

## **Preservation and Conservation of Old Shophouses in Kajang Town, Selangor, Malaysia.**

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The old shophouse in Kajang town is the best example of Hulu Langat district for historical buildings in the 20th century. Kajang town, Selangor, was selected for the case study shown, seeing as the high value of wealth history of colonial-era buildings. However, the original identity of the shophouses nowadays continues to be endangered by urban development due to the demand for infrastructure development and buildings where involved the changes of images and alter the urban pattern of the city like many other cities modernisation at a rapid and unchecked pace. This paper aims to discuss the significance and clarify the issues of shophouses at Kajang town and involves main factors of site, building facade design and historical influences to ensure it is preserved and conserved for the future. However, the discussion is not focusing on the building facade, but the environmental factors must be taken as cause damage to the building. This research method employs a site observation, historical map overlay, and literature review to understand the heritage shophouses in Kajang town. These identified issues should be emphasised with the effective methods that may apply to the overall rehabilitation design planning to find out about guidelines to specific articulations for conservation and recommendations of Kajang shophouses.

**Keywords:** Shophouses, conservation, preservation, historic building, Kajang town

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Kajang town was developed first begun along the Chua river vicinity in the early 1890s, and the early settlers have since constructed residences, shophouses, and management offices along the road leading to the outskirts of Kajang Town alongside the primary of Sungai Langat. The combination of a new and historical building in old Kajang along the primary street of Jalan Semenyih that can nevertheless see the remnants

of the colonial era on the structure and design of old shophouses along Jalan Besar, Jalan Mendaling, and Jalan Sulaiman. Therefore, shophouses Kajang town has many valued qualities over 100 years old and greatly influences colonial-era. As Mustafa. & Abdullah (2013) mention that the existing building is designed as heritage in Malaysia are the age of the environment exceeds 50 years, and it is should be preserved, protected, conserved and restored to

protect the buildings from being lost their original identity forever.

The primary aim of this paper is to discuss the identity of colonial-era shophouses at Kajang town to ensure the preservation of buildings from rapid urban development. The purpose of the preservation includes old buildings and important sites that have to do with the history of construction before and after the war on the Japanese side in the 1942s. Hence, the main objective has been set in this study; it is to identify the several elements of the building design of the colonial era. The second objective is to understand how to ensure the shophouse be the preservation and conserved by strict guidelines that have formed the concept of the Kajang historical town. Other than that, to achieve the main aims and objective, historical map overlay, site observation and literature review are used as the main research method. By this furnish precious insights into the past and their characterises communities; therefore, the value or heritage should be preserved and protected for the next generations (Reuse, 2004). Thereby, it is discovered that this case study's findings will attract more interest to understanding and understanding the preservation and conservation of shophouses in Malaysia, especially for heritage buildings.

## **2. LITERATURE**

### **2.1 PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT**

Physical assessment refers to an urban context or townscape that involves the physical elements and features that are easily identifiable and unique by observation methods. The beautiful and unique scenery reinforces this through the method of the observer. This is one of the main ways to use described by (Cullen 1986), where it discusses the townscape of the scenery of a city found in the writing of his book related to the faculty of sight and vision. In addition, this is also learning about structure that requires an examination of the material and fabric of a city as the perception of a work of art where the relationship between the elements form the city and give it its personality. This method requires an assessment and point of view of the city from

a sensory point of view, especially a good sense with a transitional journey through the city.

### **2.2 URBAN FORM**

The urban form generally contains several types of physical elements and nonphysical characteristics, depending on size and scale, land uses, density and shape, and type of urban blocks, type of building. The definition of the 'urban form' can describe as a physical characteristic of the cities. At the regional scale or broad city, the urban has been formed described as the spatial configuration on fixed of elements (Anderson. et al. 1996). The aspects of urban form at this context and scale would consist of city settlements, such as a central enterprise district, market town, or suburbs. Nevertheless, (Williams et al., 2000) stated that the urban form is intently related to the scale and can be defined as the term 'morphological attributes of an urban area at all scales.'

### **2.3 BUILDING**

The historical building at the beginning consists of two-storey shophouses. Shop homes had been often designed to be slim and deep so that many groups can be accommodated alongside a street. Each shophouses footprint was once narrow and long in-depth. The front place alongside the road used to be a formal area for customers, whilst the rear areas have been casual spaces for family members, toilets, bathrooms, kitchens, and different infrastructure. (Shamsuddin.S, 2011)

### **2.4 URBAN QUARTERS**

The town quarter is one of the predominant components of the city graph and has been used in the planning of cities. The old city centres can be considered a quarter from the rest of the town due to their recognisable personality and useful characteristics capable of preserving a community. This thinking of quarters used to be also one of the distinctive traits of the cities where the residents were segregated in uniformity to their ethnicity or trades. (Shamsuddin.S, 2011)

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

The gathering all information stage of this study area used to be divided into two methods. Visual preservation and a site visit to study the historical background on-site area are methods in this study to identify the issues why historical buildings are not preserved and restored. Why do historical buildings and surroundings have the value to preserve? Because of point the: Value for purposeful diversity, aesthetic value, resource value, economic and commercial value, value for continuity of cultural reminiscence and heritage, value for surroundings variety and contrast, value for architectural variety and distinction (Fitch, 1990). The data were then analysed in order to get a comprehensive understanding of the causes and problems for the findings; all the collected data will help to provide a deep understanding the key of characteristics for the historical buildings.

It is including an understanding and clear information to study about Kajang town and extra history values of the early commencement of Kajang town and how it developed as the key for contributing the have formation of historical to the town of Kajang town. In addition, for the further research of Kajang town, the literature review is the second method used to find out the studies that have been done and understand the methods of preservation and preservation of historic buildings in more depth. By adopting certain guidelines, the contents can be adapted, upgraded and implemented based on the preservation of historical building in town guidelines. The information that has a great influence on the development of the study area and patterns of change will be disseminated as the basis for a study area (A. Ghafar Ahmad, 1997)

### **4. FINDING: SHORTAGE HERITAGE VALUES**

#### **4.1 EXISTING SHOPHOUSES IN GENERAL VIEW**

Based on the observation of the visual site, there are two major types of influence of shophouse architecture in Kajang town. One is the traditional Chinese influence which was the early settlement, and the other is the European

influence in the colonial era. Most of the traditional Chinese influences can be seen along Jalan Mendaling and Jalan Reko, Kajang. European influences can be seen along the Jalan Besar, Kajang. The concept of a shophouse is a house and shop in the same building. It can be seen on the concept used floor level on the ground floor used for business and commercial activities and upper for the owner's house. The finding is that most shophouses are remained and maintained the original form of historic buildings. Mason (2002) states that historical value can be assessed and derived from the age of the place and argues that heritage history would not exist without historical value. However, some of them are a handful that has ignored the historical value found in the building. Additionally, the owner applies elements and actions that can damage the building's original identity.

#### **4.2 RELATED FACTORS**

Most shophouses still maintain the same ownership to next-generation until today. However, the current generation is not interested in preserving and conserving the damage to buildings. The owner's action of not caring about the maintenance of the building has a negative impact on tenants and the surrounding community. For economic activities in the town of Kajang, New traders are not attracted to old shophouses due to dilapidated buildings. The tenants are not desired to preserving the building as any interest in the condition of such buildings (Toutu, 1989). Other elements such as the quantity and kind of specific space, living area in dwelling, and the lowest level of the residing area might also additionally the great buildings have own influences especially efficient in terms of it embodied, lifestyles, cycle energy and working (Newton. Et. Al. 2000). Most of the shophouses cannot maintain due to the age of the building being over 100 years old and the basic structure of the building is not safe for use.



Figure 1 shows existing abandoned shophouses at central town nodes

### 4.3 MODERN INFLUENCE

Along the way, several old shophouses have been converted into modern architecture from the original design. In this study, historical heritage areas have to face external pressure to defend the world heritage historical areas that are listed in specific cities (Zalina and Rodzyah, 201). Besides, the same thing has happened in the shophouses along Jalan Besar, Jalan Mendaling dan Jalan Reko where most of the historical relics have been demolished. The development of a modern building over the top heritage area completely replaced and not following the original design has been effective the original identity of Kajang will be lost. In addition, the widely used use of modern signage has covered the architectural facades.



Figure 2 shows the demolished work before and after on historic building

The shopping malls in Kajang town have led to a lack of attraction for traders to do business. Visitors prefer to buy goods thing in the shopping mall compared to existing shophouses. This situation has affected less encourages the visitors to come and buy in the heritage area of Kajang town. This is specifically applicable to the historic towns, which are in a state of the threat of area degradation and area scarcity due to new developments and improvements (Lai. et al., 2013).



Figure 3 shows an existing shopping mall (Metro Kajang) located near shophouses

### 4.4 RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITY

The local authority in Kajang (Kajang Municipal Council, MPKJ) was established in 1997 which was previously control under the influence of the jurisdiction of (Hulu Langat District Council, MDHL). According to National Heritage Act 2005 (Act 645), tangible heritage consists of the area, structure monuments, and building while intangible consists of any form of language, expressions, dances as produced through the performing arts, martial arts that might also have existed or exist concerning the heritage of Malaysia or any part of Malaysia or the heritage of a Malaysian community (Government of Malaysia, 2012) Based on observations, the authorities do not provide clear guidelines to preserve the original heritage of architecture in Kajang town. As a result, the shophouse owners have altered the original design without regard to the original historical identity. In addition, local authorities do not have specifications on the use of signboards for shophouses purposes. In addition, buildings that are dilapidated and not maintained by shophouse owners are not taken seriously by the local authorities. The changed of juxtaposition also affected the footprint between the old shophouse and the new building.



Figure 4 shows placement billboard at side building to cover the damaged by MPKJ

## 5. DISCUSSION: HERITAGE IGNORANCE

### 5.1 EXPERTISE AND SKILLED MANPOWER

Based on the discussion in the writing of this paper, there are several factors that why shophouses in Kajang town are not well maintained and preserved. Skills specialising in the construction of old buildings are very difficult to find nowadays, causing the structure of buildings that have long been difficult to repair. These are supported by workers who said that the original building materials are more expensive than new ones, making it difficult to replace them according to the original design. Amer Hamzah (1994) stated in the common case, nowadays the workforce involved in the maintenance of old buildings consists of unskilled workers and lacks knowledge of old building materials. Labour involvement is just more to ordinary work like painting the exterior of the building. These also make shophouse owners not interested in living in high-maintenance old buildings.

### 5.2 MODERN INFLUENCE

It is undeniable nowadays that more generations are using the modern lifestyle that has been created during the changes of Kajang has changed dramatically over the years. Everyone has their way of the image on the mind that directly related the experience to the journey. The image is self-worth, lifestyle, and personal (Sulsters, 2005). There are several studies done on the heritage of shophouses in Malaysia which show that history nowadays only lives in the memory of the younger generation because the main factor is growing a city aggressively (Wan

Ismail & Shamsuddin, 2005; UMNUS, 2010; Mohd Baroldin & Mohd Din, 2012). Renovation of new buildings causes the relationship between old and new buildings to lose the value of uniform design architecture. Most of the renovated buildings are not pedestrian-friendly and continuity, especially for disabled people.



Figure 5 shows the building juxtaposition no pedestrian-friendly and continuity walkway

### 5.3 NOWADAYS GENERATION

Ownership to an obscure generation has also had a high adverse effect on their interest. Owners find it difficult to do business with unsecured business conditions due to overpriced maintenance costs and a tendency to modern buildings. The above matters also negatively impact the tenant and visitor because the original identity of the historical of Kajang town has vanished. The link with elements of history where architectural buildings and the culture are interconnected at neglected in the scope of preservation and conservation work has been stated. This is consistently and stated by David, GS (1992). In addition, the existence of shopping malls near historical areas has had a detrimental effect on owners move to economical shopping malls for fewer maintenance costs. If this case continues, this will cause the condition of shophouses in Kajang town to continue to be unprotected for the future.

### 5.4 AUTHORITIES CONCERNED

In addition, a major factor that can be studied is the responsibility of the local authorities less concerned that the historical heritage in the Kajang town has been lost from time to time. Local authorities also do not provide clear guidelines for preserving and renovating historical buildings. Neither exhaustive nor



prescriptive, the local authorities of Canada have broad predominantly the key features the guidelines and standards for preserving and conserving the historic building in Canada as the forms, materials, spatial configurations, location, and cultural associations and its meanings (Parks Canada, 2011). These can be seen in the awareness of existing shophouses where owners and tenants can modify the structure and design of the building without control. Renovations on the building that exceeded the original space area have made the congested district traffic because enough parking numbers are insufficient and caused vehicle users to park along the roadside.



Figure 6 shows the billboard cover the whole upper facade building

## 6. RECOMMENDATION

### 6.1 GAZETTE HISTORICAL PLACE

Conservation planning and clear guidelines are essential for the historical element form of a heritage building; it is the best way to help and be beneficial for the next generations. Studying and identifying the characteristics of something will determine that a place is important, and the type of competition presented is similar for its importance (Azmi et al., 2015). The authorities are making the main proposal to gazette as a historic area over 100 years old due to the urban elements at Kajang town. These matters directly attract the visitors to feel the atmosphere and tourist attractions as a historical centre in Hulu Langat, and this can be used as an example of the Urban district area such as historic buildings along the path at Red-square, Melaka. Local authorities may provide special provisions to shophouses owners or tenants to maintain the buildings to preserve them from being severely damaged.



Figure 7 shows the shophouses preserve the European designs as a reference

### 6.2 AUTHORITY GUIDELINE

Using method qualitative towards research allows researchers to understand how people describe and interpret their own experiences, understand the definition of the phenomena involving them, and their journey to bring up their own experiences (Merriam, 2009). Most of the potential factors also required careful planning along with frequent consistency. There are several aspects in formulating guidelines and urban heritage planning, especially for conservation and restoration, and getting approval from the local authority Kajang town. The strict conditions also should be applied by imposing a minimum renovation work that does not cause damage and loss of the identity of the building itself. Using the signboard should be following the minimum specifications that do not obstruct and obscure the original element colonial era. In this case, renovations and additions work the building should be characterised as the original element in honour to respect the historic buildings surrounding area. Government and authority bodies can take over heritage buildings that are too dilapidated and not well care for by the owners to be repaired to restore the original historical identity of the buildings in Kajang town as a tourist attraction.



Figure 8 shows the proper signboard shophouses approved by MPKJ

## 7. CONCLUSION

Referring to the physical environment condition in Kajang town. It can be concluded that the preservation and conservation of historic shophouses have been caused and challenges to the owners and local authorities of Kajang town. In addition, shophouses 100 years building has been a continuous historical colonial-era have the value of the place to be a heritage town. Most shophouses are difficult to comply with and need to preserve the historic buildings. The modern development buildings at the surrounding Kajang town have posed a challenge to maintain the historical area as the main attraction for tourists. The scholar has proved in a quote, the absence of an attitude towards design integrity between modern architecture and buildings that have aged will undermine the value identity of the historic estate (Noorfadhilah and Shamzani, 2013).

Cooperation and involvement from any party that requires the penetration of shophouses for historic buildings with guidelines and requirements for town building will continue to be preserved. The attitude of shophouses poor maintenance must be taken firm action by the local authorities. The owners involved in the development of heritage buildings need to communicate properly to ensure clear content throughout the development and preservation process. The value and artistry of historic buildings will continue to disappear without any clear awareness and will spread the interest of a more inclined community towards modern buildings of historic buildings

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