

THE ROLE OF STATE AND NEWSPAPER IN CONSERVATION OF HISTORICAL SITE: THE CASE OF PENANG

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Accepted date: 30 October 2017

Published date: 15 January 2018

To cite this document:

Ghazali, M.H., Sumrahadi, A., & Mohamad, B. (2017). The Role of State and Newspaper In Conservation of Historical Site: The Case of Penang. *International Journal of Law Government and Communication*. 2(6), 87-100.

Abstract: *Print media plays a significant role in information dissemination and could raising awareness among the public on certain particular issue arises. In fact, through the portrayal of text and image thus, it has a great ability to influence on the minds of the reader. Studies on cultural heritage conservation using communication approach are still rare in this country. The paper aims to investigate on the issue of preservation of Malay-Islamic cultural heritage vis a vis historic buildings in the Penang State of Malaysia. In addition, the paper will focus on the areas encompasses of inside as well as outside of George Town. George Town has been recognized as World Heritage Site by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on July 2008, along with Melaka. Since the recognition, the issue of conservation becomes an important agenda especially for the state government to maintain its status, which of course in line with standards set by the UNESCO. This paper used the content analysis by utilizing the local daily newspaper of the Berita Harian (BH) from year 2011 to 2015 (approximately 5 years) and also from the previous literature. Based on the findings, it is obvious to state that there is indeed an issue was highlighted and it seems that it needs to be taken seriously and dealt with promptly. Thus, besides state government, all parties must take responsibility to ensure that the valuable heritage found in the state does not extinct by the modernization.*

Keywords: *Newspaper, Malay-Islamic Cultural Heritage, Historic Buildings Conservation, George Town, State Government*

Introduction

Cultural heritage is proven to be one of the major contributors to national development. It could also bring significant impact towards individuals, ethnic groups, nations and the international community (Norhasimah et al., 2014). The values of cultural heritage can be classification as various, such as historic, symbolic, informational, aesthetic and economic. Basically, in

Malaysia, there are two types of cultural heritage, known as tangible and intangible heritage. Tangible heritage comprises of buildings, monuments and artifacts, and on the other side, intangible heritage includes traditions or living experiences inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendents, for instance oral traditions, performing arts, social practice and so on (UNESCO, 2017). The paper will focus on the tangible heritage, which is historic or heritage buildings especially in the area of World Heritage Site in the country. Currently, there are two historical cities are recognized as World Heritage Site by UNESCO, namely Melaka and George Town, Penang. In the west countries, the conservation of historic towns and cities are considered a common situation. In the developing countries like Malaysia and Singapore however, conservation is a minority interest compared to urban asset development (Pearce, 1989; Kong & Yeoh, 1994). In fact, the conservation of the heritage in Malaysia is still new, compared to other countries that have long been managing the heritage site either cultural or natural (Solihah et al., 2015).

In general, conservation has been regarded as a tool to safeguard the historic buildings. Wan Hashimah (2012) explained the historic buildings differ from most other cultural properties in that they generally have to be used, able to bear live and dead loadings and also be able to resist all the causes of decay. In addition, conservation of historic buildings includes maintenance and also may relation to circumstances include preservation, restoration, adaption and reconstruction or a combination of these approaches. In the context of Malaysia, urban or city conservation is categorized into three general groups, which are the building conservation, area conservation and cultural conservation (Mohamed et al., 2001).

Many historic and cultural significance that are worthy of preservation for sustainable development in the country. However, uncontrolled development has resulted in the building of new buildings or facades sandwiched in between old buildings (Wan Hasimah, 2012). Besides that, referring to Syed Zainol (1995) findings inventory of heritage buildings in Malaysia that has been done by the Department of Museums and Antiquities in 1992, it is estimated about 35,000 prewar buildings located in 265 cities throughout the country under review thus should be conserved. In fact, most of these heritage buildings are not well-conserved and also in obsolete conditions because of damage to the building (A. Ghafar, 2009). The fate of heritage buildings for instance traditional Malay houses, shop houses, office bungalow, colonial and many others are also experiencing problems of extinction (Kamarul Shahril, 2007). In connection with this, Forsyth (2007) acknowledged that indeed through heritage conservation, a society could pass on to the future generations what is currently identified as being of cultural significance today. Obviously, these historic buildings should be restored as soon as possible because it is a precious inheritance to the country.

In the context of Penang state, particularly in George Town historic city thus there are about 5,000 units of two or three storey traditional shophouses where the residents used to work downstairs, usually in their family business, and lived upstairs (Nor' Aini et al., 2007). However, what was once a busying commercial area, the inner city of George Town, has decreased where many buildings are now dilapidated and empty due to its residents have moved to the newly developed districts on the island as well as mainland of Penang. Apart from that, there are 4,665 historic buildings located in the George Town conservation zone, mostly situated on four main roads namely in Pengkalan Weld, Lebuh Pantai, Lorong Cina and Jalan Masjid Kapitan Keling (Solihah et al., 2015). Simultaneously, Siti Norlizaiha & Izzamir (2011) revealed there are more than 1,700 historic buildings within the core zone in here. Thus, based on the number of historic buildings found particularly in George Town, it is imperative to ensure

that those building are always in a good condition. In this case, it is certain that the role of the Government (whether it Federal, State or Local) is critical in ensuring that conservation efforts can run smoothly as planned.

On the other hand, the role of media (television, print media, internet, etc.) is crucial in spreading information and highlighting the issue to the community. Showkat (2016) explains the media could help trigger a positive change in public opinion and behavior on a matter of concern. Furthermore, this could lead to public pressure on the local policy actors, and thus, the media could also indirectly influence decision makers too. Hence, with the Malaysian government taking much concerns on the conservation matter lately, an analysis of the media coverage on World Heritage Sites becomes pivotal. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the local newspaper coverage in Malay language (BH newspaper) on the role of state government, concerning the issue of Malay-Islamic historic buildings conservation, whether inside or outside of George Town World Heritage Site.

Islam and the Malay World

In this paper, it is imperative to view in general about the background of Malay-Islamic cultural heritage in the country. From the historical perspective thus, the genesis of Malay-Islamic heritage is actually derives from the Islam and Malay World. The 'Malay world' actually refers to the world which included numerous parts of Southeast Asia, extending from Vietnam, Cambodia down to southern Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Brunei and the southern Philippines (Mutalib, 1977). In fact, the Malay world or sometimes can be referred as Nusantara alludes to the world of islands (Mohd Shuhaimi & Osman Chuah, 2012). Ismail Abdul (1998) revealed that based on previous literature, one of the first document on the subject of Malay world is the text written by Abdullah Munsyi in 1612, known as *Sejarah Melayu* (Sulalatul Salatin in Arabic). Prior to the arrival of Islam to the Malay world thus, numerous parts of the region were under the Kingdom of Sriwijaya, between the 7th and 14th century and moreover, this kingdom was highly influenced by Hindu-Buddhist traditions (Coedes & Louis, 1992).

Islam began to appear in Malay world through Pasai state (located in northern Sumatera) in 12th century, led by the Arab traders from Saudi Arabia (Hamka, 1954). Even though Pasai is considered as pioneering state to accept Islam, but the fact is Melaka (Malacca) who actually provided the momentum for Islamic leadership as well as administration of the Malay states in the region. According to Mutalib (1977) Melaka was acknowledged as the primary catalyst for the eventual expansion of Islam to other regions for instance Palembang in Sumatra, Pattani in southern Thailand, North Borneo, Brunei and Mindanao in the southern Phippines. It is said that Islam and Malay world have a unique and distinctive relationship. Until now, the community in the Malay world still shown an unwavering loyalty and persistence in their faithfulness to Islam. Recognizing this fact, it is important for us to understand that anything related to the Malay and Muslim matter in the country, it will drag the attention especially among the Malays. Next is the overview of early history of Penang prior to 1786, and the reason for highlighting it because of there is a need to see it from the historical perspective, so that we can clearly understood the root of the cause.

Penang before year 1786

Penang has its own unique history. Literally, It was the first state who taken over by the British and then paved the way for the expansion of English's imperialism in the Malay states until it officially conquered Malaya in 1874 through the Pangkor Agreement (Noriah et al., 2006). As a result, this conquest brought changes not just in the aspects of socioeconomic and politics,

even also for historiography. This scenario brings huge impact upon Penang, who formerly was part of the area of Kedah Sultanate. In short, the early history of this state began to be blurred and was not be able to compete with the historiography which created by colonial. Therefore, it is essential to know the real story of the marginalized community in Penang, that is a Malays.

Noriah et al. (2006) described that the name of Penang is not really matters prior to 1786 until Sultan Muhammad Jiwa Zainal Azilin Muazzam Shah II begins to offer the areas in the waters of Kuala Kedah up to Penang upon the English East India Company (Sharikat Hindia Timur Inggeris) in November 1771, with the condition to provide military aid for expedition attacking Bugis in Selangor. Since then, the name of Penang is often been dragged into discourses between Kedah with the English East India Company until this state was taken over on 1786. In reality, before the acquisition thus, Penang is just an island owned by Kedah Sultanate which frequently described in the notes of the early English visitors, as a stopover for skippers of small boats and English merchant vessels who commutes in the trade expeditions to Southeast Asia.

History proves that taking of Penang by Francis Light in 1786 in actuality did not follow the principles of legitimate. Bonney (1971) revealed that Francis Light first appeared in the history of Kedah since the time of Sultan Muhammad Jiwa Zainal Azilin Muazzam Shah II (1710-1778). At that time, the Sultan was so impressed with the power of the English East India Company that are already known for their military success, particularly in India. The Sultan intend to make this company as aprotector to Kedah (from the threats of Bugis and Siam) and then, in April 1771 there was agreement sealed which could be seen as the first defensive agreement ever signed by Malay state government with the British. In year 1785, during the reign of Sultan Abdullah Mukarram Shah, it offers the lease of Penang to English East India Company for renewed and the reasons behind it are still the same, to get military aid to ensure the independence of Kedah, especially from the threat of Siam and Burma. In brief, based on the development of negotiations which is not clear, the occupation of Francis Light in Penang on 11 Ogos 1786 in the name of King of England, King George III deemed by Bonney (1971) not just betrayed an international law but also defraud the Sultan.

Literally, separation of Penang from the Kedah Sultanate has a certain significance to the aspect of national historiography whereby is now became a colony of British. Penang acquisition in 1786 also appears to be as the beginning of history in this state, and thereafter by itself makes the state's history before this period of time turns into insignificance (Noriah et al., 2006). From the west perspective, for instance Mills (1961) stated an occupation of Francis Light in Penang, 1786 as the beginning of the state's history and again according to him, when Francis Light landed, Penang is just an uninhabited forest area. Now, the question is it true that Penang only for the place to stopover of fishermen and does not exist of community settlements before the arrival of Francis Light.

In parallel with the above, on the other hand, the Malay people have their own version regarding of the history of this island (Noriah et al., 2006). First is from the people of Sumatra, who recognize it as Pulau Kesatu and the name actually was given by a well-known sailor from Tanah Lingga called Ragam, which often sail between Lingga and Kedah for trading purposes. Second is for people who stayed at Seberai Perai which is also part of the Kedah, before being taken over by English East India Company in 1800 thus, they recognize this place as Tanjung Penaga, which resembles with the name of Penaga tree that abound in the area where Fort Cornwallis was built. Thus, in accordance with both names, Tanjung Penaga is more known to

the public and even until to this time, the pronunciation of Tanjung still popular among the Malay people of Penang when referring to the Georgetown.

Next discussion is *Batu Uban*. *Batu Uban* is the earliest ports opened in Penang. Actually, Batu Uban name derived from the stone that resembles a human head which a gray hair were many found in this area (Vaughan, 1857). Apart from that, Batu Uban also more advanced than any region in the mid-18th century until the new port built by Francis Light in *Tanjung Penaga* (now better known as George Town). According to Noriah et al. (2006) stated the area of settlements of Batu Uban was opened by Malay people from Sumatra. Besides Datok Janatun, Haji Mohammad Salleh or his real name Raja Nan Intan Ibni Almarhum Tengku Pateh Sebatang (or well known as Nakhoda Intan) also been said to have opened the Batu Uban.

The genesis of Haji Mohammad Salleh actually was from Kampung Buadi, Paya Kumboh at Sumatra and he also has a blood relationship with the royal family of Minangkabau. After so long in Penang thus, Haji Mohammad Salleh alongside with his brother, Nakhoda Kecil (who discovered by Francis Light at the beach after four days landed in Penang) went to the Sultan Muhammad Jiwa Zainal Azilin Shah II to apply for opened the villages on the island. The Sultan then give a permission and next, the area starts following to coast of Batu Uban was first explored for a settlements. In the same vein, the story of Datok Janatun's migration to Penang is also very similar to the story of Haji Mohammad Salleh.

In 1749, Datok Janatun, a Minister in the palace of Pagar Ruyong together with his brother named Datok Setia and 180 followers as well as slave among the Batak people have left their homeland because of having different opinions on the question of religious and customary practices (Abdul Aziz, 1983). When they arrived in Kedah, Datok Janatun was giving away ten of handwritten al-Quran, whereby it had brought from Minangkabau to the Sultan Muhammad Jiwa Zainal Azilin II. In return, the Sultan bestows 100 acres of land from Batu Uban until Gelugor to Datok Janatun and his brother. The opening of the settlements in the hills of Batu Uban takes place in 1759, which is 15 years before the arrival of Francis Light to Penang (Abdul Aziz, 1987). Besides that, it is said that Sultan of Kedah did not mind awarding the land to the Malays of Sumatra because to reciprocate the favor of people from Pagar Ruyong, who had helped Kedah against Siam (Zulkifli & Badrol Hisham, 1994). Thus, it is imperative to understand that before George Town, there is a place called Batu Uban who opened by the Malay people and they have built an early settlements in here.

George Town as a World Heritage Site

On July 7, 2008, officially George Town along with the Melaka Historic City have been listed as UNESCO World Heritage Sites. It is obvious to say that both historic cities are remarkable examples of historic colonies, that demonstrated a succession of historical as well as cultural influences. In fact, both towns bear testimony to a living multi-cultural heritage and tradition of Asia, where many religious and cultures met and coexisted (Siti Norlizaiha & Izzamir, 2011). Furthermore, they also reflected the coming together of cultural aspects from the Malay Archipelago, China, India and with those Europe, to create a unique architecture, culture and townscape. Indeed, this status certainly can be a great potential, especially for cultural heritage tourism sector to both states in particular (Shida Irwana et al., 2013).

Penang is located at the northern part of Peninsular Malaysia (see Figure 1). Basically, the state comprised of an island and portion of the mainland and thus, Penang commonly refers to the Penang Island. The state capital is George Town, which situated on the north-east corner

of this island. Founded in year 1786 by Francis Light, George Town and Penang thrived on their colonial past, which become a major selling points for the state's tourism (Ismail & Mohd-Ali, 2011).



Figure 1: Location of Penang

Basically, the World Heritage Site of George Town divided on two parts, which are the Core and Buffer Zone (Solihah et al., 2015; Nomination Dossier, 2008). Core zone comprising an area of 109.38 hectares and contains of 1,700 buildings. This area bounded by the shoreline along the north and east and the northern part to west is along the Love Lane and Malay Street Ghaut, while in the area of west also bounded by Carnarvon Street. Next is a buffer zone that involves an area of 150.4 hectares, bounded by the sea, Transfer Road in the west until Dr Lim Chwee Road and Prangin Road Ghaut in the south west. For further clarification, refer Figure 2.

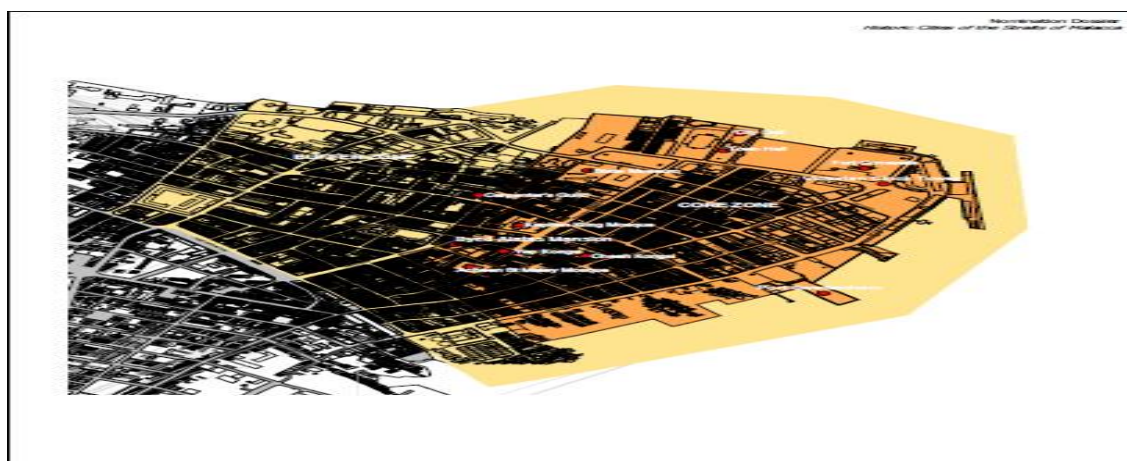


Figure 2: The Core and Buffer Zone of George Town

Method

Content analysis was employed through the local daily newspaper, that is BH. This method is based on the qualitative approach with the purpose to explore the newspaper coverage on the issue of Malay-Islamic cultural heritage in Penang, especially in historic buildings conservation. While the period of time covered was from year 2011 to 2015 (approximately 5 years) and the articles found which close to the study were eight (8) out of 194 articles in total. Second, is obtained from the previous literatures especially with respect to the early history of Malay-Islamic in Penang state. Hence, the main concerns is to scrutinize about the role of state government on the conservation of Malay-Islamic historic buildings, whether it's in the area of George Town World Heritage Site George Town or outside of its (like Batu Uban).

Results and Discussions

Based on the findings, there were two issues addressed which concerning on the conservation of Malay-Islamic heritage or historic buildings and it can be divided such as first, in George Town World Heritage Site and next is for Non-World Heritage Site (refers to outside of George Town area). As for the first issue, in George Town thus, among others its highlighted about the derelict heritage buildings that needs to be restored instantly (BH, 2013, November 11). It is understood that, there are seven (7) heritage buildings that record the development of Malay-Islamic civilization in the country is left due to not getting the attention from the owner now. Six out of seven the buildings are owned by two of state's agencies, Majlis Perbandaran Pulau Pinang or Penang Municipal Council (MPPP) and Majlis Agama Islam Pulau Pinang or Penang Islamic Religious Council (MAINPP), while for the rest is for private ownership. In fact, this matter was also confirmed by the international conservation team from Australia and Hong Kong.

In line with above, one of local conservation expert who declined to be named said, the results of two observations from those conservation team in September 2012 to and June 2013 thus, shocked the community of international conservation experts and to be one of hot topics from the scholars of most prestigious universities of the world. Furthermore, based on observation of two international conservation team involved, found that the Syed Al-Attas mansion was a Malay-Islamic heritage buildings most affected in George Town World Heritage Site. The survey also found the mansion in a pitiful condition, abandoned, neglected and used for drug activity, besides as a place for the homeless shelter too. Therefore, immediate action must be taken to repair all important buildings involving of Malay-Islamic civilization within the George Town World Heritage Site.

The second and last issue is for preservation of Malay-Islamic historic buildings in the area of Non-World Heritage Site. Actually, there are a number of issues raised in this segment, among them is the issue of neglecting history could erase the evidence (BH, 2011, June 21). Underlying of the issue is with regard to the exclusive report from Berita Minggu (BH edition on Sunday) revealed of 42 heritage sites in the state, mostly abundant with history of the Malay-Islamic do not get the attention, due to the authorities just focus around the UNESCO World Heritage Site in George Town. This matter was disclosed from the researchers of Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) which led by Dr Saidatulakaml Mohd, where the feedback of 238 forms were distributed to the public regarding conservation efforts of old relics in Penang. The report also mentioned, feedback found that the public wants the authorities in this state to be responsible for preserving historical sites which rich of Malay-Islamic heritage in order to prevent its disappeared, thus causing losses to the tourism industry.

In connection with that, Persatuan Sejarah Malaysia (Malaysian Historical Society) described the action to ignore historic buildings and heritage of the Malay-Islamic in Penang as an attempt to erase evidence of the existence of Malay placement in the state, before the arrival of English in particular. His chairman, Datuk Omar Mohd Hashim said that he regretted with the unfavorable development related to the history of Malay-Islamic heritage of Penang and hope that both State and Federal Government can play a better role in handling it. Apart from that, the problem of neglect in reality has been going on since a few years ago and it stems from a lack of awareness from the Penang Malay people on the importance to preserving the historic heritage. He also added, the historical and heritage of the Malay-Islamic must be conserved by

the authorities along with the Malay community of Penang due to the fact it was an evidence of existence the Malay settlements in this state prior to English arrival.

Meanwhile, the following BH articles also try to extend with the above issue and the details of its as next. One of Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) who fighting for Penang heritage believed to be a mastermind into subtle efforts to eliminate the history impact and heritage of Malay-Islamic in the state (BH, 2011, June 22). This matter also acknowledged by the academicians and NGO of Malay leaders, that those efforts conducted through lobbying activity on Penang Government so that it continue to focus on conservation efforts within the UNESCO World Heritage Site. As a result, many historic buildings and house of worship which characterized of Malay-Islamic outside World Heritage Site are not given proper attention from the local authorities as well as state government.

In parallel with above, president of Malay Penang Association, Datuk Seri Mohd Yusoff Latiff mentioned his own sides confirmed the existence of 'subtle hand' that caused the conservation efforts of Malay-Islamic heritage is ignored so that the focus only given to the UNESCO World Heritage Site. Moreover, the neglect attempts to extinguish the remains of Malay-Islamic heritage in Penang, besides intent to show that the Malays does not deemed as the earliest peoples in this state, in contrary it's for British and other communities. Consequently, this association together with the other Malay's NGO have no choice except tried to conserve it on their own.

Second article is regarding the issue of the state government, that is said refused to preserving on historical remains (BH, 2011, June 23). In response with the issue arises thus, the Penang Chief Minister and at the same time who holds a portfolio of heritage affairs, Lim Guan Eng explained that he do not want to interfere because it involved of religious affairs. He also try to makes legal problem of landowners and religious sensitivity, as an excuse for the state government does not need to take care the matter of relation to rescue's efforts of the Malay-Islamic heritage. In addition, he pointed the state government hard to take action because the owners of historical remains as well as Malay-Islamic heritage in this state, should be identified in advance. Apart from that, he admitted the focus of historical heritage are more emphasized on the George Town World Heritage Site than other spots, due to special status gained from the UNESCO in year 2008.

As for the third article, the issue addressed is about the Malay-Islamic heritage in Penang became a victim of the political agenda (BH, 2011, June 29). The neglect of historical remains and Malay-Islamic heritage in Penang, should be given special attention from the country's leaders, economists, Ulama (Muslim scholars), humanists and people in the country as a whole. The reason is, these thing considered as a treasure of the Malays and Bumiputera (the Indigenous People) which highly valued and became a symbol of strength of the Malay race identity until to lead the formation of Malaysia on this day. Therefore, many of NGO leaders urged that the historical remains and Malay-Islamic heritage in the state placed under the responsibility of *Yang di-Pertuan Agong* and *Majlis Raja-Raja* (Conference of Rulers), because it is part of affairs who involving the special position of Malays. In fact, this statement also supported by the president of Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia or Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM), Muhammad Razak Idris said that the historical remains and Malay-Islamic heritage are certainly closely related to the interests of Malay people and the Sultans need to protect it. Furthermore, he suggested that *Majlis Raja-Raja* should set up a special body

in order to protect and preserve the Malay-Islamic heritage especially for the states who are not monarchies and the Yang di-Pertuan Agong may supervise it directly.

In 2012, the portrayal of issue still to extends and one of them is to highlighted about the State Government is said to stop the restoration project of heritage building (BH, 2012, January 26). It is said that Penang state government does not allowed an efforts related to the conservation and preservation by Federal agencies against a historical heritage's structure, who owned by the individuals or any organizations in this state. Instead, the state government had made the decision with regard to old buildings who owned by the government only that could be preserved and conserved as a historical heritage. Source told to BH thus, the refusal of state government due to its policy that prioritizes profit tax on new private development projects implemented, for the purpose of to cover the costs of state administration.

The following issue is concerning of the Batu Uban heritage, which need to be protected (BH, 2012, February 2). The author raised the questions, why is so difficult for the stakeholders wanted to declare Batu Uban in Penang as a heritage site which must be preserved from extinction by the rapid development. From the historical perspective, Batu Uban is a village developed since before the arrival of British and now it's facing the possibility of extinction by fast track development in here. It is said, the place has become a luxury condominium village like Sunny Ville and also some developers are trying to developed it (as a commercial project). Moreover, according to the development plan obtained by residents in here from the MPPP thus, a total of 56 houses there would be demolished to make way for the construction of a 31-storey with 290 units of condominium.

In accordance with the study from a Penangies' native, Professor Dr. Ahmad Murad Merican (Universiti Teknologi Petronas or UTP) revealed the Batu Uban is the first port before the existed of Tanjung Penaga, which now known as George Town. He added, in here also is the beginning of a community of Jawi Peranakan or Pekan, as a result from the marriage between Malay and Arab. Besides, it is also became a region where the beginning of the earliest civilization existed, including the administrative center and the cosmopolitan of Malay archipelago, and the Indian Ocean up to Hadramaut. At the same time, the author raises the question again regarding an effort that just highlighted Penang only existed after the British conquest and the endeavor to developed the Batu Uban regardless of its origin as a first settlements of the Malay, could be deemed as an attempt to erode the Malay heritage in there. Furthermore, why not the state government negotiated with the Ministry of Information, Communication and Culture to find way in how it can remain as a historical heritage site without letting it continue became a squatter place in the midst of luxury condominiums.

Next and the final issue is about George Town Festival (GTF) neglects the real narrative (BH, 2015, August 22). Actually, the organizing of GTF has started since year 2010. In this festival thus, a variety of programs and events available and it included narrative of history as well as heritage of some ethnic communities such as the Peranakan, Hokkien, Indian Muslims and the latest one Serani. The author stated that he does not have the problem with the narrative and representation from others community as well as ethnic groups in the organizing of the GTF. However, GTF forget the early founders and had lived in Tanjung and the area surrounding its, before 1786. In this case, although the article not touch directly about the historic buildings, but thus as indirectly it has interrelation with the intangible heritage of Malay-Islamic of Penang as well.

Overall, the content analysis from BH newspaper articles are stressing more on the role of state government of Penang regarding the issue of conservation of Malay-Islamic heritage buildings in here. In short, the buildings seems to be neglected from the respective authorities and this may lead a loss not just for this state but also to the country, because this precious heritage could contribute towards the national heritage tourism income. Moreover, the findings also revealed the role of other related parties such as Federal government and NGOs are also involved in dealing with this problem. Indeed, this issue involved several parties and it shows that the conservation matter require cooperation from various groups due to budget constraints especially and other factors such as political differences.

Scope and Limitation

This paper covers only for Malay-Islamic historic buildings conservation in Penang, whether it recognized as a World Heritage Site or not. Melaka World Heritage Site is excluded from this paper. Furthermore, the paper concentrates just on the tangible heritage vis a vis historic buildings rather than intangible heritage. This paper also does not covers other Malay daily newspapers such as Utusan Malaysia, Kosmo and Metro.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper shown that in Penang, there is an issues highlighted on the importance of to preserved the Malay-Islamic heritage especially for the historic buildings in both of George Town World Heritage Site and also for Non-World Heritage Site as well as the role of state government. Indeed, preserving the Malay-Islamic heritage for the enrichment and education of present and future generations in the country is pivotal. A great deal of tourism relies on places with historic, indigenous and natural significance, which tourism products are established (Norhasimah et al., 2014). Both areas of George Town World Heritage Site and Non-World Heritage Site, are considered to be very significant to the development of this state tourism industry. According to Lim (2012) “Uneven conservation of the city is another criticism of the state government; incidents are highlighted where heritage buildings beyond the inner city were neglected, defeating the idea of creating a socially inclusive and sustainable city.” Therefore, it is hoped that the state government would gives an a fair attention and try to figure out the solution especially to outside of George Town World Heritage Site area.

Besides that, the narrative of Penang specifically on its early history prior to 1786 also must be highlighted again and placed it in the appropriate way, so that the younger generations in the country could know the real story and not just understanding it only starts when British arrived here through Francis Light in 1786. In this case, perhaps one of the best way to make it happens is through GTF, whereby the narrative of the early Malay settlers need to be included together in their event. Obviously, this statement also in line with the suggestion made by from Prof. Datuk Dr. Ahmad Murad Merican as mentioned above. In addition, considering that the Batu Uban is deemed to be as one of the Malay-Islamic heritage in Penang thus, it is anticipated that it will be listed as a national heritage site, under the supervision of Jabatan Warisan Negara (JWN). By getting listed, definitely this historical spot automatically can be preserved and conserved as what has been outlined by the National Heritage Act, 2005.

The relationship between Federal and State governments are totally undeniable very crucial, especially for this issue, concerning of preservation of the Malay-Islamic historic buildings in Penang. Perhaps one of the reason the problem exists is due to dissimilarity of political party ideology and interests, and this situation reflects as what has been stated by Lai

& Ooi (2015) that the tension relationship between both parties are expectedly fierce. But this should not be an excuse for both level of governments to make peace, especially for the sake of their mutual benefits too. Therefore, in this case thus, the win-win situation is probably the best way to be applied for the two parties involved. The reason is simple, since George Town has been inscribed as World Heritage Site by UNESCO, so the benefits received is not just for Penang alone, but it goes also for a country as a whole. In short, both parties need to collaborate together in order to promote and develop tourism industry in the country towards the higher level.

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