main topics have been explored based on the theoretical, conceptual and examples as listed:

- Concept, definition and implementation of conservation
- Physical Characteristic of town and its relationship to conservation
- Urban Cultural heritage and its relationship to conservation.

The concept, definition and implementation of conservation was reviewed from the current act and practice by governance referring to guidelines from UNESCO and Burra Charter from ICOMOS. This is to give mutual understanding especially on the 7 ascending actions of conservation. The review of physical characteristic of town explored the important elements of townscape and its value such as the urban structure, architectural features and cultural landscape. These three elements are the main characteristics which have been considered as the main features for towns to be conserved. The towns itself cannot survived on its own without considering the human activities as a part of cultural values of the local. The literature of urban culture heritage reviewed the norm and activities of local people which relate closely to the physical characteristic of towns and create the sense of place.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

The study focused on the physical characteristics of the towns which is the tangible quality in the former tin mining towns. The aim of the research is to create appropriate strategies for the purpose of urban conservation and to regenerate the interpretation of cultural heritage value. Qualitative method will be used which mainly based on primary and secondary data. The primary data was collected focusing on case study of selective towns by using in depth investigation and observation towards a specific phenomenon setting, process and relationship (Crosswell, 2009), while the secondary data will be collected from others include reports, journal, articles and book.

The analysis of this research were based on the thematic and comparative analysis which attributes on the tangible elements, focusing on physical characters and qualities based on the distinctiveness and recognizable elements. The distinctiveness of physical qualities was identified

through urban structure, architectural features and cultural landscape elements. The recognizable of physical qualities are identified as familiarity; historically significant; nostalgic memory; affinity; special quality of a place; dislikes; and association. The meaning and association experiential qualities have been measured by the vista; the human scale; the activity on the ground level; the mixture of activities; the historical significance; the quality of view from aesthetic appreciation of kinesthetic experience. The results of the analysis will determine the quality of the towns thus will create the appropriate conservation strategies.

#### 4. FINDING

In Perak, there are many evidence of heritage urban forms which still exist, conserved and promoted as a tourist attraction for the purpose of cultural heritage tourism product. One of the attractions are sites which relate to tin mining activities and have distinctive characteristics and historically significant in the state of Perak. Tanjung Tualang Tin Dredge no 5 (TT5) which have been conserved as heritage entity and one of the tourist attractions in Perak. The development of tin mining industry also related to the formation of the tin mining towns in Perak. According to Khoo& Lubis, (2005), some 15 mining towns in Kinta that evolved during ‘tin rush’ and its expansion era back in 1880’s until 1900s.

In current conditions, the existing ex-tin mining towns in Perak are still exist, some were still vacant, conserved, adaptively re-used but many of it were left in abandonment and in dilapidated condition due to the closure of tin mining activities, railway station or due to new development of infrastructure such as new township or roads. The state of Perak has promoted various heritage and historical place as Perak’s tourism package. In 2017, Perak visiting year has been launched and promotion of various sites has been made for the heritage sites, many research have been made in identifying heritage sites as an entity of cultural heritage tourism area including Kota Lama Kanan in Kuala Kangsar and Taiping, however the ignorance of the former tin mining towns in Lembah Kinta which have heritage and historical were amongst the factor which derived to its abandonment and deterioration.

Table 1: The current condition of former tin mining towns in Lembah Kinta, Perak. Source: Author. Source: Author

Conserved/existing operational/ some were abandoned.	Exist but in abandonment and dilapidated condition	Totally Demolished and replaced by new development
Batu Gajah, Gopeng, Kampar, Chemor, Menglembu, Pusing, Tronoh	Papan, Kota Bahru, Lahat, Kepong, Siputeh	Ampang Tg Rambutan

Most of the formation of the former tin mining towns have contributed to the enrichment of its cultural heritage value from distinctive character of its townscape and architectural features. However, in present, due to rapid development and the conditions of the buildings, most of the former mining towns in Perak were left in abandonment or demolished for the future development. The awareness towards conservation included areas with an attractive character and strong sense of identity must be maintained and enhanced and, where practicable, other areas are upgraded to provide an improved sense of identity and place which include historical and heritage buildings. Obasli (200:13) denotes that urban heritage exist as the physical attributes of building forms, public spaces and urban morphology that experienced by the progenies in present day and creating the heritage for future generations.

According to Heritage of Malaysia Trust (1990), the architectural style of Malaysia has been classified according to the building styles which consists of influences by the European, Chinese, Malay and Indian sources that were a mixture of various architectural styles modified to the Malaysian environment. In present, due to rapid development and the conditions of the buildings, most of the ex-tin mining towns in Perak were left in abandonment or demolished for the future development.

Most of these former tin mining towns have been opened during colonial period for the purpose of tin mining activities. Historically the development of the towns involved multiracial involvement where Malay Sultanate act as the owner, while Chinese as the main worker and The

British Colonial as the main tin importer. The value of these former tin mining towns have established as distinctive cultural heritage resources that were a mixture of various architectural styles modified to the Malaysian environment.



1. Papan



2. Lahat



3 Temoh



4 Kepayang

Figure 1-4, existing conditions of former tin mining towns in Perak at Pekan Papan, Lahat, Temoh and Kepayang.

Pekan Papan was chosen as the study area of this research due to its entity as the first center for tin mining in Kinta Valley. It is located next to Batu Gajah and Gopeng and once the most developed tin mining towns in Perak during British colonization. The towns consist of varieties of built forms such as houses, school, houses of worships, public buildings, entertainment premises and recreational areas as a result of multi-cultural development. This could be seen from the existing built forms such as shop houses and town houses which were vacant by the Chinese and influenced with Malaysian Chinese and Colonial Architecture. The traditional Malay Architecture could be seen from the essence of Malay community area such as Istana Bilah, mosque Malay house. These buildings were combined together to form Pekan Papan as a mix culture town and as part of Malaysian architectural identity.



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Figure 5-12 shows the urban structure of Pekan Papan- street pattern, built forms and five-foot ways. The building typologies in Papan show the influence of mixed culture development: Town houses, shophouses and Villa (which influenced by Chinese and Colonial Architecture) while the Malay traditional built forms could be seen at building types such as mosque, house and Istana Raja Bilah.

## 5. DISCUSSION

Conservation strategies at the abandoned towns could be considered different from the practice at the well-maintained towns such as Penang or Malacca. Authenticity are the main key factors which have to be considered in order to maintain its original forms and cultural activities. In order to achieve the conservation strategies and action through the interpretation of cultural heritage, the recognition of the physical characteristic of the place itself are the most

important factor to be considered. As in describing the identity of the place, the presence of distinct elements must be recognized and remembered by people (Shuhana, 2011). Human activity is the second component of the identity of the place. Physical environment provides the setting for the activity to take place. Thus, this leads to how people response physically and mentally in term their behavior pattern towards the tangible elements which is the built forms and the intangible elements from activities within the area. In this study, the identification of physical qualities could be obtained from the aspects of urban structure and architectural features. The variety of user within the community of the old town will foster the sense of belonging or place attachment of the area. The existing old significant buildings such as the shop houses, the palace and civic buildings that have distinctive and recognizable character need to be retained, and upkeep as the local community has memory and association with them. Increasing the permeability, legibility and robustness of the physical setting will eventually support the town's activities.

A better physical setting is needed to add robustness and richness to the place as it will support the variety of activities for social interaction day and night. The legibility of the streets along the built forms needs to increase by having a distinctive character as it contributes to helps people to recognize and remember the areas within the place. The hierarchy of the street layout is also will be improved by having the distinctive unifying character of streetscapes. The unique "kaki-lima" elements are one of the recommendations as unifying elements for the shop houses. The networking of side lanes and back lanes is identified as an alternative place of activities on ground level as increasing the permeability within the place. The legibility of the old towns will be influenced by the solid and void.

The architectural features especially at building facade within the built forms helps in creating visual appropriateness and distinctive character in creating the town identity. The differences of building frontage will create variety and redefined the grain. The roofscape, façade treatment and material usage of the existing building can be analyzed to identify the harmonic visual experiences by recognizing the sense of rhythm and pattern. The sensitivity to the harmonic relationship which concerns the relationship between the parts and how the

material fit together to form a coherent whole that can create a strong identity of places.

The visual orientation can be used in achieving a visual balance of the elements within the buildings. Colours are one of the syntheses of unifying elements that increase the distinctive visual identity. Unity within variety needs to be addressed in identifying the sameness in character. The effect of visual experience of place recognition is very important for identification of an area. A visual stop will be identified within the townscape area by promoting vista on architectural detailing.

The selected building will be the visual stop for cultural, place of worship and community function and these building carry meaning and association to the place. The sense of enclosure of built forms needs to be identify as to enhance the spatial volume which can determine the quality of perspective view of the area. Distinctive streetscapes elements will enhance the deflection effect and increase the imageability of the street.

Papan have been divided into main area, Kampung area and shophouses. In present, most of the kampung area have been vanished except Istana Raja Bilah and Papan Mosque while the shophouses is still remain but in deteriorated conditions. The unique character of the area especially street at shophouses and square at kampung area can be enhanced by introducing a high degree of sensory experience and the transparency of the activities. The physical setting for the temporal activities also must be able to support as in result will increase vitality and add vibrant to the built forms within the old towns.

The familiarity of people's perception at Papan is the activities along the street pattern of the shop houses. The old buildings and its surrounding place act as a frequent sighting of physical elements and carry along the historical significance. As the familiarity with physical elements in the area is closely related to the historical significance of the surrounding building within the built forms is considered distinctive, and places become recognisable.

The distinctiveness of streets is increased with the presence of old buildings where these buildings are a reminder of old and/ past time even though not because of its physical characters just of their presence will evoke the nostalgic memories. As people tend to have an affinity towards those places due to their special role in the past lives. As meaning is evoked by the physical form, the visual simulation in experiencing the place needs to be highlighted in the conservation recommendation. The creation

of vista and emphasizing on visual stimulation and appreciation will increase the visual memory of the place. The visual continuity of the activities between buildings and spaces will increase the sensory experience.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study is significance as a record and documentation of existing former tin mining towns in order to create the awareness from the process of conservation and as strategies to regenerate the former tin mining towns as cultural heritage resources from various sector such as education and tourism.

In present condition these towns are in abandonment in dilapidated condition and might be demolished due to development. Distinctive characteristics of the former tin mining towns such as Papan should be understand by the stakeholders as an embodiment of economy and the close social culture in Malaysia. In current condition this street towns remains an interesting small town steeped in history and heritage of the days gone by. The unique of the old town's character with its richness of urban and architecture design, related to historical and cultural heritage as resources which should be understand by future generations through the awareness from the process of conservation and as tourist attraction from the strategy of regenerating the former tin mining towns as cultural heritage resources.

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