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THE ACCLAIMED LANDSCAPE OF KNOWLEDGE SHARING
"Warning in Spaces: Blending Heritage, Nature and Design"

eISSN 3120-3337



9 773 120 333 006

PROCEEDING OF

6th Conference On
The Acclaimed Landscape
of Knowledge Sharing
(i-TALKS 6.0)

Organizer:

Bachelor of Landscape Architecture (Hons.)
Programme of Landscape Architecture, Department of Built Environment & Technology,
Faculty of Built Environment, UiTM Perak Branch, Seri Iskandar Campus



TALKS 6.0

THE ACCLAIMED LANDSCAPE OF KNOWLEDGE SHARING

"Harmony in Spaces : Blending Heritage, Nature and Design"

PROCEEDING OF

6th Seminar On

The Acclaimed Landscape of Knowledge Sharing

(TALKS) 6.0

Organized By:

Landscape Architecture Seminar (LAN653)
Semester October 2025 - February 2026
Bachelor Degree in Landscape Architecture
UiTM Seri Iskandar Campus

PUBLISHED

31 March 2026

PUBLICATION FREQUENCY

Published twice a year in May and September

Alamat :

Unit Penerbitan UiTM Perak,
Pejabat Jaringan Industri, Masyarakat dan Alumni (PJIM&A)
Universiti Teknologi MARA, Perak Branch,
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PROCEEDING OF

6th Conference On

The Acclaimed Landscape of Knowledge Sharing

(TALKS) 6.0

@Unit penerbitan UiTM Perak, 2026

eISSN 3120-3337



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Assessing the Heritage Significance and Conservation Challenges of Beting Beras Basah, Perak

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Abstract

This study explores the heritage significance of Beting Beras Basah, a historically significant coastal site in Bagan Datuk, Perak, closely associated with the royal coronation ritual of Tabal Pusaka. The study examines the site's historical, cultural and symbolic significance, highlighting its role in reinforcing Perak's royal identity and sustaining intangible cultural heritage. Guided by qualitative site observation and document review, the research assesses the physical and environmental dimensions of Beting Beras Basah to identify factors affecting the preservation of its heritage significance and key conservation challenges. The results show that the heritage value for the site, Beting Beras Basah, is more evident and realized through its natural landscape, practices and symbolic relationships and less through its physical structure. Although it has great values of culture and history, this site, nevertheless, must encounter challenges regarding the preservation of this site, that is, dealing with maintenance, processes of the coastal environment and the lack of documentation of the site regarding the non-material heritage of the place, particularly the ceremonial. Because of these, possible threats can be identified to the continuities of the site regarding its significance as a heritage. Within the framework of achieving the goals of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Particularly Goal 11 and Goal 15 it can be said that the site of Beting Beras Basah has great potential regarding the sustainable management of this site as a living heritage landscape.

Keywords: *Heritage, Cultural Identity, Historical, Beting Beras Basah, Conservation*

INTRODUCTION

Heritage sites play a crucial role in preserving a nation's cultural identity, historical continuity and collective memory, as they embody significance, traditions and meanings transmitted across generations. In Malaysia, heritage landscapes reflect the historical development of royal institutions, cultural traditions and belief systems that contribute to both tangible and intangible cultural heritage (Ishak et al. 2024). Beyond their historical significance, such landscapes also function as platforms for strengthening local identity, promoting heritage education and sustaining cultural continuity within society.

Beting Beras Basah, located in Bagan Datuk, Perak, is widely recognised for its historical significance as the landing site of Sultan Muzaffar Shah I, the first Sultan of Perak, who arrived from Kampar, Sumatra, in the sixteenth century, as recorded by the (Portal Rasmi Kerajaan Negeri Perak 2024). Over time, the site evolved into an important ceremonial setting for the *Tabal Pusaka* royal coronation ritual, which

symbolises royal legitimacy and the spiritual relationship between the ruler, the land and the people, as documented by (Pejabat DYMM Sultan Perak n.d.). Through its historical background and continued ceremonial role, Beting Beras Basah represents both tangible and intangible heritage significance that is central to the royal and cultural identity of the state of Perak.

In line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 11 on Sustainable Cities and Communities and Goal 15 on Life on Land, cultural heritage conservation is increasingly recognised as an essential component of sustainable development (World Health Organization 2025). Integrating heritage preservation with environmental protection and social sustainability supports long-term resilience and cultural continuity. Within this context, Beting Beras Basah holds strong potential to be developed as a meaningful heritage landscape if conservation efforts are guided by inclusive and sustainable management strategies. Therefore, this study focuses on understanding the heritage significance of Beting Beras Basah and identifying sustainable conservation approaches that enhance its cultural, environmental and social significance.

Table 1: Research Question and Research Objective

Research Question	Research Objective
What are the current physical dimensions of Beting Beras Basah in preserving its heritage significance?	To assess the current physical dimensions of Beting Beras Basah in order to identify factors affecting the preservation of its heritage significance.
What are the current environmental dimensions of Beting Beras Basah in preserving its heritage significance?	To assess the current environmental dimensions of Beting Beras Basah in order to identify factors affecting the preservation of its heritage significance.
How do key conservation challenges influence Beting Beras Basah in supporting long-term preservation?	To determine the key conservation challenges affecting Beting Beras Basah in supporting long-term preservation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Understanding Heritage Significance in Cultural Contexts

Heritage significance refers to the meanings and values attached to a place attached to a given place, thing or practice by the community because of its historical, cultural, aesthetic or spiritual significance to them (Ishak et al. 2024). The significance tends to arise out of the interaction between the tangible and intangible components, hence influencing the memory, identity and continuity of the community over the years (World Health Organization 2025). In the Malaysian context, it is important to say that the significance is embedded within the traditional knowledge systems, customs and historical accounts still underpinning the cohesion within the society. Thus, this research will use a definition of heritage significance that identifies the relationship between physical environments and the facilitation of heritage significance through culture. Against the background of Beting Beras Basah, heritage significance is very much linked with its holy function in the Tabal Pusaka Royal Coronation ritual, which represents the legitimacy and continuation of the Perak monarchy (Pejabat DYMM Sultan Perak n.d.). While Beting Beras Basah does not feature

monumental physical structures, its heritage significance is evidenced by its physical attributes and natural environment that surround it, where it is based on the physical factors of its site that facilitate its ritual activities. Therefore, this research will concentrate on the physical site factors of Beting Beras Basah to identify its relationship with preserving heritage significance through its site conditions in modern society.

Cultural Identity and Royal Malay Traditions

Cultural identity is seen to embody those commonalities of significances, belief systems, symbols and practices that distinguish a particular group or people from all others (Setiawan 2023). Cultural identity is neither static nor fixed but instead a ‘dynamic process of self-definition through which cultural identity is continually redefined according to changing cultural exchange and societal transformation patterns by means of social interaction and historical experience’ (Radzuan et al. 2024). In the Malay cultural context, royal traditions are depicted to be very significant in promoting cultural identity since they symbolize moral excellence, religious holiness and historicity. On this account, it can be appreciated that cultural identity in Malaysia is preserved and maintained by royal traditions. In Perak Malaysia, in particular, the ceremonial display of royal cultural identity is very much linked to classical Malay oral traditional narratives such as royal pantun related to myths about kingship, migrations and religious legitimacy. One such pantun:

*“Sekongkong Tanah Minangkabau,
Selilit Pulau Perca,
Di lengkong ular Saktimuna,
Perpisahan Beta di Selat Melaka,
Jika Sah Beta Raja berdaulat,
Lepaslah sekalian malapetaka.”*

This pantun symbolically recreates the transfer of royal power from Minangkabau to Perak and affirms the right to kingship through divine ratification. In these pantuns, the sovereign and the people are bound together through migration stories of coming to a new land; stories of separation; and stories of safeguards through divinity. These stories are intangible cultural properties that sustain cultural continuity and perpetuate the sovereignty of royal landscapes. Therefore, this research focuses on the essence of oral traditions that are necessary for understanding cultural and symbolic significance related to royal heritage landscapes. Specifically for the state of Perak, Beting Beras Basah is an iconic representation of cultural identity associated with royal Malay traditions (Ishak et al. 2024). As represented during the *Tabal Pusaka* event, this location is an area of dedication, religious practice, and royal tradition that is passed from time to time, represented in royal documents (Pejabat DYMM Sultan Perak n.d.). Therefore, this research will discuss the significance of cultural identity in terms of dedication, oral traditions, and symbolic areas associated with Beting Beras Basah and its significance in creating an historical awareness of belonging for the Perak Malays.

Historical Significance of Beting Beras Basah

Historical Significance is generally the importance of either an event, place or object to the history of a given community. For Malaysia, sites that are substantial in historical significance are generally

contributing to the evolution of either early kingdoms or trading and cultural exchange that have ultimately shaped the historical development of that country (Setiawan 2023; Dias Pereira et al. 2021). Additionally, researchers have argued that making sense of sites in historical context is integral to the sustainability of any heritage sites, and historical context is essential in adding meaning and continuity to historical heritage sites (Banni and Marimuthu 2021). The historical significance of Beting Beras Basah is substantial in that this is said to be the actual place where the legendary first Sultan of Perak, Sultan Muza'ffar Shah I, landed from Kampar in Sumatera, according to (Portal Rasmi Kerajaan Negeri Perak 2024). This event marked the establishment of the Perak Sultanate in the sixteenth century and symbolised the foundation of royal sovereignty in the state. Although the site lacks visible architectural remains, its historical significance is preserved through oral histories, royal traditions and ceremonial practices. Accordingly, this study treats historical significance as a core component of the heritage significance of Beting Beras Basah by recognising both documented history and intangible narratives in understanding the origins of Perak's monarchy.

Conservation Challenges and Sustainable Heritage Efforts

Conservation challenges refer to factors that hinder the effective preservation, protection and sustainable management of heritage sites, including environmental pressures, human neglect, institutional limitations and economic constraints, as discussed in heritage conservation studies (Fayez 2024). In tropical countries such as Malaysia, coastal heritage sites face additional threats from erosion, flooding and saltwater intrusion, which accelerate the degradation of cultural landscapes. Accordingly, environmental vulnerability is recognised as a major concern for coastal heritage sites such as Beting Beras Basah. At Beting Beras Basah, conservation challenges include inadequate maintenance, weak site management, limited accessibility and insufficient documentation of intangible heritage elements, which have been identified as key issues affecting the site (Ishak et al. 2024). These challenges contribute to declining public awareness and reduced appreciation of the site's historical and cultural importance. The absence of interpretive facilities and heritage education initiatives further constrains the site's visibility and limits its role within Malaysia's broader heritage framework, thereby reducing its potential contribution to heritage education and cultural tourism. Previous studies on heritage conservation highlight the importance of integrating sustainability principles into heritage management. (Herrera-Avellanosa et al. 2024) emphasise that sustainable conservation approaches, including energy efficiency, adaptive reuse and long-term management planning, are essential for ensuring the resilience and continued relevance of heritage sites. Although their study focuses on historic buildings, the principles of sustainable conservation and integrated management are equally applicable to cultural landscapes and heritage sites with strong intangible significances, such as Beting Beras Basah. Addressing these challenges therefore requires sustainable strategies that integrate heritage documentation, community participation, environmental protection and educational outreach (Qiu, Zuo & Zhang 2022). Accordingly, this study focuses on identifying key conservation challenges affecting Beting Beras Basah and exploring sustainable heritage approaches that ensure the site's authenticity, cultural significance and symbolic meaning are preserved for future generations while enhancing its role in cultural tourism and community resilience.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research design, with site observation as the primary method to assess the heritage significance and current conditions of Beting Beras Basah. Qualitative observation is selected because it allows for the direct examination of both tangible and intangible heritage attributes, providing deeper insights into the site's historical, cultural and symbolic significance (Fiantika et al., 2022). In addition, a supporting literature review is used to strengthen the interpretation of the observational findings and to contextualise the site within broader heritage conservation frameworks.

Research Setting



Figure 1: Location of Study Area
Beting Beras Basah, Bagan Datuk, Perak
Source: Google Earth 2024

Beting Beras Basah, which literally translates as “*Wet Rice Sandbank*”, is a historically and culturally significant site located in Bagan Datuk, Perak, Malaysia. According to records by the (Portal Rasmi Kerajaan Negeri Perak 2024), the name of the site is closely associated with local folklore and historical narratives surrounding the arrival of Sultan Muzaffar Shah I, the first Sultan of Perak, who journeyed from Kampar, Sumatra in the sixteenth century. This account is further supported by local historical sources and heritage studies, including (NADI Kampung Simpang 4 Rungkup n.d.) and (Ishak et al., 2024). Historically, the sandbank functioned as a landing point for the Sultan and his entourage, symbolising the foundation of the Perak Sultanate and the beginning of royal sovereignty in the state. The site comprises ceremonial grounds, sacred sandbanks and surrounding mangrove landscapes, which together form a distinctive cultural landscape. Geographically, Beting Beras Basah is located near the mouth of the Perak River, a position that provided both strategic and symbolic advantages. Riverine access historically facilitated travel, trade and communication, while linking the site to wider networks within the Malay world, as discussed by (Ishak et al. 2024). The location of the study area is illustrated in Figure 1, which shows the position of Beting Beras Basah within the Bagan Datuk district. Beting Beras Basah also holds royal and ceremonial importance as the venue for the Tabal Pusaka coronation ritual, which symbolises the divine legitimacy and authority of the Perak Sultanate, as documented by (Pejabat DYMM Sultan Perak n.d.). Beyond its national significance, the site reflects historical connections between the Perak Sultanate

and regions of Sumatra as well as the broader Malay Archipelago, highlighting long-standing cultural and political linkages within the Malay world (Ishak et al., 2024). The continued preservation of Beting Beras Basah therefore sustains vital links to royal lineage, traditional practices and collective cultural memory within the Perak Malay community.

Observation Procedure

Field observations at Beting Beras Basah were conducted over multiple weekends and at different times of the day to capture variations in environmental and ceremonial conditions. The observations focused on two main categories: physical and environmental attributes. Physical attributes included historical, cultural and symbolic elements, while environmental attributes covered natural processes, landscape conditions and site management. Data were documented through photographic recording and structured checklist surveys, supported by a review of on-site facilities and interpretive materials.

Data Analysis

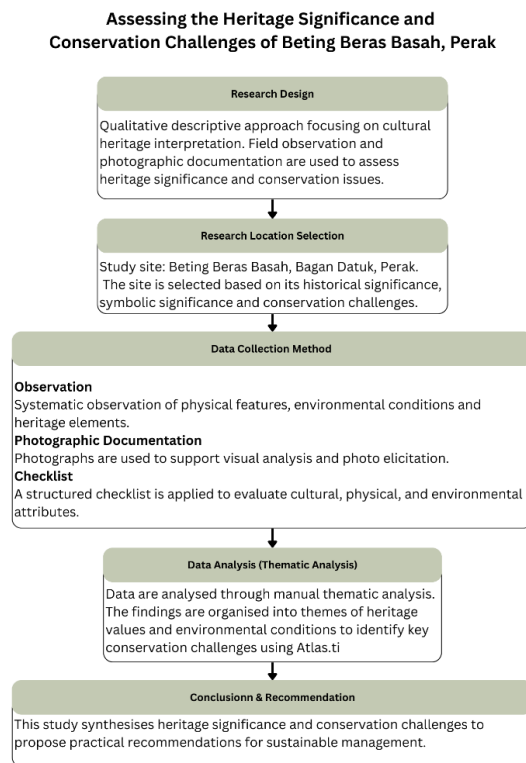


Figure 2: Research Methodology Flowchart

The collected data were analysed qualitatively to identify recurring patterns and relationships between the site's physical dimensions, environmental dimensions and conservation needs. The analysis revealed that the absence of permanent physical structures at Beting Beras Basah has led to a strong reliance on intangible heritage elements, particularly royal rituals and oral traditions, to convey historical and ceremonial significance. At the same time, ongoing environmental pressures such as coastal erosion and limited site management were observed to pose threats to both the physical landscape and the continuity of cultural practices. These patterns highlight a close interrelationship between natural conditions, intangible

heritage significance and conservation challenges, indicating that the heritage significance of Beting Beras Basah is sustained primarily through ritual practices rather than built heritage.

A five-point condition assessment scale (None, Poor, Fair, Good, Excellent) was adopted based on established heritage building condition assessment frameworks (Burhanuddin, Maulani, & Ilhadi, 2023). This scale enables systematic differentiation between the absence of heritage elements (None), deteriorated conditions (Poor), moderate conditions (Fair) and well-preserved conditions (Good and Excellent). The five-point ordinal structure allows Fair to function as a median condition, facilitating clearer interpretation and synthesis into Low, Medium and High condition levels for subsequent data analysis.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1.0 Physical Dimension

This study assesses the physical dimension of Beting Beras Basah, focusing on the historical dimension (monuments, markers and heritage features), the cultural dimension (artefacts, accessibility for ritual activities and the condition of ceremonial objects) and the symbolic dimension (landmarks, spatial arrangement and the integrity of sacred areas).

Table 1.1: Physical–Historical Significance of Beting Beras Basah

\\Aspect	Observation Indicator	Observation Findings	Condition	Notes
Historical structures or remains	Presence of any man-made or natural feature linked to historical events	A modified older monument is present; however, its authenticity as an original historical structure has been compromised	☐ None ☒ Poor ☐ Fair ☐ Good ☐ Excellent	
Monument or marker condition	Physical integrity and legibility of commemorative signage	No official monument present	☒ None ☐ Poor ☐ Fair ☐ Good ☐ Excellent	No photographic record available
Accessibility to historical area	Condition of jetty and route to site	A walkway is built to ease movement from landing area to historical site	☐ None ☐ Poor ☐ Fair ☒ Good ☐ Excellent	
Spatial setting and authenticity	Retention of original site layout	Natural sandbank layout remains largely unchanged	☐ None ☐ Poor ☐ Fair ☒ Good ☐ Excellent	

As shown in Table 1.1, the physical–historical assessment of Beting Beras Basah reveals mixed conditions across the evaluated indicators. Historical structures or remains were rated as poor because, although an older monument is present, it has been significantly modified, resulting in a loss of original form and historical authenticity. This indicates the presence of historical reference without sufficient physical integrity to effectively convey historical meaning. The monument or marker condition was assessed as

none, as no official monument or permanent commemorative signage was identified on site to communicate historical information. In contrast, accessibility to the historical area was rated as good, as a constructed walkway facilitates movement from the landing area to the site, supporting visitor access and ceremonial use. Similarly, spatial setting and authenticity were assessed as good, as the natural sandbank layout remains largely unchanged, retaining the original spatial character of the site despite minor contemporary interventions.

From the result analysis, it can be concluded that the physical component of Beting Beras Basah is more of a supportive component rather than a significant component in carrying heritage significance, especially in royal cultural heritage landscapes where significance is sustained by ritual linkage and spatial meanings, which was discussed by research on royal heritage landscapes (Ishak et al. 2024). The poor condition of historical buildings implies that there is a loss of authenticity by modification and this undermines the ability to display historicity in built components, which is associated with impacts on modification of heritage features on authenticity (Al-Azab & Abulebda 2023). However, the lack of monumental structures or markers further diminishes the site's ability to tell historical stories via tangible ways, instead maintaining the emphasis on intangible practices for the Malays' royal cultural heritage (Setiawan 2023). In that case, the site's condition for accessibility and spatial authenticity is excellent and still supports ritual practices and ceremonies based on the sustainability of the site's use rather than its monumental structures (Fayez 2024). As a result, this study examines the impact of the existing condition of Beting Beras Basah on the preservation of its significant cultural heritage based on continued support for ritual use rather than focusing on monumental structures.

Table 1.2: Physical–Cultural Significance of Beting Beras Basah

Aspect	Observation Indicator	Observation Findings	Condition	Notes
Cultural artefacts or symbols	Presence of traditional items or flags	No permanent artefacts: only temporary ritual materials used during ceremonies	☐ None ☐ Poor ☒ Fair ☐ Good ☐ Excellent	
Accessibility during cultural events	Infrastructure supporting ceremonies	Boat-based access only; no permanent facilities supporting cultural events.	☐ None ☒ Poor ☐ Fair ☐ Good ☐ Excellent	No photographic record available
Visitor interaction	Availability of visitor facilities	Presence of toilet, shelter and information point	☐ None ☐ Poor ☐ Fair ☒ Good ☐ Excellent	 
Cultural maintenance	Upkeep of ritual objects	Ritual objects are temporary and not stored onsite	☐ None ☐ Poor ☒ Fair ☐ Good ☐ Excellent	 Source: OrangPerak.com

As indicated in Table 1.2 below, the physical-cultural assessment of Beting Beras Basah shows that the area has a varying degree of physical support for cultural activities. The presence of cultural artifacts or symbols was scored to be fair since there are no permanent cultural artifacts at the site; instead, the expression of culture is through temporary ritual items used for ceremony activities. This shows that cultures are being practiced in a manner that lacks permanent physical expression. Availability during cultural events was scored to be poor since access to the site during ceremony activities is only possible through boat transportation services that are not permanent to facilitate cultural activities. However, visitor interaction was scored to be good due to the availability of basic toilet facilities. Accessibility during cultural events was poor considering that access to the site during ceremony activities is possible through boat services which are not permanent to facilitate cultural activities. Cultural maintenance was scored to be fair since ritual items are temporary; therefore, they are not stored at the site to reflect cultural conservation.

The results prove that the cultural expression at Beting Beras Basah is retained primarily through temporary and event-based practices rather than permanent physical artefacts, a hallmark shared with living heritage traditions, where ritual performance is prioritized over material permanence, as stated by (Radzuan et al. 2024). Fair maintenance and condition of cultural artefacts indicate that an active cultural practice exists without permanent physical embodiment, in line with observations of the fact that many Malays royal traditions are based on ceremonial enactment rather than on stored objects, by (Ishak et al. 2024). Poor accessibility during events shows the limitation of physical infrastructure to support ceremonial continuity, which may have implications for long-term participation and inclusivity and thus supports wider discussions based on the need for appropriate physical support systems for maintaining the intangible heritage practices within heritage sites, as identified by (Qiu, Zuo & Zhang 2022). At the same time, the fact that the facilities for tourists are in a good state may indicate that there is a growing concern for usability on the site, even though this infrastructure is not intended for facilitating cultural practices on the site. As such, this research is related to evaluating the processes through which the cultural practices on Beting Beras Basah are accommodated through temporary artifacts and minimal infrastructure, with the objective of ensuring a harmonious coexistence between ritual heritage and infrastructural provisions.

Task 1.3: Physical – Symbolic Significance of Beting Beras Basah

Aspect	Observation Indicator	Observation Findings	Condition	Notes
Symbolic landmarks	Visibility and preservation of sacred sandbank	Sandbank visible during low tide and remains significant	☐ None ☐ Poor ☐ Fair ☒ Good ☐ Excellent	
Ritual-related structures	Temporary ceremonial installations	Temporary structures set up during rituals and removed afterwards	☐ None ☐ Poor ☒ Fair ☐ Good ☐ Excellent	
Integrity of sacred site	Level of disturbance	Minimal disturbance rarely visited except during events	☐ None ☐ Poor ☐ Fair ☒ Good ☐ Excellent	

Symbolic elements	visual	Spatial symbolism	orientation and	Open sea view remains clear, preserving symbolic meaning	☐ None ☐ Poor ☐ Fair ☐ Good ☒ Excellent	
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Referring to Table 1.3, physical-symbolic evaluation of Beting Beras Basah shows that the conditions are mostly positive towards the ceremony and spiritual significances of the place. The symbolic landmarks, specifically the sacred sandbank, are considered good, as it is observable even during low tide, as that sandbank has always played a symbolic role in the religious landscape. Furthermore, evaluation on ritual-related infrastructures is considered fair, as those infrastructures are temporary, erected only during ritual performances, then dismantled afterwards. Though these infrastructures are crucial to ritualistic practices, these temporary infrastructures undermine efforts towards physical symbolism. On the other hand, the integrity of Beting Beras Basah, which is a sacred place, is considered good, as that place is less disturbed and less visited, except during ceremonial occasions, thus upholding its sacredness. However, evaluation on symbolic visual components is considered excellent, as access to the view of the open sea is free from obstructions, upholding good orientation and strengthening connections between Beting Beras Basah, the sea and royal rituals.

The results show that the symbolic meaning of Beting Beras Basah can be maintained by landscape features and visual-spatial relationships rather than hard infrastructure, which is typical of symbolic cultural landscapes with meaning inherent within natural systems (Ishak et al. 2024). The good condition of the sacred sandbank and site integrity indicates that minimal impact helps maintain symbolic meaning, consistent with concepts of authenticity and place meaning for culturally sensitive heritage sites (Al-Azab & Abulebda 2023). The fair condition of ritual facilities indicates a dependence on temporary ritual facilities, which is thematic with traditional living heritage practices emphasizing ritual activities over built facilities (Radzuan et al. 2024). On the other hand, the excellent condition of symbolic visual features indicates the significance of unbroken visual links to maintain spiritual and ritual meanings, particularly in a royal landscape along the coast where spatial alignment has primordial symbolic significance (Setiawan 2023). Therefore, this study emphasises that symbolic meaning at Beting Beras Basah is sustained through preserved natural features, controlled site integrity and strong visual-spatial relationships rather than permanent ritual structures alone.

Environmental Dimension

In this proposed research, the historical meaning of Beting Beras Basah will be discussed from the environmental point of view. The historical meaning refers to the erosion and sedimentation process that shapes the site. The cultural meaning refers to the management of the environment that takes place when the people are conducting their ceremonies. During the ceremonies, the environment affects the way the people perform the rituals. The symbolic meaning will be discussed from the environmental perspective. The environmental symbolism will explain the meaning of the site.

Task 2.1: Environmental–Historical Significance of Beting Beras Basah

Aspect	Observation Indicator	Observation Findings	Condition	Notes
Coastal geomorphology	Changes in shoreline	Slight changes due to natural erosion	☐ None ☐ Poor ☒ Fair ☐ Good ☐ Excellent	
Vegetation pattern	Continuity of mangrove species	Mangroves are healthy and growing well	☐ None ☐ Poor ☐ Fair ☒ Good ☐ Excellent	
Climate exposure and	Effect on historical features	Strong wind and waves influence landform	☐ None ☐ Poor ☒ Fair ☐ Good ☐ Excellent	
Water quality	Impact on site accessibility	Water becomes murky during high tide	☐ None ☐ Poor ☒ Fair ☐ Good ☐ Excellent	

Based on Table 2.1, the evaluation of the site’s natural environment indicates that natural factors played a moderately significant role in shaping the site’s previous condition. Coastal geomorphology was assessed as moderately good, as only minor shoreline alterations were observed, primarily resulting from natural erosion processes. Vegetation patterns received a good rating, supported by field observations showing that the surrounding mangrove ecosystem remains healthy and actively regenerating. This vegetation cover contributes significantly to shoreline stabilization and serves as a natural buffer protecting the site’s environmental setting. Climatic influences were also rated as moderately good, although strong winds and wave actions were identified as factors that may intensify erosion in more exposed areas of the site. In addition, water quality conditions were found to affect both site accessibility and visual clarity, particularly due to changes in water turbidity during high tide events.

Overall, the findings highlight that environmental components play an essential role in both the historical landscape of Beting Beras Basah and coastal heritage sites more broadly, where natural processes such as erosion and wave action are unavoidable. This observation aligns with discussions on heritage conservation within dynamic coastal environments (Fayez 2024). The generally stable conditions of the geomorphological, climatic and aquatic environments further reflect the area’s sensitivity to natural forces, which may pose long-term challenges to the preservation of historical landscapes, as widely noted in coastal heritage studies (Dias Pereira, Tavares & Soares 2021). Conversely, the well-maintained mangrove ecosystem demonstrates the critical function of natural systems in mitigating adverse environmental impacts. This reinforces the importance of environmental conservation as a protective mechanism for coastal historical landscapes, particularly in heritage sites where natural and cultural significances are closely interconnected (Qiu, Zuo & Zhang 2022). Consequently, this study underscores the need to balance ongoing natural environmental changes with sustainable heritage management strategies to ensure the long-term preservation of Beting Beras Basah’s historical significance.

2.2 Environmental – Cultural Significance of Beting Beras Basah

Aspect	Observation Indicator	Observation Findings	Condition	Notes
Surrounding landscape	Harmony between environment and rituals	Natural environment suits traditional rituals	☐ None ☐ Poor ☐ Fair ☒ Good ☐ Excellent	
Environmental management	Cleanliness after events	Some ritual waste occasionally left behind	☐ None ☐ Poor ☒ Fair ☐ Good ☐ Excellent	
Natural soundscape	Influence on ceremony atmosphere	Sound of waves and wind enhances atmosphere	☐ None ☐ Poor ☐ Fair ☐ Good ☒ Excellent	
Seasonal conditions	Environmental effect on event timing	Events only suitable during good weather	☐ None ☐ Poor ☒ Fair ☐ Good ☐ Excellent	

As shown in Table 2.2, the environmental–cultural assessment of Beting Beras Basah indicates generally supportive environmental conditions for ritual practices, with some limitations related to management and seasonality. The surrounding landscape was rated as good, as the natural setting remains harmonious with traditional rituals and provides an appropriate environmental context for ceremonial activities. This harmony supports the continuity of cultural practices at the site. Environmental management was assessed as fair, as some ritual-related waste was occasionally observed after events, indicating partial but inconsistent post-ceremony management. The natural soundscape was rated as excellent, as the sound of waves and wind enhances the ceremonial atmosphere and strengthens the spiritual experience during rituals. In contrast, seasonal conditions were assessed as fair as cultural events are suitable only during favorable weather, which limits the timing and frequency of ritual activities.

The findings suggest that the natural environment at Beting Beras Basah plays a significant role in reinforcing cultural and ritual practices, particularly through landscape harmony and sensory experiences such as natural soundscapes, which are widely recognized as important components of living cultural heritage settings (Radzuan et al. 2024). The excellent condition of the natural soundscape highlights how environmental factors contribute to ceremonial meaning beyond physical structures, supporting the experiential dimension of ritual practices. However, the fair condition of environmental management and seasonal dependency indicates practical challenges in sustaining rituals within an open coastal environment. Issues related to post-event cleanliness and weather dependency reflect broader concerns in managing cultural practices in natural heritage settings, where adaptive management is required to ensure long-term sustainability (Fayez 2024). Therefore, this study emphasizes how environmental conditions and management practices influence the continuity and sustainability of cultural rituals at Beting Beras Basah, highlighting the need to balance natural environmental qualities with improved site management to sustain heritage significance.

2.3 Environmental – Symbolic Significance of Beting Beras Basah

Aspect	Observation Indicator	Observation Findings	Condition	Notes
Landscape symbolism	Environmental features reinforcing meaning	Small isolated island strengthens symbolic significance	☐ None ☐ Poor ☐ Fair ☒ Good ☐ Excellent	
Natural integrity	Presence of modern intrusion	Area mostly natural; some modern structures (walkway, toilet)	☐ None ☐ Poor ☐ Fair ☐ Good ☒ Excellent	
Visual connection	View corridor and horizon line	Sea view remains unobstructed	☐ None ☐ Poor ☐ Fair ☐ Good ☒ Excellent	
Ecological balance	Relationship between ecosystem health and belief at	Moderately stable despite natural erosion	☐ None ☐ Poor ☐ Fair ☒ Good ☐ Excellent	

As shown in Table 2.3, the environmental–symbolic assessment of Beting Beras Basah indicates strong symbolic support provided by the site’s natural setting. Landscape symbolism was rated as good, as the small and isolated island form reinforces symbolic meaning and strengthens perceptions of sacredness associated with royal rituals. This physical isolation enhances the ceremonial significance of the site. Natural integrity was rated as excellent, as the area remains predominantly natural despite the presence of limited modern structures such as walkways and toilets, which do not significantly disrupt the overall environmental character. Similarly, visual connection was assessed as excellent, as unobstructed sea views and a clear horizon line preserve strong symbolic and spatial relationships between the site, the sea and ritual orientation. Ecological balance was rated as good, as the ecosystem remains moderately stable despite natural erosion processes, indicating that environmental conditions continue to support cultural beliefs and symbolic associations linked to the landscape.

The findings demonstrate that symbolic meaning at Beting Beras Basah is strongly reinforced through natural landscape qualities, particularly isolation, visual openness and environmental continuity, which are commonly associated with sacred royal landscapes where symbolism is embedded within natural settings rather than built form (Ishak et al. 2024). The excellent condition of natural integrity and visual connection highlights how minimal modern intrusion and preserved view corridors enhance symbolic authenticity and spatial meaning, which are key factors influencing cultural perception and place attachment (Al-Azab & Abulebda 2023). The good condition of landscape symbolism and ecological balance further suggests that natural processes and environmental stability continue to support belief systems and ritual interpretation within a dynamic coastal environment. This aligns with sustainable heritage perspectives that emphasize harmony between ecological systems and cultural meaning rather than strict physical control of natural change (Fayez 2024). Therefore, this study emphasizes how environmental symbolism at Beting Beras Basah is sustained through natural isolation, visual continuity and ecological balance, reinforcing heritage

significance without heavy reliance on permanent built interventions.

3. Key Conservation Challenges

From systematic observation conducted in the field, this study points out the difficulties of conservation according to two broad categories: physical dimensions and environmental dimensions. While physical dimensions are related to site characteristics, environmental dimensions are natural factors. This is further clarified in the following figures.

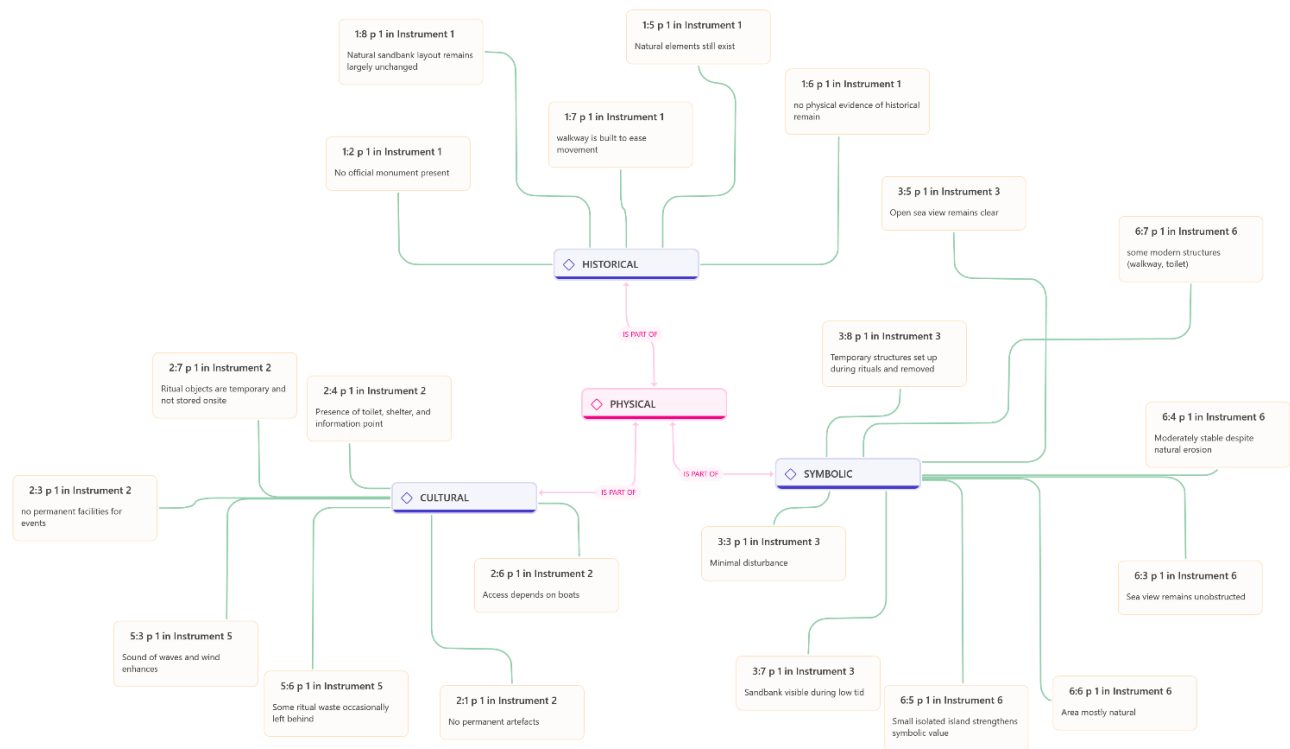


Figure 3: ATLAS.ti Network Physical Key Conservation Challenges

As shown in Figure 3, it can be determined that the physical, historical, cultural and symbolic attributes of Beting Beras Basah are very much connected and integrated; nonetheless, the natural attributes take the prominent role as the main factor behind the heritage significance. In the historical sense, the area does not have any installed historical monuments and physical historical attributes; however, the natural sandbank in the area has remained unchanged and persists in its historical settings and context (Quotation 1:6 p.1; Quotation 1:8 p.1 in Instrument 1). The installation of pedestrian walkways will enable easy passage for visitors and will not hamper the views of the open sea and the landscape (Quotation 1:7 p.1 in Instrument 1). As far as the physical and cultural attributes are concerned, basic amenities such as toilet, shades and information centers have been provided on a limited scale; however, the ritual Objects and artifacts are provisional and are not stored permanently (Quotation 2:1 p.1; Quotation 2:4 p.1; Quotation 2:7 p.1 in Instrument 2). The accessibility of the site depends entirely on boat transport, which restricts human presence and indirectly results in less disturbance to the environment (Quotation 2:6 p.1 in Instrument 2). Turning to the symbolic aspect, the natural elements including sounds like waves and wind, unobstructed

views and remoteness experienced during low tides are among the essential elements which enhance the symbolic and ritual significance of Beting Beras Basah, despite the moderate level of natural erosion taking place (Quotation 5:3 p.1 in Instrument 5; Quotation 6:3 p.1; Quotation 6:4 p.1 in Instrument 6).

The findings demonstrate that the heritage significance of Beting Beras Basah is predominantly characterised as intangible, where symbolic meaning, ritual practices and the relationship between people and the natural landscape form the core of site interpretation. This observation is consistent with the discussion by (Ishak et al. 2024), which highlights royal coronation rituals as a central component of Perak's royal heritage significance. This condition also reflects a broader shift in conservation thinking from an object-centred approach towards safeguarding cultural significance and sustainable heritage management, as discussed by (Fayez 2024). Furthermore, authentic spatial experiences shaped by natural elements, site isolation and unobstructed seascapes are found to strengthen place attachment and symbolic significance, aligning with discussions on heritage authenticity and experiential significance by (Al-Azab and Abulebda 2023). The reliance on ritual practices that do not require permanent infrastructure, together with community involvement, further supports a community-based conservation approach that sustains intangible heritage significance through social and cultural practices (Radzuan et al. 2024).

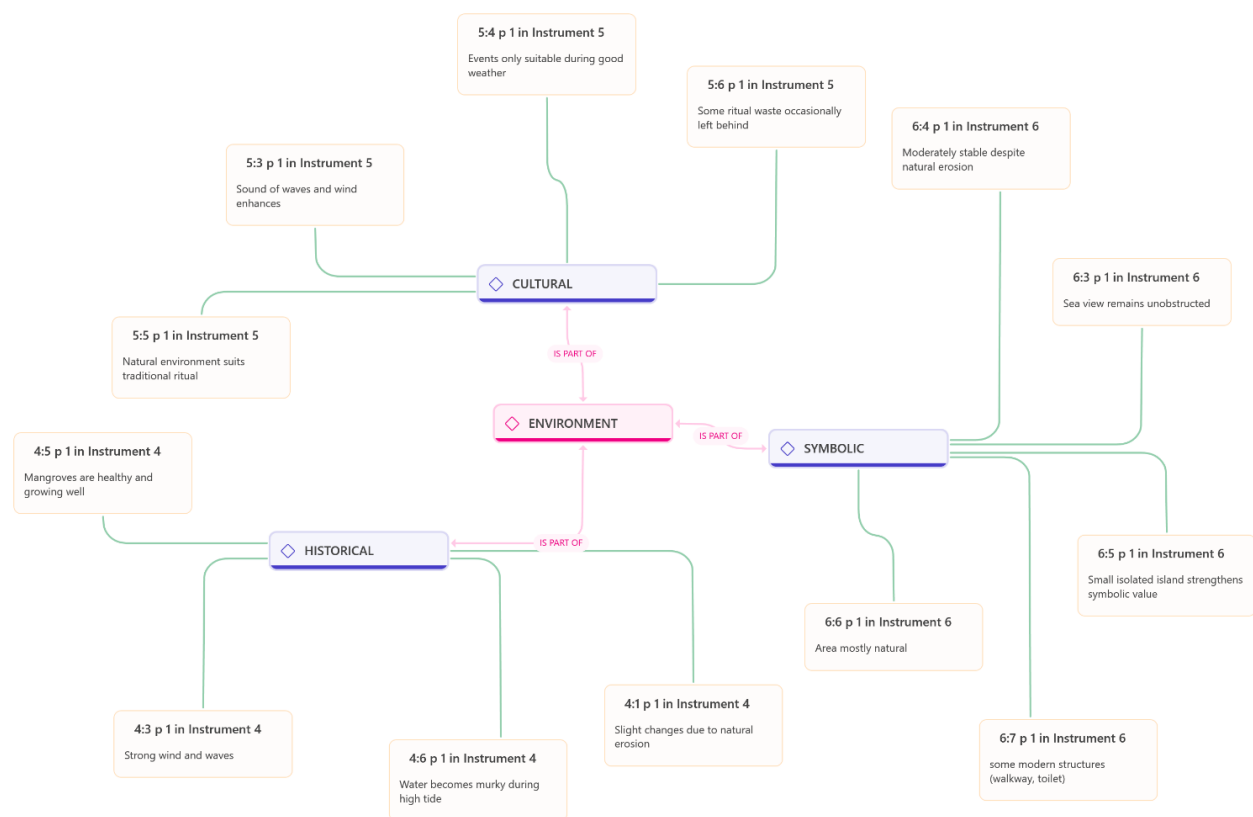


Figure 4: ATLAS.ti Network Environmental Key Conservation Challenges

As depicted in Figure 4 above, the results indicate that the environment plays a major role in the cultural and historical significance associated with the importance of Beting Beras Basah. In the cultural point of view, the environment is premises conducive to performing traditional rituals where the sound of the waves

and the wind further complements the ritualistic environment, although the rituals are still affected by prevailing weather conditions (Quotation 5:3 p.1; Quotation 5:4 p.1; Quotation 5:5 p.1 in Instrument 5). However, the waste from the rituals have been found to be left behind negatively affecting the environment (Quotation 5:6 p.1 in Instrument 5). In the environment and historical point of view, mangroves appear to be in the normal health condition and growing well. Furthermore, natural elements had been observed to include the influence of strong wind, waves and the movement of the tide that have further led to the turbidity level of the water bodies while moderate physical changes have been evidenced through the natural erosions (Quotation 4:3 p.1; Quotation 4:5 p.1; Quotation 4:6 p.1 in Instrument 4). Additionally, the erosions have been found to be moderate affecting the environment mildly (Quotation 6:4 p.1 in Instrument 6). In terms of symbolic significance, the largely natural condition of the area, unobstructed sea views and the presence of a small isolated island are identified as key elements that strengthen the symbolic significance of Beting Beras Basah, even with the presence of limited modern structures such as walkways and toilets (Quotation 6:3 p.1; Quotation 6:5 p.1; Quotation 6:6 p.1; Quotation 6:7 p.1 in Instrument 6).

It appears that the heritage significance of Beting Beras Basah is identifiable through its intangible significance, more specifically its symbolic significance, ritualistic activities and connections between human practices and the natural landscape of the coastline, based on (Ishak et al. 2024)’s viewpoints regarding the heritage of Perak state’s royal coronation ceremony. This state of heritage significance can also best express the evolution of heritage conservation views, whereby, based on viewpoints by (Fayez 2024), there has been a focus shift from preserving objects to preserving meaning and sustainability over time. The place authenticity of Beting Beras Basah is also very reliant on natural factors with a high degree of continuity, including the absence of obstruction of views to the sea, natural isolation and resistance to development, contributing to its meaningful and experiential qualities of place, explained by experiential heritage viewpoints by (Al-Azab & Abulebda 2023) of increased symbolic significance and reinforcement of heritage significance. Therefore, this study intends to emphasise conservation strategies for Beting Beras Basah that prioritise natural environmental protection and ritual continuity in sustaining its symbolic and intangible heritage significance.

Table 3.1: Priority Classification of Key Conservation Challenges at Beting Beras Basah

High Priority	• Loss of physical historical authenticity due to modified monument and absence of official historical markers • Coastal erosion and wave exposure affecting the stability of the sacred sandbank • Post-ritual waste management issues affecting environmental cleanliness and ritual sanctity • Limited physical expression of historical significance relying solely on intangible practices
Medium Priority	• Boat-dependent access limiting participation during ceremonial events • Seasonal dependency of rituals due to weather conditions • Temporary ritual structures that do not provide long-term physical support • Natural erosion processes that are currently moderate but require monitoring
Low Priority	• Healthy mangrove vegetation contributing to shoreline stability • Unobstructed sea views and preserved visual corridors reinforcing symbolic meaning • Strong natural soundscape enhancing ceremonial atmosphere • Predominantly natural landscape with minimal modern intrusion

From the summary in Table 3.1, conservation challenges at the site are classified into high, medium and

low priority based on their impact on the preservation of heritage significance. High-priority concerns are associated with threats to historical authenticity, particularly erosion and waste, which directly affect the integrity of the sacred sandbank. Medium-priority issues relate to ritual integrity, including dependence on natural access conditions and temporary ritual structures, which currently do not pose immediate risks to the site. Low-priority concerns involve aspects of natural integrity, as the site remains environmentally stable, supported by healthy mangrove vegetation and unobstructed coastal views that continue to sustain ritual practices. To address medium-priority challenges, adaptive access management and flexible ritual arrangements are recommended to ensure continuity without compromising authenticity. At the same time, environmental conditions should be conserved through a minimal-intervention approach to protect the site's long-term symbolic and intangible heritage significance. Overall, the heritage significance of Beting Beras Basah is primarily maintained through the continuity of environmental conditions and ritual practices, which remain the core carriers of meaning at the site.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the heritage significance of Beting Beras Basah is primarily sustained through environmental integrity, ritual continuity and symbolic spatial relationships rather than permanent physical structures. Although tangible heritage elements at the site are limited, its historical, cultural and symbolic significance remains strongly expressed through royal rituals, oral traditions and the natural coastal landscape. The findings also identify key conservation challenges, including the loss of physical historical authenticity, exposure to coastal erosion and inconsistent environmental management during ceremonial activities. Despite these challenges, the largely natural condition of the site, healthy mangrove vegetation and unobstructed seascapes continue to support its symbolic and intangible heritage significance. Therefore, sustainable conservation strategies that prioritise environmental protection, ritual continuity, minimal physical intervention and improved site management are essential to ensure the long-term preservation of Beting Beras Basah as a living cultural landscape and an enduring symbol of Perak's royal heritage

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