

SHOPHOUSES' FAÇADE WITH ARCHITECTURAL INTERVENTIONS IN KOTA BHARU, KELANTAN

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Accepted date: 05 August 2018

Published date: 15 September 2018

To cite this document:

Faudzi. Y. M. (2018), Shophouses' Façade with Architectural Interventions in Kota Bharu, Kelantan. *International Journal of Heritage, Art and Multimedia*, 1 (2), 01-15.

Abstract: *This article concerns architectural interventions on shophouse facades among the heritage shophouses in the study area of Kota Bharu, Kelantan. The intense urban development in Malaysia brought on by the needs and demands from society has had a significant impact on heritage shophouses. This study raises the issue of the value of the historical shophouse facades, which has been neglected by society and does not match the prominent cultural identity of these buildings. The objective of this paper is to identify architecture interventions and issues influenced on shophouse facades in the study area. The emergence of architectural interventions on shophouse facades was influenced by modernisation of the urban area as well as a lack of awareness from the shophouse owners. In addition, lack of legislation and poor enforcement of existing legislation by the local authority has triggered demolition of shophouse facades. An observation and interview method were applied to obtain the data. Observations were carried out on four selected units of shophouse facades along Jalan Temenggung in the study area. This was combined with interviews with shophouse owners and the local authority in order to achieve the research objectives. The findings revealed that besides natural causes, architectural interventions were caused by poor awareness by the building owners and the local authority; urban growth; and financial constraints. The finding may be useful to many stakeholders such as the shophouse owners themselves, local authority as well as the heritage practitioner in order to sustain and conserve the heritage shophouse as part of the national treasure.*

Keywords: *Architectural Interventions, Shophouse Façade, Heritage Shophouse, Heritage Façade, Building Conservation, Urban Heritage, Urban Conservation, Heritage Conservation, Urban Growth, Historical City*

Introduction

Architectural heritage property stands as the prominent artefact of the previous architectural style. These heritage properties owned its physical and spiritual strength. Without a proper control of urban growth and architecture interventions to uphold those qualities, heritage elements and property will deteriorate due to natural causes and other factors. Architectural interventions on building façade have created a series of modified or different images and form on the urban setting and place ambiance. Building façade symbolize the value of building structure as well as a connection and transition between interior and exterior environment. The growth of architectural intervention is inevitably due to society and its demands to fulfil their urban needs nowadays. As a result, the pattern of urban setting and heritage property had changed throughout the years of urbanization. Moreover, the changes have affected the ambiance of surrounding i.e. building façade and image, street's planning and activities.

In this fast growth of Kota Bharu as the study area, the intrinsic value of heritage shophouses has been neglected by new generation nowadays. Hence, the heritage zone of Kota Bharu has become 'dead' and isolated from urban activities. The emergence of new modern building in between the heritage shophouses has create the discontinuity of heritage façade and put them in isolation state. Further, poor characters of shophouse façade image has not been maintained and well emphasized by the authority and owners. Lack of maintenance and safeguarding by the shop house owners has cause poor and inappropriate image of the heritage shop houses. The change of function also has distracted the environment as well as the ambiance of the heritage site. In addition, the aesthetic value of shophouse façade also has been ignored by changing the strait eclectic style façade to modern façade which undermined the continuity of heritage façade. The shophouse façade has been renovated to modern architecture style irrespective the existing strait eclectic architecture style. In addition, the demolition of historical asset of shophouse façade nowadays becomes a crucial issue in Kota Bharu, to allow new buildings development.

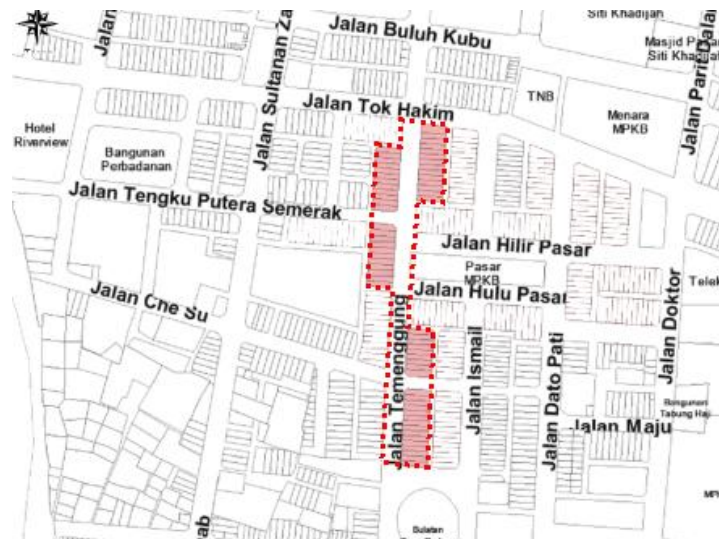


Figure 1.1: Study area

Definition of Architectural Interventions Definition

The interventions involve the degree of alteration on the shophouse's façade elements and characteristic of the study area. It is agreed by Burke. T (2011), where the types of interventions may refer to beyond the definition of maintenance and repairs. In fact, the practice encompasses bringing up to a total new standard of performance which considerably improved than the original design standard, where normally it is defined as alterations, conversion, extension, improvement, modernisation, refurbishment, rehabilitation, renovation, restoration and others.

Hülya. Y (2005) pointed out that, the intervention within the built environment may occur at many levels (from preservation to redevelopment), at various scales (from individual building elements to entire sites), and will be characterized by one or more activities; ranging from maintenance to addition. With respect to interventions at an individual building scale, the scope of interventions are classified under few classification such as protection and maintenance, repair, replacement of existing features, replacement of missing features, alteration, completion of the missing part, new constructions behind the exterior retained façades, new additions to historic buildings, and destruction of ruined historic buildings which according to small scale interventions to large scale interventions (Hülya. Y, 2005)

Regarding the scope of intervention mentioned above, this study focuses on alteration, new constructions behind the exterior retained façades, new additions to historic buildings, and destruction of ruined historic buildings which currently happened in the study area.

Observation method was conducted along Jalan Temenggung. 74 units of shophouses along Jalan Temenggung will be observed and analysed by capturing the image of the shophouse's façade by blocks. The current image of each unit will be compared to the image captured by Majlis Perbandaran Kota Bharu, AJM – PUDG in 2005. The change of façade elements between 2005 to 2014 will be recorded and analysed. All unit of shophouse of Jalan Temenggung with Straits Eclectic architecture style will be observed and captured to justify degree of architectural interventions on façade elements by means of any changes or modification, alteration, renovation, repainted, and refurbishment from 2005 to 2014 as shown in Figure 1.2 below.

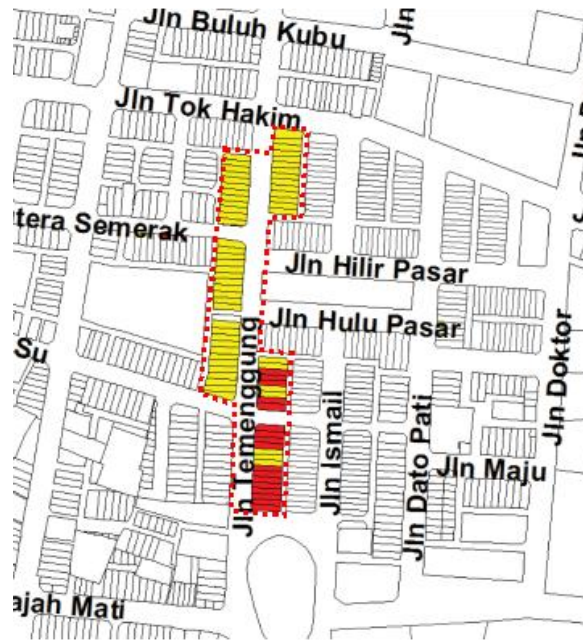


Figure 1.2: Selected shophouses in the study area

- Straits Eclectic Architecture Style
- Modern Architecture Style

Next step, observation of the façade elements will be done by capturing the image of shophouses units to be analysed. Further, types and functions as well as changes of building facade are classified in particular group regarding to degree of intervention and conservation will be identified and analysed during observation. The observation of these particular facade elements is to identify if the architectural interventions will influence the changes of façade within a 9-year timeline from 2005 until 2014.

This research interviews the local authority and shophouses' owner/tenants as respondents to gain data and information regarding research matter. The Interview has been set up by an appointment through telephone to get data and information regarding the conservation guideline and development in the study area. The respondents for interview have been selected based on scope of research, regarding to development control in Kota Bharu, Kelantan. Majlis Perbandaran Kota Bharu, as the local authority of Kota Bharu is responsible in any development and construction approval in Kota Bharu, Kelantan. Shophouse owner/tenants or owners have been selected as one of the respondents as they are the significant parties who are responsible to the issues of architectural interventions on shophouse façade. Selected four units of shophouses (Figure 1.3) along Jalan Temenggung were captured in 2014 and been compared to the image of 2005 obtained from MPKB (2005) data as shown in Figure 1.4 and Figure 1.5 below.

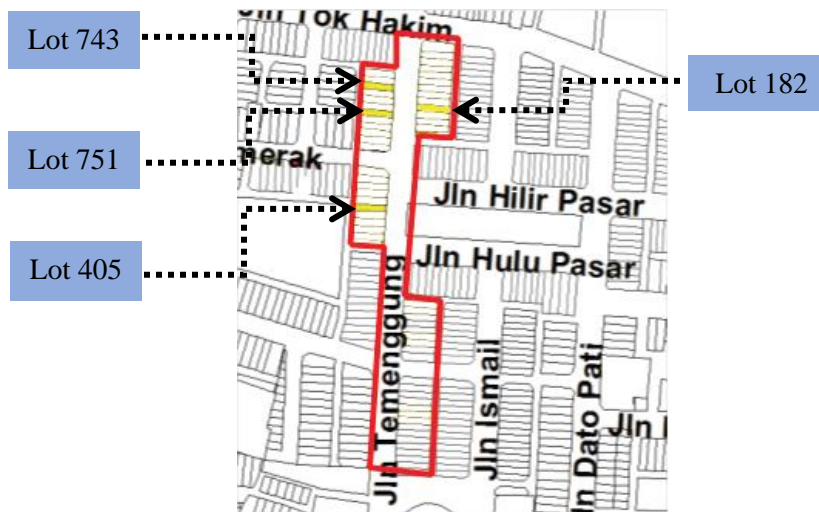


Figure 1.3: Four units of selected shophouses in the study a

Lot No. 173 174 175 176 177 178 179 180 181 182 183 184 185 186

Building
Classification



Figure 1.4: Shophouses along Jalan Temenggung in 2005 (MPKB, AJM – PUDG (2005))

Lot No. 173 174 175 176 177 178 179 180 181 182 183 184 185 186

Building
Classification



Figure 1.5: Shophouses along Jalan Temenggung in 2014



Figure 4.5: Row 2 - Shophouses along Jalan Temenggung in 2005 (MPKB, AJM – PUDG (2005))



Figure 4.6: Row 2 - Shophouses along Jalan Temenggung in 2014

Lot No. 756 755 752 751 750 749 748 747 744 743 742 741

Building
Classification



Figure 4.4: Row 1 - Shophouses along Jalan Temenggung in 2014

Lot No. 756 755 752 751 750 749 748 747 744 743 742 741

Building
Classification



Figure 4.5: Row 2 - Shophouses along Jalan Temenggung in 2005 (MPKB, AJM – PUDG (2005))

Factors Influencing Architectural Interventions

According to Hülya (2005), intervention is a matter that significantly has been discussed in conservation issues nowadays, where implemented by the previous culture when the association, modification in functions and development of spaces was required for the imperative architectural property which belongs to their own nation. As stressed by Nasser (2003), modification in the built environment and the local cultures are influenced by globalisation forces intrinsic in the shift from production to consumption. Rapid growth and urbanization in Malaysia particularly have put the heritage buildings in endangered situation, which might cause the demolition of historical value of the area. Mohamed, et. al (2008) pointed out that, rapid population growth, economic development and urbanization in developing countries with heritage significance being threatened. According to The Getty Conservation Institute (2009), due to fast urbanization and growth consequences of cities worldwide during last decade, urban heritage has confirmed to deteriorate. As added by Chun et.al (2005), there were conflict between urban change and heritage and this situation is physically obvious in all the towns and cities in Malaysia today.

Population-driven development pressures, bureaucratic red-tapes, environmental degradations and other pressing urban issues have all conspired against much hopes and anticipations for a solemn recognition and establishment of the historic and heritage buildings as national pride and treasure, to be maintained and cherished to posterity (Mohamed et.al, 2008). Huge numbers of historical buildings have been sacrificed just for the sake of letting way to new developments (Rashid & Ahmad, 2008)

Hicran (1994) mentioned that, changes in lifestyle and current urban setting due to urban needs and demand nowadays could not fulfilled their necessities, which has created conflict with preservation issues. Besides, Wan Ismail & Shamsuddin (2005) asserted, uncontrolled growth of a city can influence the emergence of new modern buildings or facade in between the existing old buildings, which resulted the changing of urban fabric. Askari & Dola (2009) pointed out that building façade, imposes significant influence on the identity of historical district, as it acts as a boundary between inner and outer space, where most of the matter of evaluation is by visitors of historical districts.

Architectural intervention and modification on building also occurred several times as time passed. Causevic (2009) pointed out that; the modifications were discontinuous performed with periods of relative inactivity and negligence, which normally small repairs were carried out periodically. In addition, architectural interventions also significance in tidying up and protect the facade which has deteriorate due time passed and weather factor (Feliu et.al, 2004)

i. Modernisation

Huxtable (2004) mentioned that façade is the face of the building that shows its value and structure. Utami, et.al (2012) explained façade in theory remains the most imperative architecture element which is able to express function and significance of a building. Major modification of heritage shophouses façade into modern and contemporary façade design is one of imperative factors, which trigger the architectural interventions on shohouse façade. Changes in lifestyle toward modernization has influence the design of the buildings according to urban needs and construction, which is inappropriate to their current users. Hence, a variety of interventions have been recognized in order to adapt the buildings into current situations and needs. Yaakob et.al (2012) appointed that, urban evolution and town distribution in Malaya was primarily a consequence of the British intervention in mainland Malaya around the 1850s.

Moreover, reason for demolishing the original heritage buildings was triggered when the current design and construction of new development could not fit in the existing site in terms of fire requirement, services and sanitation (Shamsuddin & Sulaiman, 2002). Those factors have created negative effects to the heritage urban fabric by demolishing the significant façade elements. Major façade alteration shall also cause the negligence of intrinsic heritage façade element among the youth and future generation which could possibly cause the lost of heritage value. Furthermore, the situation will become worst by losing our identity of heritage zone which should be well preserved to sustain our remarkable heritage image. In the context of conservation building, the facade of the building of monuments, historic buildings, old shop houses and so on, play an important role in making the area into a center of attraction in terms of tourism, commercial, and social value will be lost. Unfortunately, extra modern development factors sometimes have ignored the interest (Karya, 2007)

The origin of architectural style of shophouse façade was invented to show the identity of the building, as well as emphasizing the architectural influence by particular designers. Also, the architecture style is to show the different era or timeline of the building, which represent the identity of certain ethnicity. As agreed by Utaberta, et. al (2012), other factors which can affect building façade evaluation are architectural style (Hui, 2007), age of the building, size of shape, value of the building forms, light, color and materials used, as effective elements of the building façade. Without proper conservation and safeguarding of shophouse façade, the identity of particular architecture style will be lost and shall cause the lack of appreciation on the architectural and heritage value by the society which has led total changes of façade elements and architecture style.

ii. Changes of Building Function

Karya (2007) mentioned that, the changes of functions of the building, has caused many changes were made not only to the layout of the interior space but also to the facades of buildings shophouse. The front facade of the ground floor is sometimes demolished and replaced with a larger opening for enable the function of the building as a tavern run. Change on the facade and the layout of the space will contaminate the original design concept building (Karya, 2007).

Changes of function of the shophouse from commercial and residential purposes to totally commercial to allocate the bird's nest have generated discontinuity of façade design. Alteration and renovation on shophouse façade elements such as wall and upper floor for bird's nest purposes have ruined the original shophouse façade design.

To summaries, this situation shall generate different kind of ambiance with noise pollution as well as unhygienic environment because of lack of maintenance and safeguarding from the shophouse owners.

iii. Lack of Awareness from Shophouse's Owner and Society

There are few problems which trigger the intervention and demolition of heritage building, for instance the heritage buildings are being harmed because of destruction of the original owner and demolished the insistence of development and lack of concern for the community in an effort to preserve the heritage building, (Hamilton & Zuraini 2002). The statement is agreed by Karya (2007) where shophouse owners and tenants also pay an important role in conserving these elements, but they do not keep and maintain the buildings occupied by either assuming the

building has no interest to further restored and maintained. As a result, the identity of a city is lost.

Besides, lack of conservation awareness among the shophouse users has caused the new generation not to appreciate the city's remarkable history and past which should be preserved and remembered. Further, Raja Shahminan (2007) explained design continuity between the old and new units have been ignored which make the new building seems to stand alone and alienated in their own environment. The lack of integration of development, particularly in design between the modern and the old building is defacing the historic identity of the area. Moreover, since the old shophouses are privately owned, it is suspected that the roots of the problems regarding the conservation of the old shophouses are also directly related to the users, particularly the owners or the tenants (Wan Ismail & Shamsuddin, 2005). Moreover, according to Samadi, et.al (2007), most of the owners or users of the shophouse failed to cooperate in conserving the façade, due to their problems as those who prefer the excess of their income in their daily dealings without realize the significance of heritage façade of the shophouse. For them, it is nothing more than a long legacy that need high repair costs which particularly as a burden for them in safeguarding the old shophouses (Samadi, et.al, 2007)

The young generations today are taking for granted the glorious history of the heritage area as it is an essential element in forming the country from the very beginning. According to Matero (1993), hasty transforms over the past century in building technology and architectural education and practice have made it difficult for the architects to know how to treat older buildings. Some building technologies have totally disappeared, as well as traditional materials and techniques are also no longer available. Architects trained as modern designers often have little of the technical or theoretical information necessary to understand the design, technology, and behaviour of traditional materials and structures. Moreover, many materials and skills, once employed in traditional buildings, are no longer available or feasible due to the requirements of time, cost, and skill level, and to associate health hazards (Matero, 1993)

iv. Late implementation and Enforcement of Conservation Guideline by Local Authority

Lack of effort by the government side to alert and educate the public on the value of the heritage buildings to the new generations is one of the factors contribute to the poor awareness of the society (Mohamed, et.al 2008). Moreover, the conservation enforcement by the authority only just started aggressively after 2006. A few years before 2006, alteration and renovation of the building façade and structure has been done illegally which demolish the original façade of the buildings. (En. Izani b Mat, Jabatan Perancang dan Kawalan Bangunan, March 2014). As a result, the shophouse façade has been modified and changed illegally by the owners before 2006 which has produced amount of modified shophouse façade because of there are no proper conservation guideline and enforcement by local authority.

Regrettably, as stated by Wan Ismail & Shamsuddin (2005) the old shophouses lies in the fact that the old shophouses are not specifically noted under the present acts and enactments are the limitation in conservation. The old shophouses are subjected to the acts and enactments related to urban conservation in Malaysia by situated within the old town centres. In addition, according to Wan Ismail & Shamsuddin (2005) the old shophouses are not really considered within the Antiquities Act 1976 which specifies that the buildings concerned are the monuments of at least a hundred years old, where majority of the old shophouses are less than a hundred years old. She added, all pre-war rented properties came under the Control of Rent Act (1966), where the act is

to prevent the expulsion of the tenants without compensation and tearing down for development as well as to help the owners to increase the rent to maintain and preserve the shophouse. Later, the legislation was rechecked and the result was the Control of Rent (Repeal) Act 1997 (Act 572), (Wan Ismail & Shamsuddin (2005).

Local authority and legislation are crucial in conserving and forming the identity of the district or area. The success of current local legislation regarding the old shophouses is doubtful. Local government has gazetted particular conservation area which usually in the area of old town in Malaysia comprised of old shophouses. The lack of control by local government used to happen, for instance the conservation area in Kota Bharu, Kelantan, where the entire area of old shophouses within the conservation area was demolished in 2001 to allow for new development (Wan Ismail & Shamsuddin (2005). Fortunately, according to Heritage of Malaysia Trust (2004), in March 2004 the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Heritage was created. The Minister, YB Dato' Seri Utama Rais Yatim, has proposed a stand-alone Heritage Bill, which would address both tangible and intangible heritage and which will supersede the proposed 2003 Amendment to the Town & Country Planning Act.



Figure 1: Destruction of old shophouses
Source: Wan Ismail & Shamsuddin (2005)

In addition, the role of particular committee who are responsible in creating the urban fabric of the country such as urban designer, architects, urban planner, contractors and others shall put their obligation and step in conservation and sustaining the heritage buildings. Shaarani (1993) said that, in the context of preserving old buildings the need of fix guidelines is essential in order to avoid any patchwork and interventions in building redevelopment.

v. Nature

Likewise, the factor of mother-nature and time that affects the existing building massing in the heritage zone particularly have also influence the architectural interventions by means of alterations and modifications of the heritage buildings. As said by Burke (2011), building form and image will be changed physically due to deterioration by means of weather and time factor which could affects the occupants' way of living and habitat. Thus, the deteriorated and damaged buildings can be improvise through restoration and continuous maintenance by the owner in order to sustain and preserve their properties (Burke, 2011). According to Jokilehto (1999)

heritage buildings are facing various types of deterioration, for instance weather changes, ageing progression, consumption by use and natural disaster. The amount of usage depends on the types of structure and material used for the building; therefore, repair and refurbishment may be slightly differed from the original image and ambiance of the buildings, which eventually happened to shophouse buildings (Jokilehto, 1999)

Above and beyond, as stated by Feilden (1982), of the causes of decay in an historic building, the most uniform and universal is gravity, followed by the actions of man and then by diverse climatic and environmental effects, such as botanical, biological chemical and entomological factors. Indeed, human causes nowadays probably produce the utmost destruction to the built heritage.

Findings

Interview from shophouse owners found that one of the factors influencing architectural interventions on shophouse façade is lack of awareness among the shophouse owners, which encourage them to change and demolish the façade element without considering the heritage value. Besides, lack of enforcement of development control guideline from local authority has influenced the shophouse owner to illegally modify the façade elements. Further, the shophouse owners tend to change the shophouse's façade elements to fulfil their urban needs and lifestyle which is considered to be more practical nowadays. Besides, survey from Local Authority found that one of the factors influencing the architectural interventions on shophouse façade elements lacking financial sources and limited budget from the government to implement any refurbishment works. Moreover, late implementation of development control guideline has led to the demolition of the façade elements. Further, lacking of high skill workers to implement the conservation works is one of the significant factors influencing the changes of façade.

The architectural interventions on shophouse façade elements in the study area has been analyzed particularly along selected street of Jalan Temenggung. As time passed, the expansion and alteration has become a necessity due to urban demand and needs of the community. According to site observation in November 2014, it can be concluded that the selected shophouses units have been through architectural interventions by means of repainted, renovation, demolition, modification as well as refurbishment. Lack of awareness by building's owner and poor development control guideline implementation by local authority in constructing and renovating the existing heritage buildings has created a massive impact to the building heritage façade and streetscape itself. Hence, the transformation of urban setting of a township due to urban development has been a crucial issue which should be overcome. Proper proposition and guideline in developing and altering the existing heritage building shall improve the effort to sustain and preserve the originality of historical elements of the urban setting including existing intrinsic heritage building massing of the study area.

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