Heritage place inventory: A tool for establishing the significance of places

Nur Farhana Azmi*, Faizah Ahmad & Azlan Shah Ali
Faculty of Built Environment, University of Malaya, 50603 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

farhanazmi@um.edu.my

Built heritage of immense architectural, historical and cultural values constitute as one of the most dominant characteristics that contribute significantly to the identity of places. However, the built heritage in smaller towns and cities in Malaysia have been relatively neglected and overlooked. In addition to the role in identity development of heritage sites, a physical built environment or more generally the place has not received adequate attention in built environment literature. Therefore, this paper attempts to explore heritage place inventory as an important conservation tool for establishing the value of places, ultimately leading to their legal protection. A survey was conducted in Kampung Kepayang, a small town in the state of Perak, Malaysia, to discover valuable background information of the identified historic resources through heritage place inventory. A total of 50 pre and post-war buildings of varying styles, values and uses were identified as unique characteristics that influence the distinctiveness of the town. The paper ends with the conclusion that documenting historic places paves the way for establishment of the overall significance and importance of the place in the light of meaning, understanding, definition, and recognition of the cultural values they provide.

Keywords: *Built heritage, heritage place inventory, place, small town, values*

1. INTRODUCTION

Every town has unique characteristics which significantly contribute to its distinctiveness and identity. Numerous researchers have referred to these characteristics as built heritage, which is present in heritage places (Goad & Ngiom, 2007; Heritage of Malaysia Trust, 2011; Kamarul Syahril et al., 2008; Logan, 2002; Mansfield, 2008; Muhamad Khairuddin, 1996; Syed Zainol, 1996; Wan Hashimah & Shuhana, 2005). Mansfield (2008) and Goad & Ngiom (2007) for example highlighted the importance of historic urban features as salient sources for both local and national identity. As stated by the Heritage of Malaysia Trust (2011), built heritage does not only contribute to national character, but also local distinctiveness.

In several Asian countries, such as China, Korea, Laos, Myanmar and Thailand, conservation of cultural heritage resources has been practiced to better cultivate a sense of identity (Logan, 2002). In Malaysia, the oldest extant urban dwellings consist of shop houses which strengthen the identity of the country (Wan Hashimah & Shuhana, 2005). In the context of small towns, Muhamad Khairuddin (1996) has argued that old historical buildings make the most significant contribution in conferring on such township its unique image. Despite numerous valuable historic resources, tangible pieces of built heritage within small towns is often underestimated and overlooked (INTERREG, 2005; Yuksel & Iclal, 2005).

In this regard, this paper attempts to explore heritage place inventory as an important conservation tool for establishing the value of places, ultimately leading to their legal protection. The paper begins by reviewing the concept and approach in developing inventory of local historic places. In light of the literature, this paper further attempts to discover valuable background information of built heritage with reference to a study area through heritage place inventory. For the purpose of this paper, the term built heritage has been used to specifically refer to the built environment, including those buildings or groups of buildings that are deemed to be of special value and meaning to the locality.

2. HERITAGE PLACE INVENTORY

Since the 1970s, the use of heritage place inventory or at times called as cultural resource site survey facilitates the initial recognition of any cultural resources present in a particular place (Bronson & Jester, 1997). The term place embraces a site, area, landscape, town, building, or group of buildings, which may include components, contents, spaces, and/or views. Per Pearson & Sullivan (1995), the term place has been defined as area of concentration of in situ cultural material or region of land where human activity is manifested physically in the form of structures and buildings. Furthermore, Norberg-Schulz (1980) in his discussion of the theory of identity and place, emphasized concrete things with material substance, shape, texture, and colour in defining place.

Heritage inventory has been described by Pearson & Sullivan (1995) as a tool used to document the extent of cultural evidence present in a single large or small historic place. It includes all relevant written and graphic information on the evidence. In Canada, historic buildings of significance to the locality are relatively catalogued and documented in an inventory known as the 'Community Heritage Inventory' (Saskatchewan Ministry of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sports, 2008).

The ICOMOS Principles for the Recording of Monuments, Groups of Buildings and Sites 1996 further emphasized the need for recording as one of the principal ways available to give meaning, understanding, definition, and recognition of the values of the cultural heritage. Documentation is further highlighted by Vileikis et al. (2012) as the first step in achieving better understanding of our heritage. According to Australia ICOMOS (2000), the exercise of documenting and assessing information relevant to a place is necessary in establishing the overall significance and importance of that place. In fact, the separation of the process of documentation and assessment of cultural resources often leads to problems (Pearson & Sullivan, 1995). They both form an integral part of good resources management. Per Morrish & Laefer (2010), in addition to promoting and retaining a city's architectural and cultural diversity, the inventory of existing building stock also forms the basis for future development of resource management strategies. Feilden (2005) went further to stress that the generation and maintenance of inventories of all historic buildings in each town are essential for their legal protection. Hence, it is a critical process within the overall conservation process (Blumenson & Taylor, 1990).

Despite the absence of statutory implications for such documentation, the process of recording essentially helps to identify important historic resources, especially in places in which the overall significance and importance are unclear or poorly understood. In Malaysia, an inventory study undertaken in 1992 by the Heritage of Malaysia Trust in conjunction with the National Museum, the Ministry of Unity, Culture, Arts and Heritage (KPKKW) and the University of Technology Malaysia revealed 30,000 pre and post-war buildings throughout the country. At the local level, some local authorities have undertaken surveys of buildings that are of local significance. For example, the Hulu Selangor District Council or Majlis Daerah Hulu Selangor (MDHS) identified 102 heritage buildings in a survey conducted in the town of Kuala Kubu Bharu (MDHS, 2010).

To date, there exists no universally accepted international inventory or standards for creating the tool (Bronson & Jester, 1997). A review of the literature has provided several basic steps useful for preparation of heritage place inventory as demonstrated in Figure 1.
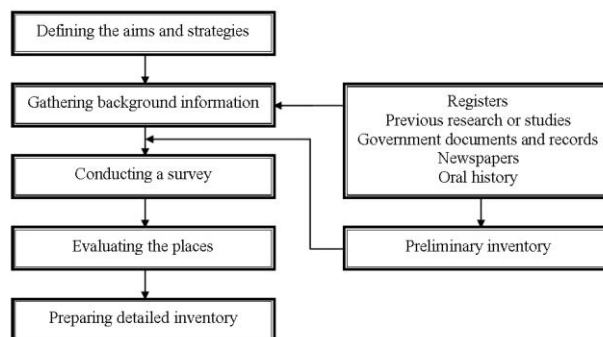

Figure 1: Basic steps for preparation of heritage place inventory
Source: Adapted from Saskatchewan Ministry of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sports (2008) and Pearson & Sullivan (1995)

The first step in preparing a heritage place inventory is to clearly define the aims or purposes of the exercise as well as the strategies in achieving the defined aims. The latter typically involves determining the scope of inventory and method to be used (Pearson & Sullivan, 1995). This step should be followed by research into background information of the heritage places within the area under study. Important information can be obtained from long-time local residents and documents of various kinds such as registers, newspapers and archives. According to Wells et al. (2014), integration of multiple sources of data provides tremendous research opportunities. In the light of available information, a preliminary or progressive inventory of major known places should be drafted to facilitate the survey. According to the Saskatchewan Ministry of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sports (2008), a standardized survey form should be used to guarantee the consistency of collected information. All places that have been surveyed and recorded need to be evaluated in order to determine their heritage values. The last step is to create a detailed heritage place inventory. The exercise of deleting places which are no longer valued, as well as adding new places to existing records, is necessary for the long-term management of the inventory.

2.1 GENERAL RECORDING INFORMATION

A handbook on Malaysian architectural heritage survey prepared by the Heritage of Malaysia Trust has set forth a number of pieces of information that need to be recorded from particular buildings. These include the name of building, owner and name of recorder, reference number, address, age, condition, uses, historical photographs, cultural significance, and plans (Heritage of Malaysia Trust, 1990). Per Blumenson & Taylor (1990), heritage records should comprise measured drawings and photographs. At the local level, the recorded information proposed by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sports (2008) consists of name of recorder and date, common name of the place surveyed, uses, address, owner's name, construction materials, condition, existing or potential threats, surroundings conditions, and photographs. The architectural style and alterations are optional.

As discussed in Section 2, the assessment of cultural significance is an essential prerequisite in order to establish the particular value of a place. The task, according to Australia ICOMOS (2000), involves the preparation of a statement of significance (SOS).

A statement of significance may be defined as a succinct summary of the reasons why the place is of value, and is supported by sufficient description of the assessment process used and the data upon which the assessment was based on, to demonstrate that the statement of significance was justified (Pearson & Sullivan, 1995). According to New South Wales Heritage Office (2011) a short statement of significance for places that are important at the local level will be sufficient. Generally, the statement of significance consists of three main parts (Kerr, 2007; Saskatchewan Ministry of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sports, 2008):

2.1.1 Description of a place

The description conveys an overall picture of the place and its setting in two to three sentences.

2.1.2 Cultural values

Indicates the full range of cultural significance or values of the historic place on a value based judgment. According to Mason (2002), there is no internationally agreed typology of cultural values. Thus, this study has substantially reviewed the criteria demonstrated by international well-established and best practices in identification and assessment of local heritage places. The aesthetic, historic, scientific, social, and economic values are the criteria adopted across Australia and England for assessing local heritage places and guidance at the local entry level. Additionally, this paper holds political value as one of the important criteria to be considered. According to Mason (2002), all values attributed to heritage are political as they are part of the power struggles and exertions that determine the fate of heritage. Brief explanations of these criteria have been illustrated in Table 1.

2.1.3 Character-defining elements

Defines how the values are embedded in the place. According to Jandl (1988), character-defining elements or features are the tangible components of a building that contribute to its unique character, sense of place and time. For Kerr (2007), these elements drive the subsequent conservation process. They are broadly defined as the materials, forms, location, spatial configurations, uses, and cultural associations and meanings which comprise of the place (Government of Canada, 2010). For Gunderlach (2007), sound is another important, character-defining element of a historic place.

Table 1: Criteria for assessment of local heritage places adopted across Australia and England

Criteria	Description
Aesthetic	Exhibits perfect example of any local styles, material or other distinctive local characteristics. This value may also be derived from the sensory experience, particularly the smell, sound, feeling and sight of a place. For these reasons, it tends to demonstrate landmark quality and contribute to the overall quality of its setting.
Historic	Closely associated with past events, developments or cultural phases that have played an important part in the locality's history, including links to important local figures. The association becomes stronger with the presence of physical traces or the continuing traditional use of a place.
Scientific	Potential of a place to yield information and evidence about past human activity not available anywhere else. Thus, allowing people to understand and learn a great deal about their past history, culture, environment, behavior, earlier technology, architecture and others.
Social	Possess strong and special associations with a community or cultural group in the local district for social, cultural, educational or spiritual reasons. It also tends to develop positive local sense of place and identity. In contrast with other values, social value is less dependent on the survival of physical fabric.
Economic	Relating to places perceived as a source of good economic returns or marketable destinations to lure visitors, investments and media attention. More often than not, individuals are willing to allocate resources to protect places with this value.
Political	Derived from the capacity of places as a political tool to build or sustain civil relations, governmental legitimacy, protest or ideological causes.

Source: Adapted from Government of South Australia (1993); English Heritage (2008: 2010); Heritage Council of Western Australia (2012); Mason (2002); New South Wales Heritage Office (2011).

3. METHODOLOGY

The entire research is divided into two stages which flow logically from theory development and field survey. In the first stage of the study, the theories of place, heritage place inventory and its significance as well as approaches in developing heritage inventory were reviewed through a systematic search of available literature. An in-depth review of relevant journals, books, and official documents published by governments and private agencies has been used to establish the theoretical framework for this study.

The second stage of the study involved the process of acquiring and gathering background information of the identified historic resources through observational survey. This study adopts a case study approach as part of the survey. In particular, the small town of Kampung Kepayang, Perak, Malaysia has been chosen to illustrate the usage of heritage place inventory as an important conservation tool for establishing the significance of places. The survey was divided into two phases, beginning with an identification of places of interest followed by a detailed evaluation of the identified places.

Phase I of the survey started within familiar places and continued to progress to street by street within the selected town. In light of information obtained from the literature, the presence of known historic places was determined and other historic places that may previously overlooked were also recorded. The survey identified 50 buildings meeting the following conditions:

1.   It meets the definition of built heritage of the study;
2.   It meets at least one of the pre-defined assessment criteria; and
3.   It lies within the legal boundary of the town (but exceptions were made for external places that have significant relations to the town).

This survey made use of a standardized survey form in ensuring the consistency of collected information. Other data recording items consisted of maps, field notes and digital camera were also used in supplementing the form. Each of the 50 buildings was recorded in a separate survey form and assigned a reference number to enable the researchers to cross-reference all information collected, as well as to

facilitate formation of the systematic inventory record at the end of the survey.

In Phase II of the survey, the cultural values of each of the 50 buildings identified were determined using the pre-defined and well-established criteria for assessing local heritage places outlined in Table 1 of Section 2.1.2. In particular, a place will be considered of significance to the locality if it meets one or more of the criteria under the headings of Aesthetic, Historic, Scientific, Social, Economic, and Political value. It is anticipated that the questionnaire survey on how local and non-local residents perceive the inventoried places, together with the semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders from different tiers of government regarding heritage protection measures impacting the development of small towns in Malaysia, will form the next stage of the study.

3.1 BACKGROUND OF CASE STUDY

Kampung Kepayang is a small town located in the sub-district of Sungai Raia, Perak. More specifically, the town lies on the old North-South trunk road of Jalan Gopeng-Ipoh, with an area of 98.02 hectares and an estimated population of 1,492. Founded in the 17th century, its development was closely associated with the development of mining activities in the sub-district of Sungai Raia. This was reflected in the statement made by the French explorer Errington de la Croix: 'The Sungai Raia district is the smallest of all, but at the same time makes the largest returns of tin…' (Khoo & Abdur-Razzaq, 2005, p.172).

At that time, the Mandailings were the largest group settled in Sungai Raia and it was probably formed by Kulop Riau's men, a Mandailings entrepreneur who first built the road between Gopeng and Sungai Raia. The road ended at a river port in Sungai Raia called Pengkalan Baru or New River Port where now lays Kampung Kepayang. The Gopeng-Ipoh road was then built along a slightly different alignment from the old road, thus bypassing Pengkalan Baru.

In addition to mining activities, the town was also once an important commercial hub in the district offering a wide variety of businesses since the late 17th century. However, the establishment of Simpang Pulai town in the 1950s represented a turning point in the town's history. It was stripped of its earlier status as the vibrant commercial hub as businesses slowly shifted to the new town and since then Kampung Kepayang has remained largely ignored. The widening of the Jalan Gopeng-Ipoh main road further caused the shop houses built along the road to lose their businesses. As stated by the Heritage of Malaysia Trust (2004), the high speed of traffic through the town led to its withering and eventual near death. Many of the town's heritage buildings had been destroyed and if any of these are still standing, they remain in poor state of repair. Therefore, it is necessary to identify and document these buildings before they disappear.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The survey was conducted in March 2013 and a total of 50 pre and post-war buildings of local significance were identified in Kampung Kepayang. The distribution of these buildings is illustrated in Figure 2. The red shading shows the distribution of buildings located within the legal boundary of the town whereas the blue shading indicates the location of two (2) buildings particularly the Kong Fook Ngam temple and Sri Siva Subramaniam temple which are located outside the town's boundary. The survey revealed that the vast majority of the identified buildings in Kampung Kepayang constitutes of double-story shop houses along Jalan Gopeng-Ipoh. According to Shuhana (2011), the character of a town is very much influenced by the function of the town and its geographical setting. Considering the former, the results obtained in some cases reconfirm the function of Kampung Kepayang as a business center.

The background information of the identified historic buildings is summarized in Table 2. Almost 100 percent of the identified buildings were constructed in the period before World War II. These include the Toh Sedewa Raja Abdul Wahab bungalow, Ahmadiah mosque, post-office, Kong Fook Ngam temple, Syed Kamarul Ariffin bungalow, the shop houses and the Smart Islamic Primary School (SRIP), most of which were located right along the main road of Jalan Gopeng-Ipoh. In terms of occupancy status, a large percentage of buildings were vacant. One of the vacant buildings was the former post office (Figure 3), where its move to Simpang Pulai in the 1950s marked an end to the town. Other buildings were the shop houses and the Toh Sedewa Raja Abdul Wahab bungalow. Under the use of properties, these empty buildings have been indicated by the 'other' category as shown in Table 2.
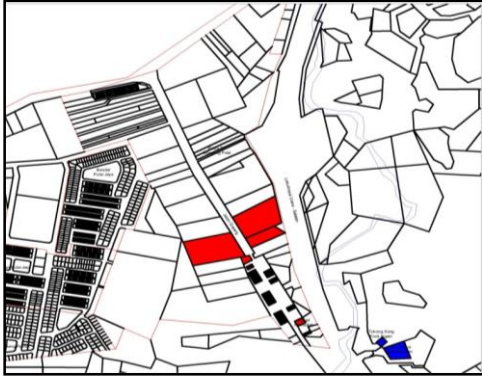
Figure 2: Distribution of the identified built heritage in Kampung Kepayang

Table 2: Background of the identified historic buildings

	Percentage (N=50)
Period	
Pre-war	98.0
Post-war	2.0
Occupancy	
Occupied	32.0
Vacant	68.0
Use	
Residential	12.0
Commercial	10.0
Mixed use	2.0
Educational	2.0
Religious	6.0
Others	68.0
Ownership	
Government	2.0
Private	98.0
Condition	
Good	12.0
Fair	14.0
Poor	74.0
Architectural styles	
Colonial	2.0
Malay vernacular	6.0
Modern	4.0
Straits Eclectic	4.0
Utilitarian	84.0
Values	
Aesthetic	94.0
Historic	100.0
Social	92.0
Economic	4.0

With respect to the ownership, the majority of buildings (98 percent) are privately owned. According to Wan Hashimah & Shuhana (2005), one of the challenges in protecting old buildings is that they are privately owned. A relatively large number of vacant and abandoned buildings in the town intrinsically proves the fact. This is further substantiated by the high percentage of buildings (74 percent) that were rated in poor conditions. The findings also demonstrate that the majority of buildings (84 percent) were erected in old architectural designs of Utilitarian style. This is predominantly represented by the double-story shop houses (Figure 4) which have so faithfully greeted people travelling along the busy Federal route between Simpang Pulai and Gopeng. Its unique architectural style, featuring arched windows frames and oversized windows with small individual panes, contrasts with the large wide structure of the building. The uniformity of the design do not only influenced the distinctiveness of the buildings but also the Gopeng-Ipoh main road where they were concentrated.

In terms of cultural values, 100 percent of the 50 identified buildings were found to be historically significant to the locality. As argued by Mason (2002), there is no heritage without historical value. As discussed in Section 2.1.2, a place will be of historical importance if it is associated with past events, developments, cultural phases, life or works of persons, group of persons or organizations that have played an important part in the locality's history. For instance, the majority of the buildings with historical value demonstrate strong associations with the role of Kampung Kepayang as an important commercial hub in the district. Examples of these buildings comprise the late 17th century shop houses along the main road of the town. Another building with historical value is the Toh Sedewa Raja Abdul Wahab bungalow. It was built in the late 1880s as the formal residence of Penghulu Wahab, one of the earliest chiefs of Kampung Kepayang. The bungalow is particularly noticeable among the residents due to its significant association with a historically significant figure of the town who had contributed in the gazette of the existing Malay and Sumatran settlements in Sungai Raia district as Malay reservations in 1921. Furthermore, since most of the identified buildings were constructed in the period before World War II, the result in some cases supported the literature that mentioned historical value can also simply accrue from the age of buildings (Mason, 2002).

Other cultural values possessed by the surveyed buildings include the aesthetic value at 94 percent followed by social and economic value at 92 and 4

percent respectively. None of the buildings are deemed to be of scientific and political value.

As discussed in Section 2.1.3, the character defining elements are among the most fundamental elements that need to be examined when assessing the potential cultural significance of a local place. It was found that meanings and associations of buildings with particular events or persons in the past are vitally important in invoking a building's historical significance. This is clearly depicted in Table 3, in which 100 percent of buildings with historic value are regarded as significant through their meanings. In this sense, meanings represent the key character-defining element by which the buildings carry their most important historical significance.

The character-defining elements of spatial organization and uses are also important in defining the historic character of the buildings. In view of the former, 84 percent of the buildings were valued historically for the way they were organized, most of which were comprised of shop houses. These buildings were laid out in rows of specified widths and connected to each other by covered walkways to form number of blocks with a continuous frontage of shop houses. These clumps of shop houses blocks, which would eventually form a so-called shop house core, were separated by streets in a formal grid pattern, thus forming European-style medieval streets.

In addition to historic value, the use of buildings also plays a significant role in defining the social and economic values of a number of buildings in the town. Taking the former as an example, 4 out of 46 buildings (8.7 percent) of social significance, including the Ahmadiah mosque, Sri Siva Subramaniam, and Kong Fook Ngam temple, continue to be valued for their religious, social and cultural roles. For decades, they have played a major role in the community life of the town.

A place of social significance also tends to be symbolic or a landmark place in the local landscape (Heritage Council of Western Australia, 2012). It was observed that the strategic location of the shop houses along the Gopeng-Ipoh main road has significantly influenced its visibility, hence it has a role as a landmark that anchors the entry to the town (91.3 percent). This is in line with the findings of Khairul Amin & Norsidah (2014), who highlighted location as one of the important attributes that influence identification of a landmark.

Finally, overall form and material have been shown to serve as important character-defining elements in 100 and 44.7 percent of the buildings, respectively, in terms of aesthetically valuable. For instance, double-story shop houses in a Utilitarian style are not only distinguishable by the overall form of the buildings, but also by the predominant use of timber material. Since places with aesthetic quality are often associated with the sensory perceptions, such as the smell, sound, and appearance of a place (Mason, 2002), it is expected that the character-defining element of sound will have results as well.

Figure 3: Former post-office

Figure 4: Shop houses along Jalan Gopeng-Ipoh

Azmi, N. F., Ahmad, F., & Ali, A. S.

Table 3: Character-defining elements with respective cultural values

	Percentage			
	Aesthetic (N=47)	Historic (N=50)	Social (N=46)	Economic (N=2)
Meanings	0	100.0	0	0
Organization	0	84.0	0	0
Uses	0	8.0	8.7	100.0
Location	0	0	91.3	0
Form	100.0	0	0	0
Material	44.7	0	0	0

5. CONCLUSION

A relatively large number of historic buildings of local significance, as identified through heritage place inventory, reflects the historical richness of the area. We have demonstrated significance of a tool for identifying the unique characteristics of a place that may have been previously overlooked. Documentation of important historical places allows appreciation for the overall significance and importance of a place in the sense that they provide meaning, understanding, definition, and recognition of cultural significance and values, which is the ultimate aim of conservation. While this does not necessarily mean that places can, should, or will be conserved, ignorance of cultural significance often leads to total loss of historic places. In addition to the current set of criteria for the assessment of local heritage places, this paper also offers an overview of a process for developing a heritage place inventory that would benefit from the establishment and enhancement of the significance of local heritage places.

6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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