



# Sustainability of Cultural Heritage in World Heritage Site, Melaka

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## Abstract

Cultural heritage is constructed from the intrinsic relationship between three fundamentals: society; tangible cultural heritage (TCH); and intangible cultural heritage (ICH). To sustain, cultural heritage relies on the social behaviour of society. Thus, reflecting fragility of heritage. Hence, this paper attempts to discourse the society's behaviour towards ICH. Exploratory case study was employed by adapting five social behaviour related-criteria required by UNESCO. The data was analysed using two techniques: (1) simple statistical; and (2) thematic. The results indicate that the status of ICH is threatened due to the weak viability level and minimal safeguarding effort by the 'society'.

**Keywords:** social behaviour; intangible cultural heritage; world heritage site, threatened

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## 1.0 Introduction

Cultural heritage is a symbiotic relationship involving society, norms and values. These are the pillars, the triangle relationship to form a smart partnership to sustain cultural heritage (Munjeri, 2004). On the other hand, symbols, technologies and objects are tangible evidence of fundamental norms and values (Bouchenaki, 2003). This two (2) statements show the inevitable association between Tangible Cultural Heritage (TCH) and Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) in envisioning the cultural shape and significance towards the community or society. The characteristic of ICH that relies on TCH and the possessors reflects the vulnerability of the elements. As the conservation of TCH is positively achieved, the effort of safeguarding ICH seems missing. The finding in a study by Othman and Hamzah (2013) has confirmed that the preservation and safeguarding effort of ICH is less emphasized in the MWHS. Figure 1 is an illustration on the association of the individual, community, and society, with cultural heritage. These components are important variables of this research.

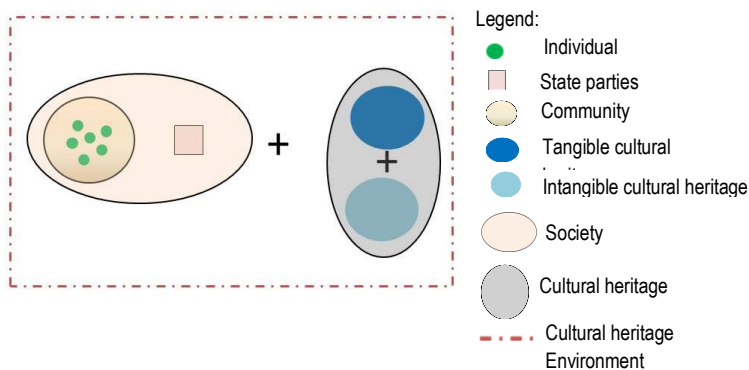


Figure 1.1 Associations of Components in Cultural Heritage

Melaka nominated, as World Heritage Site on 2008, comprises of three (3) criteria of Outstanding Universal Values (OUV). One of the criterions is concerning Melaka as the most complete surviving historic cities in the Straits of Malacca with a multi-cultural living heritage originating from the trade routes at that time (ICOMOS, 2008). The term 'living heritage' as stated in the justification of the OUV criteria (criterion iii) is a proof of the extraordinary and unique existence of ICH value on the site. Therefore, this paper intends to discourse the society behaviour against ICH at Core Zone, Melaka World Heritage Site. The research questions, firstly, what the subsist ICH in the study area, and secondly, what the status of ICH within the study area.

## **2.0 Methodology**

Research methodology is important to determine the research idea and concept that is worth pursuing (Congdon & Dunham, 1999). Therefore, to achieve the aim of this research, researchers set up three (3) mechanisms in its methodology. The mechanisms are: 1) research approach; 2) research instrument and 3) data analysis procedure. In order to achieve the research aim, adaptation of five (5) criteria (4 of the criteria are related to social-behaviour) required by UNESCO, as stated in 'Urgent Safeguarding List' is necessary to be included in each stage of the methodology. These criteria later used as indicator in ICH status evaluation in the analysis stage. The five (5) criteria are:

- Criterion 1 - The element constitutes Intangible Cultural Heritage as defined in Article 22 of the Convention
- Criterion 2 – a) The element is in urgent need of safeguarding because its viability is at risk despite the efforts of the community, group or, if applicable, individuals and State(s) Party(ies) concerned; (or) b) The element is in extremely urgent need of safeguarding because it is facing grave threats as a result of which it cannot be expected to survive without immediately safeguarding.
- Criterion 3 - Safeguarding measures are elaborated that may enable the community, group or, if applicable, individuals concerned to continue the practice and transmission of the element
- Criterion 4 - The element has been nominated following the widest possible participation of the community, group or, if applicable, individuals concerned and their free, prior and informed consent.
- Criterion 5 - The element is included in an inventory of the intangible cultural heritage present in the territory (ies) of the submitting State(s) Party (ies), as defined in Article 113 and Article 124.

## **2.1 Research Approach**

The first component of research approach is case study oriented research. The researchers decided to employ exploratory case study because this type best describes a study that attempts to understand what happen within the case by looking beyond descriptive features and investigate surrounding context (CAPAM, 2010). The second research approach is utilization of the mixed method. This method was applied in the field of the cultural anthropologist as well as the sociologist for the first 60 years of the 20th century (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007).

## **2.2 Research Instrument**

Research instrument is a mechanism to elicit data needed as determined in the preliminary stage of research design. The importance of research instrument is to ensure information obtained fulfill the research data requirement. There are three (3) types of data instrument utilized in this research, which are:

- Site observation and inventory which are attempted to fulfill the criterion 1.
- Face to face questionnaire survey designed to achieve the criterion 2, 3 and 4.
- Structured professional interview is designed to achieve the criterion 5

### 2.3 Data Analysis Procedure

Data analysis will assist to support and answer the research questions. Therefore, there are two (2) types of data analysis procedure engaged in this research. The data procedures are: 1) frequency distribution and cross tabulation by using SPSS; and 2) thematic analysis.

### 2.4 Research Limitation

Limitation according to Simon and Goes (n.d) are matters that emerge in the research, which is beyond the researcher’s control. The limitations occurred in this research were: 1) inconsistency responses by targeted respondents; 2) limited professionals’ involvement during data collection phases; and 3) time-constraints.

## 3.0 Results

### 3.1 Criterion 1 – Identification of the Substist ICH

Based on the site observation and inventory, there are 815 buildings (including lots) available in the research area. From the statistical analysis, 599 (73.5%) buildings out of 815 are occupied, 32 (3.9%) buildings are under renovation and 184 (22.6%) buildings are vacant. From the overall building uses and activities, Table 3.1 shows three (3) identified domains substist in the research area.

Table 3.1 Substist ICH Domain in the Research Area

Domain	Details	Justification
Traditional craftsmanship	20 practitioners	All the practitioners treasure skills and knowledge in specific craftsmanship. These skills are precious as they have been transmitted for generations and influence the formation of community identity as well as physical development.
Social practice, ritual and festive events	22 religious purpose specific building	This public and private religious purposes building proves the multicultural community norm and belief that linger for hundreds of years
Knowledge and practice concerning nature and universe	14 Traditional trade	All of the streets in core zone embody unique identity. Throughout the observation, Kg Pantai Street remains the significant identity as a trade centre. The activities of ‘go-down’ and wholesale remains until today.

### 3.2 Criterion 2 – indication of viability level

For criterion 2, the analysis has narrowed down to the only effected domains. At this point criterion 2 aims to measure viability of each domain. This viability measure is to identify the ability of domains to live or to operate by themselves. To identify the level of viability, the

researchers have framed six (6) questions. These questions are important to reflect the possibilities of the ICH to sustain and practice. Table 3.2 shows a summary of frequency distribution of viability measure for two ICH domains. This indication is only significant to the practitioners of traditional craftsmanship, and knowledge and practice domains. Researchers were incapable to cover the aspects of social practice, rituals and festive events domain due to time constraints and limitations. From the overall data revealed, the issues confront by the Traditional Craftsmanship domain outweigh the issues in the knowledge and practice domain. The issues are;

- Irregularity of practice - Majority of Traditional Craftsmanship practitioners only practiced when requested.
- Lacking of demand and unprofitable product - Besides irregularity of practice, the data shows that the product is also less in demand. Moreover, practitioners claim that the activities are unworthy in terms of economy (unprofitable).
- Insignificant in community - They asserted that the activity is important to them, or rather very significant in their life. However, the activities appear insignificant to the community life (from the practitioner's perspective). In this regard, it demonstrates an unpleasant fact; whereas in order to ensure viability of the domain, the main factor is that it (the ICH) must be treasured by the community as well. The community should feel it is valuable and significant to their life, which in this case, it portrays the opposite.
- Transmission issues - Majority of the practitioners claim that there is no possibility for them to hands down their skills to the next generation. The main reasons that could be enlightening at this section are firstly, the practitioners have no heir, and secondly, their children refused to continue with the activity.
- Capital obstacle – practitioners experience capital obstacle in continuing the activities and claim not receiving any financial aid from any agencies or local authority.

### 3.3 Criterion 3 – Identification Potential to Safeguards

Criterion 3 aimed to identify possibilities of the domain to sustain. The result shows that both domains are valuable and significant to the research area (refer Table 3.3). As the expertise and inheritance are from the ancestors, the activities give an impact towards their life and the identity of the research area as well. However, similar issues as to the viability aspect, is that there are also transmission issues taking place at this point. The findings for criterion 3 are:

Table 3.2 Summary of Frequency Distribution of Viability Measures

Viability Measures	Domain	Traditional craftsmanship (n/19)	Knowledge and practice (n/14)
Frequency of practice	Daily	6	14
	Upon Request	13	-
Important level for individual	Not important	-	-

	Slightly important	-	-
	Average	3	2
	Important	16	12
Important level for community	Not important	3	-
	Slightly important	-	-
	Average	14	14
	Important	2	-
Potential to hands down	Yes	1	5
	No	12	3
	Not sure	6	6
Obstacles in continuing practices	Source	2	-
	Capital	16	-
	Skills	-	-
Current efforts to preserve	Individual	-	-
	Local Authority	1	-

- Skilled and Knowledgeably Practitioners - Traditional Craftsmanship practitioners undertake because that is their field of expertise. Meanwhile for Knowledge and Practice Domain, hereditary is the main factor of undertaking. Due to these factors, both domains are considered as valuable and significant to the place identity as well.
- Hereditary Significant - The result shows majority (11 practitioners) of the Traditional Craftsmanship are 2nd and 3rd generation. The result is similar to Knowledge and Practice Domain, where all of the respondents are 2nd and 3rd generations inheriting the knowledge from their ancestors.
- Transmission Issue – The practitioners and respondents of both domains are optimists in continuing the practice of the activities. They have no plans to change it. However, the statistics show a very low potential to transmit. As shown in Table 3.4, 12 out of 19 practitioners who are certain that they will not transmit to the next generations, only one (1) practitioner is willing to transmit. The same issues confronted by the second domain in which, 3 out of 5 are hesitant in this matter.

Table 3.3 Summary of Frequency Distribution of Safeguarding Measures

Safeguarding Measures	Domain	Traditional craftsmanship (n/19)	Knowledge and practice (n/14)
Reasons for undertaking	Hereditary	7	14
	profitable	-	-
	Interest and hobby	1	-
	Expertise	11	-
Hereditary generations	1	8	-
	2	8	8
	3>	3	6

Plan to change	Yes	3	-
	No	15	14
	Not sure	1	
Potential To Hands Down	Yes	1	5
	No	12	3
	Not sure	6	6

### 3.4. Criterion 4 – Local Community Awareness

According to criterion 4, if the state party intends to nominate the element in the Urgent Safeguarding List, the nomination must involve the community, group or individuals. The community, group or individuals should perceive and agree on the nomination of the elements. Accordingly, this point is to discover the awareness of the community on ICH elements. From the 599 occupied building, only 399 (49%) of the community are willing to participate in questionnaire survey, 200 (24.5%) refused.

The first measurement was to discover ICH understanding among the community. This part also attempts to explore the community's perception on ICH aspect and elements. Forty-five (45) or 11.3% out of 399 respondents understand the scopes of ICH. Nevertheless, majority does not know or are familiar with the ICH aspect and elements. In the second measures, the study found that 53 (13.3%) of the respondents were able to illustrate ICH elements. However, the other respondents (346 or 86.7%) could not explain it. As a third measure, the respondents were requested to identify any ICH that subsists in the research area. The result shows that 344 (86.2%) of respondents did not perceived any local ICH in the research area. However, 32 (8%) of them considered the Baba Nyonya culture as ICH element. Thirteen (13) or 3.3% of the respondents declare that ICH in the research area is the living heritage and 10 (2.5%) of the respondents illustrate traditional craftsmanship as ICH element.

The last measure was to explore community's awareness on Melaka receiving UNESCO recognition. There are 218 (54.6%) from 399 respondents believe that the factor of the recognition is TH, which means the architecture of buildings in the area. In addition, 141 (35.3%) of respondents do not know what contributed to the recognition. The result also appears that 38 (9.5%) of respondents believe it is because of both TH and ICH, and only 2 (.5%) respondents think that it is due to the unique ICH in the area that contributed to the nomination. (Refer Table 3.4)

Table 3.4 Summary of Frequency Distribution on Local Community Awareness

Awareness elements		Total
ICH Understanding	Yes	45 (11.3%)
	No	354 (88.7%)
ICH Identification	Yes	53 (13.3%)
	No	346 (86.7%)
Identification of Local ICH	Living Heritage	13 (3.3%)
	Traditional Craftsmanship	10

Reason of UNESCO Recognition		(2.5%)
	Cultural of Baba and Nyonya	32 (8%)
	Don't know	344 (86.2%)
	Tangible cultural heritage	218 (54.6%)
	Intangible cultural heritage	2 (0.5%)
	Tangible and intangible cultural heritage	38 (9.5%)
	Don't know	141 (35.3%)

### 3.5. Criterion 5 – Role of State Parties

To respond to the Criterion 5, researchers targeted three (3) State Parties that are responsible within the research area as respondents. There were three (3) questions framed by researchers, the questions focussed on; 1) necessary and safeguarding measures, 2) inventory, and 3) current safeguarding effort. The results are presented as below:

- Necessary and safeguarding measures  
The respondents have similar thoughts in “safeguarding measure”. They claim that they refer to the policies and regulations. There are three (3) regulations currently applied to the research area, which are the National Heritage Act (2005) as the highest level of legislation; the Town Planning Act (act 172); and Melaka Enactment 1988, that upholds to the National Heritage Act (2005) pertaining to ICH safeguarding.
- Inventory  
Article 12 has underlined the required documentation for ICH by the states parties. Documentation is considered as one of the efforts to ensure the originality of identified local ICH recorded. Nevertheless, through the interview, it shows that there is no specific inventory of local ICH (within the case study area) prepared by any agencies.
- Current safeguarding effort  
As the safeguarding measure and inventories are considered mandatory to the states parties, their current effort should also be taken into account. A good effort from each agency somehow will enhance survival rate of the ICH value. All of these agencies have been organising programs such as workshop and course. These programs are an effort to boost awareness level instead of relying on policies and act since they do believe that knowledge and understanding of the society is very important.

## 4.0 Discussions

### 4.1 Research Findings

The major findings are: 1) Three (3) major domains of ICH subsist; 2) The viability of dominant ICH is weak; 3) The dominant ICH has low potential to be safeguarded; 4)



Minimal awareness and understanding on ICH by the local community; and 5) Dominant ICH has not established within the core zone territory (Refer Table 4.1).

Table 4.1 Summary of Research Findings

Criterion	Findings	
Criterion 1	3 major domain of ICH subsist;	
	1. Traditional craftsmanship domain > Identified 20 practitioners in 2013, 2 practitioners passed away in 2015	
	2. Social ritual, practices and festive domain > 22 religious and association buildings	
	3. Knowledge and Practice Concerning Nature and Universe Domain > 14 traditional trades significant to past function of the Kg. Pantai Street	
Criterion 2	5 major issues	1. Irregularity in practicing
		2. Lack of demand and unprofitable product
		3. Insignificant to the community
		4. Transmission issues
		5. Capital obstacle
	Major finding	Weak viability level
Criterion 3	3 findings	1. Skilled and knowledgeable practitioners
		2. Hereditary significant
		3. Transmission issues
	Major Finding	Low potential to safeguards
Criterion 4	Local community lacks awareness and understanding	
Criterion 5	There is no specific inventory, policy, standard or regulation for ICH. Dominant ICH has not established within the core zone territory.	

#### 4.2 Status of ICH in Melaka World Heritage Site

Table 4.2 shows the summary of all criterions. To evaluate the status of ICH in the research area, researcher sets up weights for each measurement of the criterions. There are three (3) stages of weight in the **Quantitative Analysis**. The weights are: 1) when the frequency of the measurement show below 50%, it is considered as negative influence, thus the weight is one (1); 2) If the statistic shows precisely 50%, its considered average, therefore, the weight score is 2.5 and 3) weight five (5) is for statistic that is over 50%, as it is considered as positive influence. Weights for **Qualitative Analysis** are also classified into three (3): 1) if majority of feedback is positive, it is marked as five (5), 2) If the majority of responses demonstrate as average, the weight is 2.5, and 3) if outcome illustrated negative influence then the weight, it is marked as one (1). Table 3.6 shows the total score is 44.5 / 110, which is less than half of the total marks to be considered as average (the average score is 55). Thus, the findings suggest the ICH in the Melaka World Heritage Site (MWHS) can be declared as **threatened**

Table 4.2 Summary of Criterions

Criterion	Description	Weight
Criterion 1	Oral traditions and expressions	-
	Performing Arts	-

	Social Practices, rituals and festive events	5
	Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe;	5
	Traditional Craftsmanship	5
Criterion 2	Frequency Of Practice	1
	Important Level For Individual	5
	Important Level For Community	2.5
	Potential To Hands Down	1
	Obstacles In Continuing Practices	1
	Current Efforts To Preserve	1
Criterion 3	Reason for undertaking	2.5
	Hereditary generations	5
	Plan to change	1
	Potential To Hands Down	1
Criterion 4	ICH understanding	1
	ICH identification	1
	Identification of ICH in Territory	1
	Awareness	1
Criterion 5	Necessary and safeguarding measure	2.5
	inventories	1
	Current effort	1
<b>Total Score</b>		<b>44.5</b>

**Notes:**

*For quantitative analysis;*

*i) Statistic shows 50% > = 5*

*ii) Statistic shows 50% = 2.5*

*iii) Statistic shows <50% = 1*

*For qualitative analysis;*

*i) Positive view/feedback/influence = 5*

*ii) average view/feedback/influence = 2.5*

*iii) Negative view/feedback/influence = 1*

## 5. 0 Recommendation

The threat to the ICH in the Melaka World Heritage Site (MWHS) is rather worrying, when enforcement and effort by state parties to safeguard the ICH is still in infancy. In order to mitigate these issues, the state parties are recommended two pursue (2) aspects.

The first aspect is to strengthen the level of awareness and understandings in the ICH by establishing the dominant ICH in the Core Zone area. Agencies can set up research and development (R&D) unit that focuses on the ICH within their territory. The second aspect is to improve the management and safeguarding efforts. This can be done by establishing specific policies and regulation for the ICH in the Core Zone area. Involvement of the community in cultural heritage management is vital and their opinions should be considered in the process of heritage protection. The state parties are also encouraged to collaborate with the community to create apprentice of the related ICH skills and knowledge.

It is suggested that further researches need to concentrate on the investigation of challenges confronted by state parties in safeguarding ICH, and develop a proposed database of dominant ICH in MWHS.

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