



UNDERSTANDING THE CURRENT PRACTICE OF CONSERVING HERITAGE BUILDING IN MALACCA

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Abstrak

Pemuliharaan bangunan warisan boleh menjadi sesuatu yang mencabar. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk memahami amalan-amalan semasa pemuliharaan bangunan warisan di bandaraya bersejarah Melaka. Lapan siri temuramah pakar telah dijalankan di peringkat strategik, taktikal, dan operasi di Melaka, Bandaraya Warisan Dunia. Peringkat strategik merupakan fasa yang melibatkan matlamat jangka panjang dan arah fungsi organisasi kerja pemuliharaan di Malaysia. Kedua, tahap taktikal atau pengurusan, proses menyampaikan keseluruhan fungsi kerja-kerja pemuliharaan di Malaysia. Ketiga, pada peringkat operasi merupakan tahap pengoperasian kerja-kerja penyelenggaraan berkala dan pemuliharaan bangunan-bangunan warisan. Responden-responden berpendapat bahawa semua Nilai-nilai Budaya seperti sosial, sejarah, estetik, saintifik, dan ekologi telah digunakan sebagai amalan-amalan semasa pemuliharaan bangunan warisan di Malaysia. Mereka juga menyatakan bahawa Nilai-nilai Budaya ini telah digunakan sejajar dengan empat dokumen penting untuk proses pemuliharaan iaitu “Akta Warisan Kebangsaan Malaysia”, “Outstanding Universal Values atau Nilai-nilai Universal yang Cemerlang oleh UNESCO”, “Garis Panduan bagi Pemuliharaan Bangunan-bangunan Warisan” serta “Pelan Pengurusan Pemuliharaan Bandaraya Melaka” dalam kerja-kerja pemuliharaan di Malaysia. Oleh itu, memahami gambaran keseluruhan amalan-amalan semasa pemuliharaan boleh membawa kepada pembentukan suatu model pemuliharaan bangunan Warisan yang teguh di Malaysia.

Kata Kunci: Pemuliharaan, Temubual Pakar, Bangunan Warisan, Malaysia

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Abstract

Conserving a heritage building can be daunting. This developing study seeks to understand the current practice of conserving a heritage building in the historic city of Malacca. A series of eight sessions of interviews with experts were conducted at three levels of conservation practitioners at the strategic, tactical, and operational levels in Malacca, the World Heritage City. At strategic level, which is the first level, is known to associate with the long-range aims and direction of the organisation's functions of conservation work in Malaysia. Secondly, the tactical or managerial level, which is concerned with delivering the totality of functions of the conservation work in Malaysia. Thirdly, at the operational level, which is responsible for the periodic and conservation maintenance work operations. The respondents perceived that all Cultural Values which are social, historic, aesthetic, scientific, and ecological have been used as the current practice in conserving heritage buildings in Malaysia. Thence, these conservation practitioners have stated that they have been applying Cultural Values which are in accordance with four vital documents which are "The National Heritage Act of Malaysia", "Outstanding Universal Values by UNESCO", and "The Guidelines for Conservation of Heritage Building" and "The Conservation Management Plan of Malacca" in conservation works in Malaysia. Hence, understanding the overview of current practice of conservation practitioners can draw the development characteristics that led to the robust model of conservation in Malaysia.

Keywords: Conservation, Expert Interviews, Heritage Building, Malaysia

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1.0 Introduction

Conserving a heritage building can be daunting. However, the conservation of a heritage building is something that we owe to the future generations, something we must do to accomplish.

According to Avrami et al. (2000), *“the process of conserving a heritage building begins even before a building is considered as heritage. It is derived from individuals, institutions, or communities deciding that some historic building is worth preserving and conserving as it represents something worth remembering about themselves and their past that should be passed to future generations”*.

Moreover, Article 1.4 of the Burra Charter of ICOMOS (1999) stated that conservation *“includes all the processes of looking after a place so as to retain its cultural significance which encompasses the activities that are aimed at the safeguarding of a cultural resource so as it retain its historic value and extend its physical life”*.

Thus, the emphasis of conservation is about the inheritance of the Cultural Heritage Significance of a heritage building that focuses on sustaining the physical condition of a heritage buildings Therefore, Cultural Significance is a collective term for the “cultural values”.

In Malaysia, increasing number of old buildings that have been restored, reused for various purposes and were listed as National Heritage (Lilawati et. al., 2008; Robiah and Ghafar, 2010). The practice of conservation that includes the work of operation and maintenance is the key to good conservation practice (British Standard Institution, 1998; Worthing et. al., 2002).

Hence, the purpose of this study is to understand the current practice of conserving a heritage building in a historic city of Malacca.

2.0 Methodology

A series of Expert Interviews were conducted at the strategic, tactical, and operational level from the conservation practitioners in Malaysia. The strategic level, which is the first level, is known to associate with the long-range aims and direction of the organisation’s functions of conservation work in Malaysia. Secondly, the tactical or managerial level, which is concerned with delivering the totality of functions of the conservation work in Malaysia. Thirdly, at the operational level, which is responsible for the periodic and conservation maintenance work operations.

In total eight Expert Interviews were conducted. Eight respondents (**R1 + R2 + R3 + R4 + R5 + R6 + R7 + R8**) were chosen because they are actively involved in the process of conserving heritage buildings in Malacca. The details of the eight experts interviewed are presented as follows (Table 1).





Table 1: The Detailed Background of Identified Respondents

Level	Respondent	Role	Expertise
Strategic	R ₁	Deputy Commissioner of Cultural Heritage Department Malaysia;	Facilities Management; conservation
	R ₂	Director of Registration and Enforcement, Cultural Heritage Department	conservation
Tactical	R ₃	Director of World Heritage Organisation of Malacca;	conservation
	R ₄	Conservation Architect of Malacca City Council;	conservation
Operational	R ₅	Curator / Conservator I for Malacca Museum Corporation;	conservation
	R ₆	Curator / Conservator II for Malacca Museum Corporation;	conservation
	R ₇	Curator Assistant for Malacca Museum Corporation;	conservation
	R ₈	Contractor/ Appointed Conservator	conservation

R₁, who is the policy maker, is the Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Cultural Heritage, Ministry of Information Communications and Culture of Malaysia. She was an academican before she joined the Department of Cultural Heritage. She is specialised in Facilities Management and expert in heritage buildings in Malaysia.





R₂ is the Director of Registration and Enforcement of the Cultural Heritage Department. He is expert in conservation of Cultural Values of tangible and intangible heritage in Malaysia. Tangible cultural heritage consist of buildings, monuments, historical sites and cultural landscapes; intangible cultural heritage includes the practices, expressions, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills of communities, as well as objects and instruments (UNESCO, 2003, and 2005; ICOMOS, 2002).

R₃ is the director of the World Heritage Organisation (WHO) of Malacca which was established in order to monitor and implement the best practice of conservation in Malacca. He is one of the key people who drafted the National Heritage Act (NHA) of Malaysia to conserve the tangible and intangible aspects of cultural heritage.

R₄ is the conservation architect of Malacca City Council who is responsible for monitoring the conservation work of historical sites in Malacca. She is an expert in conservation work for the heritage buildings in Malacca.

R₅ and **R₆** are both conservators of the Malacca Museum Corporation which managed the Stadhuys or Red Building in Malacca. They were both experts in the operation and maintenance of the Red Building. Meanwhile **R₇** is the assistant to **R₅** and **R₆**.

R8 is the Contractor and Appointed Conservator who is responsible for the operation and maintenance of the Red Building in Malacca. He is an expert in the conservation work for operations and maintenance of historic buildings in Malaysia.

2.1 Results

This section represents the findings of Expert Interviews regarding the current practice of conserving heritage building in Malaysia. These findings or the interview's transcripts will be extracted and brought together into one table, divided into "Respondent Identifier", "Interview Text", "Interpretation of the Underlying Meaning", and "Descriptive Code".

Content Analysis is used to analyse the "Interview Text" which interprets and summarises the "Underlying Meaning of the Interview Text". It is then coded as the "Descriptive Code" to outline the theme of the research which will then be mapped to develop the theoretical framework of the study. Table 2 indicates the Content Analysis for the Expert Interviews in this research.

The respondents perceived that all Cultural Values which are social, economic, political, historic, aesthetic, age, and ecological have been used as the current practice in conserving heritage buildings in Malaysia. Thence, these conservation practitioners have stated that they have been applying Cultural Values which is in accordance with four vital documents which are used in conservation work in Malaysia. However, all Cultural Values are not mentioned briefly and explained by the respondents. Therefore R1 suggested the researcher refers to the four vital documents used, which are:



2.2 The National Heritage Act of Malaysia (NHA) - D1

The National Heritage Act of Malaysia 2005 (NHA) is an Act to provide the conservation and preservation of National Heritage; Natural Heritage, Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage, Underwater Cultural Heritage, Treasure Trove and for related matters. It received Royal Assent on 30th December 2005 and was published and gazetted on 31st December 2005. NHA came into effect on 1 March 2006.

The process of conservation according this Act includes preservation; restoration; reconstruction; rehabilitation; and adaptation or any combination of the aspects mentioned. Furthermore the process of preservation includes to halt further deterioration; decay; or a state of dilapidation; and providing structural safety and well-being of heritage buildings; which includes the techniques of preservation; and improving the structure of the heritage building; and operation and maintenance.

The process of restoration involves recovering the form and details of a structure or part of a heritage building; removing the latter work and replacing the missing original work; full restoration that involves both the exterior and interior of the heritage building; partial restoration which involves the exterior, interior, or; any partial combination that illustrates the historic value; and adaptive restoration that includes the exterior and interior being adapted to a modern functional use.

The reconstruction includes accurately reproducing a new construction of a heritage building; producing in detail the vanished structure of a heritage building; or part of it. The rehabilitation includes to return a heritage building to a state of utility through repair or alteration to a contemporary use; and preserving the historic values of the heritage building. On the other hand, the Cultural Values in this Act includes aesthetic; historic; scientific; social; and ecological.

2.3 The Outstanding Universal Values (OUV) - D2

The Outstanding Universal Values or OUV is the central idea of World Heritage Convention Concerning the Protection of the World's Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972) which was granted to establish an effective system of collective protection of the world's cultural and natural heritage. OUV was established by the UNESCO Expert meeting in 1976 who discussed the concept of OUV. It was then agreed at a convention which took place in Paris on 27th June to 1st July 1977 and produced the first definition of OUV.

This document has defined the following words (i) Outstanding as a heritage building is exceptional, superlative and remarkable; (ii) Universal as a heritage building is outstanding from a global view; and (iii) Value of a heritage building is determined based on the standards and processes by The World Heritage Convention.





A heritage building will be considered to be OUV when it meets the conditions of integrity and authenticity. Each nominated heritage building should represent aesthetic value; OR have a great influence in architectural, monumental arts, town-planning, and landscaping; OR uniqueness; OR illustrates a significant historic value; OR indicates the outstanding example of a traditional human settlement culture; OR is associated with important events that are significant with OUV; and meet the test of authenticity in design, materials, workmanship or setting of a heritage building.

In 2005, Cultural Criteria OUV of heritage building was established. There are as follows it represents a human-made masterpiece; illustrates the human values that have a great influence in architectural, monumental arts, town-planning, and landscaping; uniqueness of the heritage building; outstanding example of type of a heritage building, architectural, technology, landscape that illustrates human historic value; indicates an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement culture, land use, or sea-use; associated with important events that are artistic and significant with OUV; indicates the aesthetic value.

2.4 The Guidelines for Conservation of Heritage Buildings in Malaysia (GCHB) - D3

The Guidelines for Conservation of Heritage Buildings (GCHB) are provided as a guide for the implementation of heritage conservation in Malaysia. The preparation of GCHB refers to NHA; International Conservation Guidelines of UNESCO; Charter Burra Australia 1999 (Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Significance); and the Charter under the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS). With the availability of this GCHB, all work related activities and the conservation of heritage buildings must comply with the principles and procedures contained in the GCHB and approval of the Department of National Heritage.

2.5 Conservation Management Plan of Malacca (CMP) - D4

A Conservation Management Plan is defined by ICOMOS as a document which sets out the significance of a heritage asset, and how that significance will be retained in any future use, management, alteration or repair. The Conservation Management Plan for Malacca or CMP was first identified in 1979 in Malaysia.

In 1988, the state government of Malacca organised a seminar on the heritage of Malacca. The state government decided to designate the St Paul's Hill as a heritage zone after the seminar. The heritage buildings within the zone include the Stadhuys or Red Building, Christ Church, and the ruined A Famosa Fort which has been restored and conserved. These properties are included in the Heritage List, which comprises of two major protected areas within the conservation zone of the historic city of Malacca, and is demarcated by the Malacca River.

Conservation Management Plan is used as guidance for the promotion of conservation, preservation, rehabilitation, restoration, and reconstruction in Malacca; as an outline of the strategies and guidance





that enable and allow changes to take place within a framework of conservation and protection; and serving as a long term comprehensive framework to guide heritage in Malacca.

Table 2: Content Analysis for the Expert Interviews for Understanding the Current Practice of Conserving a Heritage Building

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Respondent Identifier	Interview Text	Interpretation of the Underlying Meaning	Descriptive Codes
Strategic: R₁	Preservation and conservation for heritage buildings in Malaysia are based on the National Heritage, the Outstanding Universal Value or OUV, Guidelines for Conservation, and also Conservation Management or CMP. All the Cultural Values of Heritage Buildings are under those documents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Conservation of heritage buildings in Malaysia are based on:-<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The National Heritage Act 1;• The Outstanding Universal Value 2;• The Guidelines for Conservation of Heritage Building in Malaysia³; and• The Guidelines for Conservation Management Plan of Malacca⁴.• All classifications of Cultural Values⁵ are stated in these four documents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">¹ : NHA - D₁² : OUV - D₂³ : GCHB - D₃⁴ : CMP - D₄⁵ : CV





Strategic: R₂	<p>Actually, Cultural Values are very broad. Cultural Values should be included with the authenticity. The authenticity is affiliated with the geographical environment of Malaysia. It is based on the value of history. The history and geographical significance of what should be maintained and preserved in Malaysia.</p> <p>The conservation process begins with Section 24 to Section 31 under the Heritage Act. Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is implemented in order to check the value or the authenticity of any heritage values. There are 14 specialists in the expert committee of conservation. Each of the heritage building has its own architectural expert to do the screening test in designating the site. A heritage site is the heritage area or zone which has been designated to be conserved. Buildings can also bid to be designated as a heritage site. The most important aspect is the area itself. Then, Notice of Intention will be produce to the owner of the site, that the site or building will be gazetted as a heritage site. Notice of Intention is under Section 24 which is proposed by the Heritage Commissioner in order to gazette a heritage site. The Notice of Intention is published in the press after it is gazetted as a heritage site. If there are any objections, anyone can protest about the area gazetted as a heritage site. The Heritage Commissioner will carry out a hearing about the gazetted site if any objections have occurred. A period of 28 days are given to the person (who objects the gazetted site) to defend their stand after the notice of hearing takes place. However, the Heritage Commissioner has the final decision as to proceed or not with the intention of gazetting a heritage site. The most important thing in gazetting a heritage site that it must have the State Government or the Chief Minister of the State's consent.</p> <p>In Malacca, gazetting a place is under the responsibility of PERZIM. PERZIM will issue a notice of designation in the Heritage Registration Act under Section 23. Malacca has its own CMP for conservation.</p> <p>On the other hand, the conservation work uses the Guidelines for Conservation which includes the manual for preservation and conservation, building facades, building structure, etc. Any changes to the building must be approved by the Commissioner under the Act 172 Town and Country Planning 1976.</p> <p>The most important thing is the OUV in conserving the heritage site.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In the Registration and Enforcement section,• conservation of a heritage building is according to:-• The National Heritage Act¹; that emphasises all Cultural Values² including archaeological, architectural, cultural, spiritual, linguistic, and technological features.• In Malacca, conservation is done by PERZIM or the Malacca City Council under the Notice of Designation in the Heritage Registration Act under Section 23 of the Conservation Management Plan³.• The conservation work in Malacca used the Guidelines for Conservation of Heritage Building⁴ which includes the manual for preservation and conservation, building facades, and building structure.• OUV⁵ is also applied in conserving the Cultural Values in Malaysia.	<p>1 : NHA - D₁ 2 : CV 3 : CMP - D₄ 4 : GCHB - D₃ 5 : OUV - D₂</p>
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Tactical: R₃	<p>This unit is established to monitor and implement the best practice of conservation of heritage buildings and also to conduct an awareness programme for the local community about the importance of preserving and conserving Cultural Values of Heritage Buildings. The heritage buildings are evaluated according to all the Cultural Values based on the National Heritage Act, UNESCO's OUV, CMP and the Guidelines of Conservation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- According to the World Heritage Organisation (WHO), the heritage buildings are evaluated according to all Cultural Values based on:-<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The National Heritage Act₂;• The UNESCO's OUV₃;• The CMP₄ for Malacca; and• The Guidelines of Conservation for Heritage Building in Malaysia₅.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">¹ : CV² : NHA - D₁³ : OUV - D₂⁴ : CMP - D₄⁵ : GCHB - D₃
Tactical: R₄	<p>I am the Conservation Architect for the Malacca City Council. This unit focuses more on the enforcement tasks and the policies in gazettement a heritage site.</p> <p>I am assigned to evaluate the Cultural Values of Heritage Buildings based on architectural views. However, conserving a heritage building involves a historian, planner, and building surveyor.</p> <p>I am more focused on the tangible aspects of a building, such as the physical look and material used in conserving a heritage building.</p> <p>Heritage buildings in Malacca have existed for a long time and we perpetuate and monitor the buildings in accordance with UNESCO. We also have the CMP and use the Operational Guidelines to justify the old heritage buildings in Malacca.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- According to the Malacca City Council, conservation of heritage buildings are accordance with:-<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The National Heritage Act, using CV₂;• The UNESCO's Outstanding Universal Value₃;• The Conservation Management Plan₄; and• The Guideline of Conservation of Heritage Building₅.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">¹ : NHA - D₁² : CV³ : OUV - D₂⁴ : CMP - D₄⁵ : GCHB - D₃
Tactical: R₅	<p>Our unit of conservation is responsible for the preservation and conservation work, planning and implementation work of conservation of Cultural Values of Heritage Building. All Cultural Values are used in conserving heritage buildings according to the National Heritage Act, OUV, CMP and the Conservation Guidelines. The Conservation Guidelines and CMP are used in order to prolong the life-span of the heritage buildings and to maintain the good condition of the buildings.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- The Conservation Unit for conservation of the Malacca Museum Corporation is responsible for the preservation and conservation work, planning, and implementation of the plans for heritage buildings.- All CV are used according to:-<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The National Heritage Act₂;• The OUV₃;• The CMP₄; and• The Conservation Guidelines for Heritage Building₅.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">¹ : CV² : NHA - D₁³ : OUV - D₂⁴ : CMP - D₄⁵ : GCHB - D₃
Operational: R₆	<p>I am responsible for conservation work and exhibition shows for the museum.</p> <p>Actually, all Cultural Values used in conserving a Heritage Building in Malacca. We used the Act, OUV, CMP and the Conservation Guideline for the conservation work in Malacca.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- All CV₁ are used in conserving a heritage building in Malacca along with:-<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The National Heritage Act₂;• The OUV₃;• The CMP₄; and• The Guidelines for Conservation of Heritage Building₅.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">¹ : CV² : NHA - D₁³ : OUV - D₂⁴ : CMP - D₄⁵ : GCHB - D₃





Operational: R ₇	I think I am agreeing with her.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- R₇ Expert Views on the current practice of conservation are similar to R₆;- All CV₁ are used in conserving a heritage building in Malacca along with:-<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The National Heritage Act₂;• The OUV₃;• The CMP₄; and• The Guidelines for Conservation of Heritage Building₅.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">¹: CV²: NHA – D₁³: OUV – D₂⁴: CMP – D₄⁵: GCHB – D₃
Operational: R ₈	I am the execution part. All the earlier process of evaluating the Cultural Values of Heritage Buildings have been done by the Cultural Heritage Department.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- R₈ does not provide any Expert Views on the current practice of conserving CV in Malaysia.	-

3.0 Conclusion

This study has captured the views from three levels of conservation practitioners at strategic, tactical, and operational levels in understanding the current practice of conserving heritage building in Malacca.

The analysed data of Expert Interviews were generalised as follows:

- Strategically:
 - The respondents, which are **R1** (Deputy Commissioner of Cultural Heritage Department Malaysia) and **R2** (Director of Registration and Enforcement, Cultural Heritage Department Malaysia) perceived all classifications of Cultural Values (social, historic, aesthetic, scientific, and ecological) are used in the current practice of conserving a heritage building in Malaysia.
 - There were no further elaborations on all the Cultural Values cited by the respondents.
 - R1 recommends referring to the four vital documents used. They were:-
 - i. **D1** – The National Heritage Act of Malaysia or **NHA**;
 - ii. **D2** – Outstanding Universal Values or **OUV**;
 - iii. **D3** – Guidelines for Conservation of Heritage Building in Malaysia or **GCHB**; and
 - iv. **D4** – The Conservation Management Plan of Malacca or **CMP**.
 - **R2** elaborated briefly on **D1 - NHA**, **D3 - GCHB**, and **D4 - CMP**.
- Tactically:
 - **R3** (Director of World Heritage Organisation of Malacca) and **R4** (Conservation Architect of Malacca City Council) also comprehended that all of Cultural Values are applied in conserving a heritage building in Malacca.
 - **R3** and **R4** do not elaborate further about the current practice of conservation, but instead





detailed their organisation's tactical functions.

- Operationally:
 - The majority (3 out of 4 respondents) stated that all Cultural Values characteristics, **GCHB**, and **CMP** were used in the current practice of conservation. Nevertheless, none of them specified the operational work process.
 - However, **R8** (Contractor/Appointed Conservator) does not respond to the **RO2**.

In summary this study developed a general understanding of the overview of current practice of conservation practitioners which can draw the development characteristics that led to the robust model of conservation in Malaysia.





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