Conservation of Cultural Heritage in the Context of City Marketing for Developing Sustainable Urban Development Strategies – A Case of Melaka Historical City

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ABSTRACT
Cities are products of human creation. As cities open their doors to global migration, it is expected that the development of the cities will project the cosmopolitan image to cater for the need of their residents and the future migrants. How will these developments affect the local residents? The aim of the paper is to describe how the aspect of culture, heritage and conservation has been used in marketing cities for tourism purpose. As a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural country, Malaysia prides herself for being able to maintain the cultural identity of her population, amidst the onslaught process of globalization. But the question is, to what extent and for how long can the aspect of culture of the people be conserved and protected as cities become more urbanized? What are the roles of the local authorities in ensuring that the cultural identity is maintained? Many cities in Malaysia have a long history of development. However, Melaka, is probably one with the longest and continuous recorded history since it was an urban centre and an international trading port in the 17 Century and has a population that came from the Eastern and Western part of the world. Until now, there still remain some elements of historical past, which is embedded as part of the local history and culture. The paper will describe the issues that need to be given emphasis by the State of Melaka in the context of conserving and sustaining culture for the purpose of city marketing especially on the aspects of non- tangible heritage.

INTRODUCTION
Cities are the products of economic, political and cultural forces. Also known to be the engines of growth, the importance of cities in development has long been accepted and the growth and decline of human civilization has been associated with cities. As stated by Kofi Annan,

“We have entered the urban millennium. At their best, cities are engines of growth and incubators of civilization. They are crossroads of ideas, places of great intellectual ferment and innovation…cities can also be places of exploration, disease, violent crime, unemployment, and extreme poverty… we must do more to make our cities safe and livable places for all.” (http://www.makingcitieswork.org, 7/1/04)

In recent years, urbanist have come to appreciate the importance of cities and its impact on economic changes. The role of cities as acatalyst of economic growth is made more significant as tourism becomes another income generating activity for the countries. Post modernization of the industrial cities in developed countries have caused the production sites to loose their magnetism and in order to generate income for the local people, these site have been targeted for regeneration strategies to lure tourist for example cities like Bradford, Leeds, Manchester and many other industrial cities in England. In the era of globalization, the challenges of these cities are to maintain their own identity and yet still be an attraction to the international tourist. However, tourists are attracted to destinations in many parts of the developing world due to the uniqueness of the local culture. Hence, the attraction of many cities in the Eastern part of the world is because these cities still retain many of its unique charm very much embedded in their local culture, for example, Bali, Macau, Beijing etc.
According to Law, four factors that cultivate cities to enhance and develop their strength as centres of urban tourism are:

- The decline of industrial activities
- The need to create new economic activities and generate employment
- Awareness of the tourism industry as engines of growth
- Rejuvenation and revitalization of urban economies

In many developing countries, the emigrants of urban tourism was not merely caused by the decline of industrial activities. The creation of tourist sites was based on the capitalization of the aspect of local culture and heritage, which is considered exotic and mystical by the Western society. The development and accomplishment of tourism industry relies upon the sale of value added goods and services in the form of what Whitson and Macintosh (1996) defined as destination image or the symbolic commodification of place. Local authorities with a great awareness of such value attached to a city will utilize and capitalize the image for market it for tourism purpose. Therefore, city marketing becomes a lucrative business.

**Melaka: the historical city:**

Probably the only city in Malaysia with the longest continues recorded history, Melaka will strive to be known as the city where it all began. Situated on the Western Coast of Peninsular Malaysia, it is about one hour drive from Kuala Lumpur, the capital city and is easily accessible by road. The city contains the oldest European, Chinese, Malay and Chinese buildings in the country and can be considered a true ‘melting pot of culture’ where the meaning of culture assimilation can be seen and heard in real life and real people.

The present city of Melaka owes its existence to the rise of the port of Melaka in the fifteenth century. Founded by Parameswara, a fugitive Sumatran prince where Hinduism was the religion at that time in 1400, she rose to be the greatest entrepot port of the region and the conversion of her rulers to Islam to make Melaka the focal point for the spread of religion throughout the Peninsular and the other parts of the Malay-Indonesian archipelago.

The Portuguese occupied of Melaka for more than a hundred years until the Dutch drove them out in 1641. The Dutch ruled Melaka until 1786 and the British under the Anglo Dutch treaty of 1824 later ruled Melaka. Although she was outshined by the other cities, namely Singapore and Penang, during the British rule, she still housed the legacy of European architecture as well as maintained the multi-ethnic of her residents. It is mostly in Melaka, compared to the other parts of country, that you can find the babas and nyonyas (the off-springs of intermarriage between the Chinese and the locals), the chitty (the off-springs of intermarriage between the Indian and the locals) and the Portuguese descendants, these are the intangible heritage of the city, which must be preserved, for once it is lost, it will can never be created or regained.

Until recently, the state of Melaka was associated with the agriculture and commerce and the development of industries was visibly leaking. Is wasn’t until Melaka was proclaimed the Historical City on the 15th April 1989 that the elements of its long history become the focal point for promoting the city and State for tourism purposes. Melaka has always been a favorite stopover for domestic and regional tourists. Until 2001, up to 2 million tourists from ASEAN visited the State and the other half a million came from other parts of the world including Europe, America, and Asia Pacific region. But, the average length of staying 2001 was only 1.98 days. Therefore, while the tiny state is fast becoming a popular tourist attraction, it is only capturing the stopover visitors. More should be done to ensure that it shall not only become a stopover destination but shall must be a must visit state.

The State of Melaka should be very proud to show off her huge bank of assets in the form of historical buildings as old as the state herself. The mere mentioned of the word ‘Stadhuys’ or ‘A Famosa’ brings to mind the reddish building with a distinctive architecture or the old fort of the Dutch tried to gunned down in 1641 and these are two landmarks are some examples that conjure images of Melaka.

The Municipal Council of Melaka the Historical City has been proactive in promoting the aspects of conservation in terms of material culture, specifically the historical buildings. In the Melaka Draft Structure Plan (2000 -2020), the policy on conservation of cultural heritage was formulated specifically to ensure sustainable heritage conservation through the principle of living heritage. The conservation of heritage will involve both the tangible and non-tangible heritage. This is a bold move by the State Government and should be commended considering that the conservation is an expensive and laborious task. However, having such a policy stated in the structure plan will ensure that continuous effort will take place to put Melaka in its right place as the City where it all began.

Melaka is also the only state in Malaysia, which has the preservation and conservation of Cultural Heritage Enactment. The state has also empowered three governmental agencies to be responsible to safeguard the cultural heritage and carry out the conservation and preservation work. The three agencies are Museum and Antiquity Department (a division of the Federal Government agency –Southern Branch), the Municipal Council and the Melaka Museum Corporation.
Since Melaka is also vying to be included in the World Heritage list, rather state has to be very serious about conservation the cultural heritage. To date almost 10 million Ringgit has been spent on the conservation of the cultural heritage buildings in the Seventh Malaysia period and the process is still continuing. This indicates the importance of preserving historical Melaka as an asset to be projected to tourism purposes. Some of the completed heritage project are shown below.

Table 1: completed Heritage Projects 7th Malaysia Plan (1996-2000).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NO</th>
<th>DISCRIPTION OF COMPLETED PROJECTS</th>
<th>TOTAL BUDJET (RM)</th>
<th>FUNDING SOURCES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Restoration of Chitty House</td>
<td>0.83 mil</td>
<td>Federal Government (FG)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Restoration of Kampung Hulu Mosque</td>
<td>0.84 mil</td>
<td>FG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Restoration of Tengkara Mosque</td>
<td>0.85 mil</td>
<td>FG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Restoration of Kampung Kinj Mosque</td>
<td>0.88 mil</td>
<td>FG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Conservation of old British Period Government Office</td>
<td>1.3 mil</td>
<td>FG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Restoration of old Dutch Residence</td>
<td>1.5 mil</td>
<td>FG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Conservation of old British Cottage</td>
<td>1.0 mil</td>
<td>State Government (SG)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Conservation of stadhyus (Phase 1)</td>
<td>1.5 mil</td>
<td>SG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Conservation of old Malaka Club</td>
<td>0.9 mil</td>
<td>SG</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Melaka: The People:**

Serious effort to conserve and preserve the tangible aspects of culture in building seems to be on its way for Melaka to ensure that the image of Melaka the Historical City can be promoted and marketed. However, what is insufficient in the exercise to preserve the local culture in the element of the non-tangible heritage especially with regards to the culture of the assimilated groups that is the Babas and Nyonyas, the Chitty and the Portuguese. Probably, among the three ethnic groups, the Babas and Nyonyas has the wider coverage and more documented information on their history. The Baba-Nyonya is the distinctive sub-community of the Chinese within the Chinese community in Melaka, also known as the straits born Chinese or Peranakan, this community conserve in their peculiar Malay in their daily life, the woman wear the sarung and the kabaya Nyonya with its rich and intricate embroidery and their cooking is a blend of Chinese and local influence. Well known for their mastery in making multi-coloured, delicious kueh like kueh Ku, popia using simple ingredients but laborious preparations, the woman cooks dominated the kitchen to prepare food like inche kabin, itik tim etc.

The Chitty, being the minority amongst the three unique ethnic groups, are probably the least documented and if not for the effort of its own community, the local culture would be lost in history. A very phrase told to everyone who invited them, the first thing a chitty will say is ‘ Please don’t confuse us with the chettiars. They are the moneylenders and we are the traders” (interview with mr. Raja, cultural society of melaka). Said to come from the southern part of India, Kalinga during spice trade, the Chitty speaks Bahasa Malaysia in their daily conservation but still retain their religion, which is hinduism. Many of the young generation no longer speaks Tamil therefore, marriage rites taken place in a hindu temple will be conducted in Malay. The Chitty woman, like the Baba-nyonya also dressed in kebaya and sarong.

The Portuguese community in Melaka is probably the honest living assimilated group who has been in existence for the past 600 years. A small population of them is gathered at the Portuguese settlement in Ujong Pasir. Speaking Bahasa Malaysia as their daily spoken language, their mother tongue, kristang, will be lost to the future generation if no effort to conserve them is made. Effort have been made by a Portuguese named Joan Marbeck who has written a book Ungua Adana (An inheritance) in 1995 and collected a glossary of 800 words and she is continuing her effort to ensure that the language and the traditional culture of the group will not be lost. Cristang cuisine is said to be combination of all ethnic groups – Malays, Chinese, and Indians should not be forgotten, too. Each of the ethnic groups has its own distinctive peculiarities, unique to the people of Melaka.

While the State Government is serious in it effort to conserve the local tangible heritage, more is required in the aspect of non-tangible heritage especially with regard to the want of life of the unique ethnic groups. A very simple way of promoting the local people is through their cuisine. Tourist should be educated about this myriad of ethnic groups not just through books, brochures, and stage performances but their settlements should be a must see site in Melaka (becomes part of the historical heritage walk), their food just be sampled in the food stalls and hotels and their image must be projected by the frontlines in the service industries. These can ensure that the aim with the aspect of living culture can be promoted and Melaka can become listed on the world Heritage Listing for promoting a city living culture.

**Conclusion:**

The City of Melaka has successfully utilized and capitalizes and its cultural diversity and tangible heritage based on her colonial legacy to promote the city. With a well structured heritage policy underlined in its future development, the City of Melaka is on its way to ensure that she lives up to the image that she is promoting, that is a historical city. However, while the image can be projected in a static way via conservation and preservation of its tangible assets, it can also be projected in a dynamic way by promoting the people. In order to
be included in the World Heritage List, a concerted effort should be undertaken by the authorities concerned including the local communities in drafting the development plan, to ensure that the image of the people not just the image of certain interested parties.

REFERENCES