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**UNESCO in Melaka: Cultural Politics, Identities and Tourism in a World Heritage Site**

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**Abstract: The UNESCO World Heritage Site of Melaka within the ‘Historic Cities of the Straits of Malacca’ together with George Town in Penang is arguably the most important national historical site in the Federation of Malaysia. As the origin of the Malay-Muslim sultanate system in Peninsular Malaysia and more widely it has been a crucial element in the Malaysian government’s nation-building policies since independence. It symbolizes a ‘golden age’ in the development of Malay civilization and in that regard the emphasis on Malay and Islamic culture in the construction of a national identity has played an important part in the ways in which Melaka has been represented and developed as a historical heritage site. However, the post-independence preoccupation on the necessity for economic growth and modernization has generated a tension between the protection and conservation of national heritage and the need to transform urban landscapes to realize modernity and profit. This tension presents particular difficulties for those bodies responsible for the management of a UNESCO-inscribed site in regard to the multivocal character of heritage discourse and the conflicting political, economic, social and cultural pressures on global heritage.**

**Keywords: UNESCO World Heritage Sites, Melaka, heritage, nation-building, identity, tourism, development**

**The Comparative Study of World Heritage Sites and the Heritage Problematic**

Once it had been established...., the settlement at the mouth of the Melaka River grew rapidly to command the trade between East (China and Japan, the islands of Indonesia and the Philippines, the coasts of mainland Southeast Asia) and West (the Indian subcontinent, Arabia, the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea, the Mediterranean and Europe) (Cho and Ward, 1983: 621).

Melaka presented a heritage rooted in a distinctively Malay past, expressing and symbolizing ‘a golden age’ of Malay commerce, political power and cultural expansion.... It thus came to serve, much as Majapahit did for Indonesia, as a geographical and territorial forerunner of the modern Malaysian state and as a symbol of nationhood (Worden, 2010: 132, 133).

Melaka is more than a tourist attraction: it is a symbol of the Malaysian cultural experience. In its stones, its streets, its peoples, and its social transactions are synthesized a national ethos, a cultural style, a world view that has been engendered by the vicissitudes of six centuries of history (Sandhu and Wheatley, 1983c: 566).

This study of Melaka, as arguably the most important historical and cultural site in Malaysia, is part of a much larger, multidisciplinary, comparative and cross-regional project conducted by a British research team which is examining the management, development and re-presentation of UNESCO World Heritage Sites (WHS), both natural and cultural sites, in Southeast Asia. The sites are defined generally as those of ‘universal human value’ and within this ‘a select list of the most outstanding of these from an international viewpoint’ (cited in Malaysian State Party, 2008: 8).

 Among other matters, the research programme focuses on the tensions and conflicts generated in the encounter between different stakeholders and users which comprise local communities, national and local governments, international bodies, domestic and overseas tourists, and civil society institutions. Obviously the significance and involvement of these different bodies will vary from case to case. In addressing the issues which arise in the management of the sites our main concern is to determine how conflicting pressures are making themselves felt on these sites, how those who carry responsibility for their management are addressing them and how the different users interact with and perceive these sites. What is a common locus of potential tension is, on the one hand, the granting of a globally acknowledged heritage status to a particular site with all that this entails in its preservation, conservation, and what is perceived to be its authenticity in historical terms, and, on the other hand, the attraction that the site has, once inscribed on the World Heritage List, first, for tourists and those in the tourism business; secondly governments and their concern with national identity and prestige and the promotion of economic growth and development; and thirdly the local communities which live in and around the site and often depend on it or come to depend on it for their livelihoods.

In Malaysia the issues are even more complex because the Malay-dominated government has used and transformed urban landscapes in their nation-building policies, but established and primary urban areas which are the focus of these policies, are usually home to visually prominent and demographically and economically significant Chinese and to a lesser extent Indian populations. Urban areas therefore express and embody particular sub-national ethnic identities, not only of various Chinese communities, but also increasing numbers of Malays and other Muslims, numerically smaller populations of Indians, and a whole host of hybrid peoples, including, in the case of Melaka, Portuguese- and Dutch-Eurasians, Baba-Nyonya or Peranakan Chinese and Indian Chitties; these mixed populations are usually the product of acculturation, cultural exchange and intermarriage between immigrants and indigenes. Therefore, there is often ongoing tension between the need to protect and conserve a historically and culturally important site (and in UNESCO terms, its authentic or original characteristics) which has been bequeathed to the world by earlier generations and provide it with its ‘universal human value’, and the pressures exerted by the vagaries of changing human political, social and economic interests, values and use, and the changing demands of tourism, leisure, recreation and consumption.

The research for this paper also emerges from a recently co-edited book in which I was involved on *Heritage Tourism in Southeast Asia* (Hitchcock, King and Parnwell, 2010) and an earlier edited special issue of the journal *Indonesia and the Malay World* (Hitchcock and King: 2003) entitled *Tourism and Heritage in South-East Asia*. The 2010 text is the first to consider the character and consequences of the growth in the interest of heritage and heritage tourism across the Southeast Asian region and the many ways in which heritage is presented, re-presented and constructed in relation to the growth of both domestic and international tourism. In that book several World Heritage Sites (WHS) were also considered: George Town (in Penang [Pulau Pinang]), Melaka (Malacca), Angkor in Cambodia, Hue and Halong Bay in Vietnam, and Vat Phou in Laos, and it seemed appropriate that the many issues which were raised in considering UNESCO along with other heritage sites and the implications of inscription on the World Heritage List, which began at the end of the 1980s, demanded a much more ambitious and wide-ranging multidisciplinary and comparative programme of research (and see Miura, 2010: 103). There has been very little attention given to the comparative study of internationally recognised heritage and the different demands which these sites make upon the management bodies responsible for administering them. Although some of the sites are not directly comparable, lessons can be learned from good and bad practice trans-nationally, and it can be expected that rather than the interest in and use of these high profile sites diminishing, the continued expansion of domestic and international tourism and the economic and political roles which tourism plays in national development strategies in Southeast Asia will serve if anything to increase the pressures on World Heritage Sites. Once UNESCO has inscribed a site then it becomes ‘a validation of quality’ and even more importantly it confirms its ‘authenticity’; these attributes can and usually do provide significant attractions for the international tourism market and governments also deploy them for political and economic purposes (Jenkins, 2008: 5).

The chapters in our *Heritage Tourism in Southeast Asia* which focus on UNESCO sites raise several issues (and see Esposito and Gaulis, 2010). These comprise in no particular order of precedence: (1) how different constituencies construct, present, re-present, reshape and contest heritage; in the case of Hue, once the imperial capital of a united Vietnam, Johnson demonstrates how local researchers, experts and tour guides in the Hue Monuments Conservation Centre have embraced the official view of the site as one which demonstrates Vietnamese cultural creativity and artistic skill, and embodies ‘a renewed sense of national identity’, though they remained critical of the failure of government to realise the historical and architectural importance of the site until the more recent incorporation of heritage into national tourism development strategies (2010: 197); (2) the ideological control and manipulation of the sites which governments frequently exert on what they consider to be important elements of national identity, nation-building, history, achievement and international image; Melaka is a case in point within the Malaysian government’s nation-building policies based on Malay-Muslim priorities as we shall see in detail below (Worden, 2010:130-146), as are Angkor in Cambodia (Miura, 2010: 126-127) and Hue in central Vietnam (Johnson, 2010: 176-178); (3) the pressures which tourism exerts on these sites and the problems raised by government involvement in the promotion of and planning for tourism and other kinds of development. Again in the case of Hue local researchers expressed anxieties about the negative effects of tourism, particularly ‘uninterested and ill-informed’ tourists (whether domestic or international), on the authenticity of a historic site (Miura, 2010: 198); whilst in the case of Halong Bay in northern Vietnam the site is endangered by pressures both from increased tourist interest and also from the rapid expansion of industrial and infrastructural projects and resource exploitation around the bay (Parnwell, 2010: 244-246); (4) the importance of encouraging the kinds of tourists (whether domestic or international) who are genuinely interested in and wish to be informed about sites as testaments to the cultural achievements of past generations, or at the very least to provide informative literature, signage, audio-visual materials and guides (without these being overly intrusive) so that the sites can be better understood, enlivened and contextualized; (5) the role of sites and what they are seen to represent as expressions of the particular everyday lives, circumstances, views and thoughts of those who engage with them and as expressions of wider political, economic and cultural issues; in other words, they serve not only as subjects of discourse but they enable the creation and elaboration of discourse (Johnson, 2010: 198-199); (6) the variations in the effects of change and local responses to these across communities and areas within the same site and between sites as in George Town for example (Jenkins, 2010: 162-171) or between Angkor in Cambodia and Vat Phou in Laos (Miura, 2010); (7) the issue of local communities who live in or around the site and their involvement in or exclusion from WHS. Communities were often removed from sites and restricted in their movement and livelihoods in the interest of conservation and to recreate cultural sites as historic parks for the purpose of tourism promotion; the WHS of Sukhothai and Ayutthaya in Thailand and Prambanan and Borobudur in Indonesia illustrate this early policy as Black and Wall demonstrate (2001). However, looking at other examples, Angkor, following its inscription in 1992, experienced a first phase of protection and conservation and the relocation and restriction of local residents under the ‘Save Angkor’ initiative sponsored primarily by French and Japanese international agencies; it then saw a shift in policy particularly from about 2004 towards more sustainable development and a recognition of the rights of local communities with an emphasis on ‘living’ cultural heritage using ‘local knowledge, skills and local people’s association with the sites’; Vat Phou in Laos demonstrates a similar set of tensions and the dislocation of local residents but then the attempts to address local needs and involvement. But it needs emphasizing here that there is often a considerable gap between official policies to promote local participation and their implementation (Miura, 2010: 126-127, 119-123); and finally (8) these sites provide ‘a new genre of community, both imagined and real’ comprising ‘a new social space, new values and borders’ (ibid: 103); although the importance of WHS carries their importance and influence beyond their borders in that they are part of national and international flows of people, capital, ideas and values, they can also be seen as defined, bounded and localised spaces within which there are encounters, exchanges and conflicts.

**Melaka: a Malay Sultanate Transformed**

This paper focuses on Melaka, but in the course of this discussion of Melaka some comparative observations will be made. Given that Melaka was not inscribed on the UNESCO WHS list until 2008 along with George Town in Penang as ‘Historic Cities of the Straits of Malacca: Melaka and George Town’ then much of the available research was undertaken whilst the Malaysian government along with the Melaka and Penang state governments (referred to in UNESCO terms as the ‘State Party) were preparing the case for inscription. The fact that it was inscribed only recently and that the success of the nomination had been achieved by including Melaka together with the British colonial creation of George Town in Penang as ‘historic cities’ of the Straits of Malacca tells us much about the place of Melaka in Malaysia’s post-colonial history. Above all it demonstrates appositely the tensions between nation-building in a newly independent multicultural state with a colonial legacy and the need to modernize and promote economic growth, and in turn the impact of these processes on the perception, presentation, development and use of a heritage site. As Wan Hashimah and Shuhana have said, in their analysis of old shophouses, in Malaysia ‘urban conservation is still a new phenomenon’ (2005: 2).

The focus of much of the recent research on Melaka has been on the central position which it occupies, as a former global port settlement, in the history and the cultural symbolism of the Muslim-Malays, the Malayan Peninsula and the wider nation-state of Malaysia (Sandhu and Wheatley, 1983c: 566-567). The strategic and commercial importance of the Straits of Malacca had, in Carolyn Cartier’s words, generated in Melaka a centre of ‘cultural transformation, economic power and political leadership’ (2001: 193). In addition, as Cho and Ward state ‘At their greatest, the port’s trading connections reached from Maluku to Suez (thence indirectly to Europe), from Japan to East Africa, from Luzon to the Persian Gulf’ (1983: 623). Having been founded around the turn of the fifteenth century as a minor chieftainship’ on the periphery of other more powerful states, particularly Ayutthaya in Thailand, it grew into a major international trading emporium (Sandhu and Wheatley, 1983c: 499). With its strategically located deep water harbour and a sheltered river mouth on the Straits of Malacca to enable it to establish control over the exchange and distribution of trade goods carried on the seasonal north-east and south-west monsoon winds, Melaka’s economy came to be founded on ‘the centralized collection and exchange of goods produced elsewhere’ (from Asia came tin, gold, diamonds, pearls, spices, silks, bird feathers, aromatic woods and other tropical forest produce, natural medicinal items, aphrodisiacs, rice, salt, tobacco, tea and many other items in exchange for weapons, metal ware, cotton cloths, glassware, perfumes, opium, dyestuffs and other manufactured goods) (Cho and Ward, 1983: 624). The port provided warehouse facilities, a bazaar, ship provisions and a Malay-run shipbuilding and repair industry; it also developed the maritime military capacity to control seaways and coerce traffic to call at Melaka and to exercise suzerainty or at least patronage and authority over its vassals.

Most importantly, as a result of its wide range of international connections ‘In the fifteenth century the streets of Melaka must have been as cosmopolitan as those of any city of the contemporary world’ (ibid: 624). Its historical importance and its allure to traders, merchants, missionaries and adventurers from far-flung places are captured in the words of Sandhu and Wheatley who demonstrated Melaka’s significance in their celebratory edited work in two volumes and covering 1,600 pages (1983a): for them Melaka was ‘one of the most famous trading emporia that the world has known, its fabled wealth a byword from Lisboa to Peking’ (1983b: 50). More than this ‘Its *raison d’être* was a network of connections both regional and extra-regional, which made it a central place among central places, the hinge point between eastern Asia and the lands to the West’ (Ginsburg, 1983: 289). Over the thousands of miles of river, sea and ocean on which valuable Oriental spices were carried the Straits of Malacca was the only waterway on these trade routes which enabled ‘a virtual monopoly’ of that lucrative commerce to be established and sustained (Sandhu and Wheatley, 1983c: 504).

In ‘patrimonial’ and ‘galactic’ style it extended its reach and authority through the island world of Southeast Asia, and in so doing the Melakan thalassocracy played a crucial formative role in the development and dissemination of Malay culture, language and literature as well as serving as a centre of Islamic learning (ibid: 509-512). What is more its historical traditions expressed above all in the *Sejarah Melayu* (the Malay Annals) and the *Bustanu’l-Salatin* (Garden of the Kings) are ‘without equal in the Malayo-Indonesian world, in terms of either quantity or quality’ (Wake, 1983: 128). Yet at the same time from its beginnings as a Malay state Melaka forged diplomatic and trade relations with China, partly to counter the threat from Siamese Ayutthaya and Javanese Majapahit, and the Chinese maritime presence at that time and China’s imperial patronage was an important element in the early development of Melaka as an entrepôt; the Chinese maritime connection goes back to at least the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) and there is evidence of a Chinese trading community in Melaka on the arrival of the Portuguese there, with a significant increase in numbers during the sixteenth century (Sandhu, 1983a: 94, 96-97). The connection with the world of Islam also afforded Melaka important relations with Arab, Persian and particularly Muslim Indian cultures (Sandhu, 1983b: 174-177).

Melaka’s importance was attested to, as in other ports along the Indian-China trade routes like Galle in Sri Lanka, Hoi An in Vietnam and Macao SAR (all of which have also been inscribed by UNESCO as World Heritage Sites), by the imperialist interests of a succession of European powers (in Melaka’s case Portugal, the Netherlands and Britain). Yet the European political, economic, cultural, symbolic and architectural impacts on these strategic nodal points in Asian trade made it difficult for newly independent governments, in their attempts to construct an indigenously-framed nation-state, to reconcile their colonial heritage with the image of a new post-colonial nation-state based on the achievements and aspirations of their native ancestors.

This dilemma was especially acute in the case of Melaka, in that the original material, cultural and architectural expressions of its greatness as a Malay-Muslim maritime sultanate, which through the fifteenth century had extended its political, economic and cultural reach to large areas of Asia, parts of Africa, the Middle East and indirectly to Europe, were effectively eliminated by European colonialism. Irwin says ‘With a disregard for Muslim susceptibilities typical of the time, the Christian Portuguese erected their fortress on the ruins of the Great Mosque of Melaka and constructed it, in part at least, out of stones taken from Malay religious buildings and from the graves of former Malay sultans’ (1983: 783). This was not altogether unexpected in that most of the buildings were made of easily disposable natural materials. The indigenous origins of the port centre and its seat of economic and political power in the Sultan’s palace and the state mosque were replaced in the first instance by Portuguese architectural forms, religious and civic buildings and concepts of urban landscape in a fortified, walled town; as Sandhu and Wheatley remark ‘the Portuguese had done their best in so far as the equatorial climate permitted to create within the walled enclave of Melaka the ambience of an Iberian city’ (1983c: 531).

In the residential and market area known as Upeh on the other side of the river earlier indigenous buildings were gradually over time replaced by other Asian cultural implants from outside the region, particularly from southern China, and to a lesser extent India. Yet this was not a process of simple replacement of Malay forms by European and southern Chinese ones; even during the zenith of the pre-colonial Malay sultanate its far-flung trade had resulted in the creation of a multicultural port-centre, and aside from Malays who were in the majority at that time, there were communities of Chinese, Hindus, Bengalis, Gujaratis, Tamils, Bengalis, Parsees, Malabaris, Arabs and Javanese among many others (see Sandhu, 1983b: 179). Then during Portuguese rule clearly delineated ethnic quarters were also identified in the suburb on the right bank of the Melaka River and extending along the then coastline, and these probably comprised buildings made primarily of wood and other natural materials which conformed to local architectural forms. Here was found Kampung Keling where South Indians, mainly Tamils resided, Kampung China for southern Chinese residents, Kampung Jawa for the Javanese, and Kampung Bendahara where the chief native Malay official and his retinue had their residence. A Malay fishing settlement also extended inland along the Melaka River (Sandhu and Wheatley, 1983c: 532).

Following the Dutch succession we find in 1678 communities of Dutch, Portuguese Eurasians, Chinese, Muslim Indians and Hindus, Malays, Bugis and an ethnically mixed collection of ‘slaves’ (Sidhu, 1983: 32). In addition, the Dutch kept broadly to the Portuguese spatial division between a European civic zone and an ethnically mixed residential zone, though some Dutch residents began to move into spacious townhouses in the area opposite the administrative district and across the river from it. Moreover, ‘[t]he significant fact about the distribution of housing during the Dutch period was, of course, the spread of brick dwellings outwards from the walled city primarily into the northwestern suburb....By 1678 nearly a quarter of all houses in the city were constructed of brick’ (Sandhu and Wheatley, 1983c: 535). The Dutch also introduced building regulations covering the planning, construction and use of materials (Wan Hashimah and Shuhana, 2005: 2).

Malay residential dominance during the sultanate period was gradually displaced from its northern suburbs along the Melaka River (in what is now the heritage zone) and Kampung Hulu (which was also a district for Arab residents) to such districts as Kampung Morten and Durian Daun Dalam; central Melaka is now the home primarily of Chinese, many of whom are what is known as ‘Baba’ or in the Malay language ‘Peranakan’; these were traditionally hybrid communities which emerged from processes of acculturation (in the Malay language, cuisine, dress, some everyday lifestyle elements, and in the reinterpretation of certain aspects of Chinese religion, kinship and formal organisations) as well as from the intermarriage of Chinese immigrant males with local women. They were identified as a localized and partially integrated Chinese community in cultural terms, and under British colonialism oriented themselves to their colonial masters as British subjects, emphasizing the importance of learning the English language and working for and in the interests of the colonial regime. More than this Melaka was where ‘Baba society has its origins and deepest roots’ and it flourished within the particular political framework of the British Straits Settlements (Clammer, 1983: 156-158). It was from here that Baba migrants took their culture to Penang, Singapore, the Malay States, Phuket in southern Thailand and even to Indonesia (ibid).

Thus, early Melaka and its indigenous Malay and Muslim roots and rationale were removed, one might say obliterated, and a Malay-Muslim sultanate as a head-link within the commercial and trading networks of the Malay-Indonesian world and the wider Asian region, and as a significant disseminating point for Malay culture, language, Islam and political concepts and values, became a colonial port and a place for European settlement; during the Portuguese period it also became linked more firmly to European markets and European-dominated sea-going empires, and with the growing importance of trade with China but more especially the expansion of tin-mining and the cultivation of estate crops like rubber in the Malay States during the later British period, the numbers of Chinese residents there increased, though not on the scale of Penang and Singapore. In addition, the function of Melaka as a trading emporium diminished to be replaced by its role as a European residential, administrative and garrison town and a regional capital for those neighbouring hinterland areas where tin-mines and estates were located which were worked primarily by Chinese and Indian labourers. Cartier says bluntly ‘Melaka’s Islamic past is missing in the cultural landscape’ (ibid: 194). More than this ‘Ironically today, Melaka – the land and place where the “Sultanate of the Malay Kingdom” was born, has no Sultan at all to name and reign. Instead, the twisting fate of history, has the Yang di-Pertua Negeri or The Governor installed as the Head of State following the British tradition’ (Wee, 2009: 21). Melaka’s status as the premier sultanate in what was to become Peninsular Malaysia was removed, the royal family fled after the Portuguese conquest, and other successor sultanates, particularly Johor and Perak, which owed their origins to the connection with the Melaka sultanate stepped in to take its place.

**Melaka as a World Heritage Site**

The UNESCO World Heritage Site as inscribed in 2008 comprises two areas totalling 38.62 hectares with 930 buildings: (1) St Paul’s Hill Civic Zone (which is almost entirely given over to heritage tourism and administration and includes government buildings, museums, churches, an urban square and the remains of the European fortress) and (2) the Residential and Commercial areas with more than 600 shophouses of what was known by the Dutch as Heerenstraat (the street for the well-to-do, higher status Dutch, now Jalan Tun Tan Cheng Lock) and Jonkerstraat (the street for ordinary folk and workers, now Jalan Hang Jebat) and those streets leading off from them including the Melaka River (Malaysian State Party, 2008: 5). This central urban space on either side of the river is connected by the Tan Kim Seng Bridge, a concrete bridge built in 1862 on the site of the first timber bridge which dates back to the pre-colonial period and which was then followed by a series of colonial bridges. The heritage zone has some 2,800 residents with over 80 per cent Chinese, about 10 per cent Malay, and a small number of Indians and others (JICA, 2002: 5).

UNESCO also designated a further 134.03 hectares with 948 buildings as a surrounding buffer zone bounded by Jalan Merdeka, Jalan Laksamana, Jalan Ong Kim Wee, Jalan Tan Chay Yan, and Jalan Munshi Abdullah and the back lots of Kampung Banda Kaba, Jalan Chan Koon Cheng and Jalan Merdeka (Malaysian State Party, 2008: 5, 13).

However, the main buildings in the protected conservation zone clustered around the river and on and around St Paul’s Hill, known as Bukit Melaka during the sultanate period, are primarily colonial in origin. The most iconic buildings are mainly of Dutch origin and design; they are decorated in a distinctive reddish paint, which was a late British innovation to replace the neutral plaster colour and which has since been extended to adjacent buildings. First and foremost there is the Stadthuys, the official residence of Dutch governors and other administrative functions which was built between 1641 and 1660; the British inherited this building and continued to use it as government offices, though ‘after some repairs that eradicated certain of its oldest and most typically Netherlands features’ (Sandhu and Wheatley, 1983c: 538). Then there is the Dutch-built Christ Church, consecrated in 1753 as a Dutch Reformed Church after 12 years under construction, and then re-consecrated as an Anglican church in 1838 (Wee, 2009: 13-14). They are located in the Town Square or ‘Dutch Square’ (or ‘Red Square’) at the heart of Melaka town and at the junction of Jalan Kota, Jalan Laksamana and Jalan Gereja.



Map 1: Melaka World Heritage Site showing core zone and buffer zone (source: Malaysia, UNESCO Nomination Dossier: Historic Cities of the Straits of Malacca: Melaka and George Town)

Equally iconic and dating from the Portuguese period is one of the surviving gates (Porta de Santiago) of the fortress (Forteleza), A’ Famosa, built from September 1511 and completed in January 1512 by Afonso de Albuquerque using the forced labour of 1,500 local captives (Irwin, 1983: 783). Extensions and modifications were made during the later sixteenth century. It suffered damage during the Dutch siege and invasion of 1641 but was then repaired and used by the Dutch. There are also the remains of a smaller Dutch fort at nearby St John’s Hill (Bukit Senjuang) on the site of a former Portuguese chapel, dedicated to John the Baptist. Following the British arrival in 1795 the Portuguese-Dutch fortifications demolished in 1807 under a plan to deter any future European settlement, particularly a hostile takeover by Britain’s enemies, and then to move the most valuable parts of the population and its trade to Penang, though the gate was saved with the intervention of Thomas Stamford Raffles (ibid: 15; Turnbull, 1983: 244). An extension of the fort or an oblong bastion constructed by the Dutch in 1660 and called Middelburg has recently been excavated and part of it reconstructed and adorned with cannon of the period. The remains of St Paul’s Church still survives, originally the Portuguese Church of Our Lady of Annunciation (Nossa Senhora da Annonciada) enlarged and transformed by the Jesuits between the mid-1560s and 1590 from what had been the smaller Our Lady of the Hill chapel constructed as early as 1521 by Duarte Coelho; it was subsequently incorporated into part of the Dutch fortress and then became a Dutch burial ground for distinguished Dutch residents of Melaka. It was renamed St Paul’s by the Dutch but gradually fell into disuse after the Dutch built Christ’s Church and then subsequently abandoned during British rule (ibid). A marble statue of St Francis Xavier who regularly visited the church and whose remains were interred there temporarily before being transferred to their final resting place in Goa, commands the front area of the church.

During the Dutch period Portuguese Catholic missionaries also constructed St Peter’s Church which was consecrated in 1710 in what was the northern precinct of the old Dutch town; in its architecture it combines Western and Eastern ecclesiastical forms reminiscent of Portuguese churches in Macau and Goa and it underwent some rebuilding and renovation in 1818-19 (Maeda, 1998: 9). It is now the oldest functioning Roman Catholic Church in central Melaka on Jalan Bendahara and the oldest church in Malaysia (Schubert et al, 2004: 15; Wee, 2009: 19).

From the British period which began in earnest in 1825 one of the most important buildings is the Malacca Club built in 1912 near the remains of the Portuguese fortifications at the eastern foot of St Paul’s Hill (Worden, 2010: 135). Another, which is close to Dutch Square on Jalan Gereja, is the Gothic-styled twin-towered St Francis Xavier Church commissioned by the French Catholic priest Reverend Farve in 1849 (Schubert et al, 2004: 150). As part of the Dutch Square complex of buildings there is also the 20-metre high Clock Tower, painted red to blend in with the nearby Dutch buildings, and erected in 1886 by local benefactor Tan Jiak Kim in honour of his father Tan Beng Swee, as well as the Queen Victoria Fountain in English marble which was funded by the people of Melaka in honour of the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee and erected in 1904 (Wee, 2009: 13-14). The British in destroying the fortifications of what was the Portuguese and Dutch walled town reduced the division between civic centre and suburbs. ‘They also eliminated virtually all dwellings other than the Residency itself from the higher slopes of St. Paul’s Hill.....From seaward the hill took on the appearance of a public park’ (Sandhu and Wheatley, 1983c: 537). Several administrative and commercial buildings were also erected by the British around the foot of St Paul’s Hill. The main museum quarter is located here along Jalan Kota and several former administrative buildings from the British period have been reassigned as museums.



Map 2: The core zone showing the two main sections: St Paul’s Hill Civic Zone and the Residential and Commercial Zones (source: Malaysia, UNESCO Nomination Dossier: Historic Cities of the Straits of Malacca: Melaka and George Town)

The other buildings within the World Heritage Site are located in the residential and commercial district on the opposite bank of the river and are primarily Chinese in origin. In the Portuguese period communities from different ethnic groups (Chinese, Javanese, Bugis, Indians, Arabs, as well as a Eurasian community derived from Portuguese intermarriage with locals) began to settle in this area outside the walled town (where the Portuguese resided) which was the site of the bazaar and some official residences during the Sultanate period. Over time these ethnic groups formed their own distinctive quarters or villages (*kampung*): Kampung Kling (South Indian Village), Kampung Hulu (Arab Village), Kampung Jawa (Javanese Village), Kampung China (Chinese Village) and Kampung Serani (Eurasian Village). But during Dutch governance several streets were developed in what was originally Kampung Keling (South Indian Village), including Heerenstraat and Jonkerstraat into which some prominent Dutch residents moved where impressive townhouses were built (the district came to be known as Kampong Blanda). Outer suburbs such as Tengkera (derived from the Portuguese term ‘tranqueira’ [earthen rampart] which bounded the northern and eastern parts of the old suburb of Upeh in Portuguese times], Bandar Hilir, Bunga Raya and Bukit China were also developed, and by the end of the eighteenth century the ethnic districts were not so clear cut when the Chinese began to move into areas previously occupied by the Dutch, Malays, Javanese, Indians and Arabs.

Today this whole area is Melaka’s Chinatown, comprising two- and one-storey, high density terraced shop houses of food outlets and markets, kopi-tiams (coffee shops), antique, souvenir and tourist shops, art galleries, artisan dwellings for goldsmiths, ironsmiths, tinsmiths, apothecaries, woodcarvers, coffin-makers, pottery-makers, and printers, shops selling Chinese ritual, funerary and prayer items, as well as legal firms, interspersed with ancestral temples, club-houses, clan and guild buildings (ibid). Jalan Hang Jebat is the street in which the antique and craft shops are concentrated (Maeda, 1998: 9). The Malaysian Conservation Management Plan remarks that ‘Melaka’s townscape is quite distinctive in character because of its sense of enclosure and mixture of houses, shops and places of worship (Malaysian State Party, 2008: 14). The buildings draw their inspiration mainly from southern Chinese prototypes elaborated with ‘facade treatments of western beaux-arts, neo-classical, and art deco architecture’ (Cartier, 2001: 207). In other words, they express the eclectic, hybrid culture of the Straits Chinese (Maeda, 1998: 9). They were the product of ‘the introduction of Chinese building forms, materials, decoration, workmen, systems of construction, tools, and craftsmanship...’ (Seow,1983:776). In the documentation which was prepared for the nomination process the whole range of shophouse designs and facades was identified and categorized (Dutch [17th-18th century], Southern Chinese [18th-early 19th century], Early Shophouse [1800-1850s], Early Transitional [1840-1900s], Early Straits Eclectic [1890s-1920s], Late Straits Eclectic [1920-1940s], Neo-classical [19th-early 20th century], Art Deco [1930s-1950s], Early Modern [post-war]).

On Jalan Tun Tan Cheng Lock, the most important heritage street in Melaka, one of the finest Baba or Peranakan houses with adjacent dwellings has been converted into the Baba House Hotel, another into the Hotel Puri; yet another has been transformed into the privately owned and run Baba Nyonya Heritage Museum, by a local Justice of the Peace and prominent member of the Chinese community, Chan Kim Lay; another well known landmark is the Malaqa House Museum and antiques shop owned by Jack Sim Juek Wah (Wee, 2009: 51, 85). The street also boasts the recently renovated ‘Chee Ancestral Mansion’ or Rumah Abu, built in 1919 by Chee Swee Cheng in memory of his father Chee Yam Chuan, the rubber plantation baron and a founding member of the Overseas Chinese Banking Corporation (OCBC). It was designed by a Eurasian architect combining, in an extravagantly eclectic fashion, Georgian, Dutch and Middle Eastern architectural styles ((ibid: 50). Among other streets in the UNESCO-inscribed area are First Cross Street (Lorong Hang Jebat), Second Cross Street (Jalan Hang Kasturi), Third Cross Street (Jalan Hang Lekir), Fourth Cross Street (Jalan Lekiu), Temple Street (Jalan Tokong), Goldsmith Street (Jalan Tukang Emas), and Blacksmith Street (Jalan Tukang Besi), Beach Street (Jalan Pantai), Portuguese Street (Jalan Portugis), Jalan Masjid (Mosque Street), Fort Street (Jalan Kubu), Jalan Jawa (Javanese Street), Tranquerah Street (Jalan Tengkera), the Indentured Labourer Village (Kampung Kuli) and Upriver Village (Kampung Hulu).

Chinatown also contains several prominent religious buildings. Probably the most important as well as being the oldest Chinese temple in the country is the Cheng Hoon Teng temple (Temple of the Green Clouds) which was begun in the mid-1640s by Kapitan Lee Wei King and eventually completed in 1704. Located on Jalan Tokong it was built with materials imported from China and it embodies the southern Chinese architectural style. It also incorporates in its functions and symbolism the three main strands of Chinese religion: Taoism, Confucianism and Buddhism. Another significant temple is the Sam Poh Kong Temple which is the guardian temple of the Bukit China cemetery and is ‘believed to be named after a fish that was claimed to have saved Admiral Cheng Ho’s (Zheng He) ship after it had been damaged in a storm whilst the Chinese Admiral (a Muslim born in Yunan, China) was sailing to Malacca’ (ibid: 16). Next to the temple is the Sultan’s well or Perigi Raja; it is also known as Hang Li Po’s well after the name of the Chinese princess who was said to have become the wife of Sultan Mansur Shah in 1459 (ibid). There is also the Eng Choon Association temple dedicated to two Taoist deities with colourful and dramatic decorations of deities and dragons.

What is now Chinatown was once home to Malay and other Muslim communities, as well as Hindu Indians and Eurasians; in the 1930s for example, the Portuguese-Eurasians moved from the central area to Ujung Pasir near St John’s Hill some three kilometres east of the town centre (Maeda, 1998: 11). There are two important mosques which remain in the central area. The Tengkera Mosque (Masjid Tranquerah), one of the oldest in the country dating from 1782, was built with a Chinese pagoda rather than a Middle Eastern style minaret which suggests that it was also used by Muslim Chinese as well as local Muslims with the involvement of Chinese builders. Its three-tiered roof design is of Sumatran origin. In its grounds is the tomb of Sultan Hussain Shah of Johor, a descendant of the Melakan sultans. It was Sultan Hussain who ceded Singapore to Raffles in 1819 and then sold it to the British East India Company in 1824. Following a rift in the royal family Sultan Hussain moved to Melaka in 1834 and died there in 1853 (ibid: 17). Another mosque is that located in Kampung Hulu which gives the mosque its name; it is considered to be the oldest mosque in Malaysia dating back to 1670. Its patron was a Chinese Muslim, Datuk Aroom (Harun) who before his conversion was Tan Seek Tiong. Its unique architectural feature is a separate roofed entrance (ibid: 38). There are also two surviving Muslim mausolea in this district said to be the resting places of two of the famous heroes of early Melakan sultanate history, Hang Kasturi and Hang Jebat (Maeda, 1998: 9-10).

And let us not forget the Indian contribution. In a remarkable statement of religious and cultural harmony we find in close proximity in Jalan Tokong (Temple Street), Jalan Tukang Emas and Jalan Tukang Besi three religious buildings of different ethnic groups: the Cheng Hoon Teng Temple (Chinese), the Kampung Kling (Indian) mosque, dating from 1748 (like the Tengkera mosque, with a Chinese pagoda-like minaret and a Sumatran-type tiered roof design), and the Sri Poyyatha Vinayagar Moorthi Temple of 1781, a Hindu temple dedicated to the elephant-headed god Vinayagar or Ganesha, and built on land given by the Dutch government to the Melakan Indian Chitties (ibid: 33; Schubert et al, 2004:). It is also sacred to those Indians of the Chettiar caste of money-lenders (Maeda, 1998: 10; Malaysian State Party, 2008: 18, 20).

Lest we assign too much emphasis to the European elimination of a Malay political and cultural legacy we might also remark here that, following the Dutch and British succession, much of the architectural heritage of the Portuguese like that of the Malays before them was also removed. Under the administration of the Dutch East India Company ‘The Portuguese churches, monasteries, and convents which had previously dotted the town were destroyed, allowed to decay, or resumed for Company use’ (Andaya, 1983: 199; and see Maeda, 1998: 3). In contrast the major heritage structures at the heart of Melaka which were built by the Dutch, were co-opted by the British and then the newly independent Malay(si)an government, though the British destroyed much of what was left of the Portuguese legacy. The Malay-dominated Malaysian state then began to reclaim Melaka and to put upon it a Malay-Islamic national stamp, as we shall see.

Cartier also suggests that the mobile, cosmopolitan population of Melaka with a history of intermarriage between different ethnic groups has been progressively re-ordered since Malay(si)an independence in terms of contemporary national ideologies and the development of nationalist movements (ibid: 194; Milner, 2010). Indeed Cartier sees this as a major problem in presenting Melaka to a wider audience: its roots in a dynamic, mobile, open, eclectic, hybrid trading enterprise has been replaced by a narrower, inward-looking nationalist agenda. Melaka’s history, based on cosmopolitanism, cultural hybridization and ethnic intermixture, and the cultural encounters between Europe and Asia have therefore been subject, in an independent Malaysia, to a national political discourse based on ethnic discreteness and communalism; but this merely continues a process of ethnic rationalization and simplification which was instituted by the British.

The complexity of Melaka’s population has been reduced on the national stage to three broad ethnic categories comprising ‘Malay’ (though with additional communities which are, for certain purposes, brought together as *bumiputra* [indigenous people]), ‘Chinese’ and ‘Indian’. The mestizo communities have then had to decide how they accommodate themselves to these three macro-ethnic categories. These politically driven issues have obvious implications for the ways in which Melaka has been presented, to some extent transformed and then deployed in nation-building and it helps explain some of its recent history as a heritage site and a centre of tourism development. It also helps us understand some of the difficulties the Malaysian government experienced before the country secured its first UNESCO cultural site inscription, although the inscription was only agreed with the provision that both Melaka and George Town should be considered together as ‘historic cities’.

In theory at least, UNESCO, having approved of twin sites linked by the Straits of Malacca, has left open the question of whether or not other future submissions might be included under this umbrella, though for the time being it has only approved two sites within one country; those additional cities or urban areas which might lay claim to inclusion are Phuket (in Thailand), Acheh, Medan, Palembang and Jambi (in Indonesia), Kuala Lumpur (in Malaysia) and Singapore. It is very unlikely that some of these would qualify, given that post-independence, government-driven development and modernization programmes have removed what UNESCO would consider as acceptable and viable heritage under its criteria of sites of universal value. Nevertheless, it again underlines, so it would appear, the equivocation and open-endedness with which UNESCO approached its decision to inscribe Melaka and George Town, and presumably the difficulties of handling a series of urban developments which owe their genesis to a trans-national waterway but which, in terms of the nomination procedure, are dealt with by a United Nations system based on constituent units referred to as ‘State Parties’ or in other words sovereign nation-states. This in turn highlights a dilemma in the inscription process in that certain heritage sites cannot be prescribed and delimited in nation-state terms and yet UNESCO receives nominations from a particular country which lays claim to a site within its territorial discretion. The recent Thai-Cambodian military confrontation over the Preah Vihear temple complex in Cambodian territory which is disputed by Thailand, and which was inscribed by UNESCO at the same meeting as the Melaka-George Town inscription, is wonderfully apposite in this connection. It suggests that UNESCO might well have to develop a much more focused and direct trans-national mechanism in the nomination process in order to avoid nationally driven boundary disputes. As we shall see even two sites within Malaysia present problems because they are located in different states within a federated political system.

From its heyday under the sultanate and then the Portuguese from 1511 and the Dutch occupation from 1641 Melaka’s importance as a port-centre declined from the late eighteenth century through the nineteenth century (Ginsburg, 1983: 290). Its harbour became increasingly silted; it was not deep enough to take larger, sea-going vessels and it was rapidly superseded by Penang and then by Singapore, after the British established themselves along the Straits of Malacca from the last part of the eighteenth century. The British had become temporary caretakers of Dutch-owned Melaka from 1795 to 1818 during the Napoleonic Wars and the French occupation of the Low Countries, and during this time the British officials and merchants in Penang were determined ‘to reduce the trade of Malacca. This reflected the fact that the two ports belonged to rival European empires, with radically different social structures, systems of governance, and cultural traditions of doing business’ (Webster, 2011: 908). Melaka was officially handed over to the British in 1824 by the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of London, but the Dutch presence in Melaka continued beyond then (ibid: 920-921). Even before the conclusion of the treaty the British had begun to shift the focus of trade from Melaka to Penang and especially after 1819 to move to Singapore as it increasingly became the major entrepôt between India and China. By the 1850s Malacca had been administratively, culturally and economically incorporated into the British Straits Settlements but in relation to Singapore and Penang it ‘came to be regarded as the junior partner’ (ibid: 922) and in the estimation of a Governor of the Straits Settlements in 1895 as ‘a mere suburb of Singapore’ (Sandhu and Wheatley, 1983c: 518). Even during Dutch rule there had been a progressive shift of interest from Melaka to the Dutch possessions in Java and Sumatra from the 1650s in that commerce came increasingly to be concentrated in Batavia and the Dutch interest in Melaka was primarily military and focused on the need to deprive other European powers of a base there, rather than commercial (ibid: 514). Melaka’s fate was eventually sealed following Malaysian independence when other ports, particularly Port Klang and Port Penang, were favoured in the Malaysian government’s plans for economic growth and modernization.

As a result today the economy of Melaka does not depend on sea-borne trade, and about three-quarters of the Gross Domestic Product of the state of Melaka (which is a larger territory than the metropolitan area) is derived from tourism and related service industries. Under British government Melaka became increasingly a regional service centre for the surrounding agricultural hinterland (Chi, 1983: 652). It might be argued therefore that what has survived of Melaka’s urban heritage has been in part the result of its decline as an international port and therefore the absence of the need to redevelop and modernize the old harbour area around the Melaka River. The relative neglect of Melaka in national development terms in relation to Penang, the greater Kuala Lumpur area and Johor Bahru meant that the pace of change was modest enough to enable the municipal and state governments to be selective and they have ‘not been in a position to make serious planning or promotional mistakes’ (Osborn, 1983: 476). With a few exceptions much of the central urban area of Melaka Town remains low-rise, though high-rise low-cost flats were built at the southern end of Jalan Bendahara attached to the core area (Chi, 1983: 700). Furthermore, the need to re-house residents away from the overcrowded core area has been largely achieved by suburban residential developments which began to appear from the 1960s (Lim, 1983: 719-720). The charm of Melaka and its global heritage value therefore depend on its compact, narrow streets with a mixture of architectural and cultural styles, and a large number of surviving public and religious buildings (Seow, 1983).

**Melaka as a Site of Malay and Malaysian Identity**

The complexities surrounding the ways in which Melaka’s global heritage has, in Cartier’s terms, been ‘imaged’ derive from its singular position in Malay and Islamic history in Southeast Asia and its role in the construction of the national identity of a modernizing, post-colonial nation-state. Melaka’s importance was confirmed in the words on the plaque unveiled by the then Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamed in 1989: translated it reads ‘the historic city of Malaysia. Here is where it all began....the birth of a nation’. Indeed it was the first Prime Minister of Malaya and then Malaysia, Tunku Abdul Rahman, who made the first declaration on 20 February 1956 of the forthcoming independence of the Federation of Malaya at Padang Pahlawan, Bandar Hilir in central Melaka. The emblematic connection between Melaka, the politically dominant Malays and the wider nation of Malaysia is clear. The state emblem, flower and flag resonate with Malay and Islamic symbols and with Melakan history. In literature and web material issued by Tourism Malaysia, which is the promotional arm of the federal Ministry of Tourism, Melaka is usually styled ‘Malaysia’s Historical City’ (2009b: 18-19). Moreover, during the last decade campaigns by the Melaka state government’s Tourism Promotion Division rehearse the theme of the close symbolic connection between Melaka and Malaysia in the slogan ‘Visit Historic Melaka Means Visit Malaysia’ (Schubert et al, 2004: 22; Tourism Promotion Division, 2009). However, as we shall explore later, there has been a shift in emphasis from an earlier Malay-focused agenda to one which presents Melaka as ‘a melting pot of all the races, reflecting the diverse multiracial society that today distinguishes this country’ (Schubert et al, 2004: 23).

Let us first examine the earlier representation of Melaka as an essentially Malay creation and construction. As Worden demonstrates in his carefully crafted paper on identities and nation-building, the construction of a close relationship between the Malays, Islam, and Melaka, and these in turn with the modern nation-state of Malaysia required ‘some deft remodelling’ (2010: 132). The historical domains of the Malay-Muslim world of Melaka of the fifteenth century were not coterminous either with the territories which the British brought together as the Straits Settlements and the Malay States and on independence (with the exclusion of Singapore) the Federation of Malaya on 31 August 1957, or even less with the wider territories which included the northern Borneo territories (with the exclusion of the Sultanate of Brunei) and which became the Federation of Malaysia on 16 September 1963. European colonialism resulted in the division of the Malay world between what was to become the British domains and, to the south, the Netherlands East Indies, later to become the independent Republic of Indonesia. In particular, the roots of Melaka and Malay culture in Sumatra which became incorporated into the Dutch domains and then Indonesia were distanced from the Malays of the Malayan Peninsula even though a considerable percentage of what is now the Malay population of Malaysia traces its ancestry and history to communities in what is now Indonesia. The Malays of southern Thailand and the Muslim populations of the southern Philippines were also excluded. This politically generated distancing process between Sumatra and the Malayan Peninsula became even more prominent after Sukarno’s ‘Confrontation’ of the then newly created Federation of Malaysia from 1963 when Indonesian Malays were firmly separated from their cousins to the north, but even before then the concept of a ‘Greater Indonesia’ in the 1940s had come to nothing (ibid: 132). Therefore, Melaka as a Malay sultanate which derived from the Indonesian islands to the south and which bridged the Straits of Malacca (as other maritime states like Srivijaya in Sumatra had done before) became increasingly fixed territorially in a Malay(si)an Malay polity.

Another important consideration in nation-building was the identification of those elements in Malaysia’s history and culture which could be brought together to constitute a national identity. This was made especially difficult in a new country made up of previously differently administered and historically separate units and comprising a medley of peoples and cultures, a significant proportion of which came from outside the Malay-Indonesian archipelago and the wider Southeast Asia. The ethnic composition of Melaka and Penang was even more complex in that as port centres they were the focus of migrations and settlement from a wide range of places, and subject also to a considerable amount of cultural exchange and intermarriage. How then to unify the nation in a shared identity? This exercise, in important respects, was an extraordinarily difficult task. As the dominant symbols, both in the pre-colonial and the British colonial period, were associated with the Malay sultans, and the senior local administration under the British system of indirect rule was primarily made up of Malays, then it was to be expected that the Malays would play a dominant part in the post-colonial state (Crouch, 1996). The Malay-dominant government then chose Malay- and Muslim-centred symbols, including the institution of the sultanate and kingship, which in turn harked back to, at least in part, an ‘imagined tradition’ and an unbroken connection with the past, the Malay language as the national language, and Islam as the national religion; and this is where Melaka, as the state located in Malaysian territory, played an important role as the source, ancestral anchor, geographical locus and the legitimacy of the newly created Malaysian state.

As Worden says with reference to the Malay concept of a kingdom (*kerajaan*), and more importantly the authority of the king or *raja*: ‘Some Malaysian scholars have argued that the “Malacca tradition” of kingship, law and authority survived the Portuguese conquest through the Johor-Riau empire and into the eighteenth century, and was by implication incorporated into the modern Malaysian nation-state’ (2010: 133). More than this Melaka ‘provided the model for the present Sultanates in the Peninsula, with the exception of Negeri Sembilan’ (Mohd Yusoff, 2004: 28; Zainal Abidin, 1983: 101). Even the concept of ‘Malay’ and ‘Malaydom’ was intimately associated with Melaka. Milner, in his detailed exploration of the meaning of ‘Malay’, proposes that a major problem in examining Malay identity is determining ‘when “the Malays” came into being as a community extending beyond individual Archipelago states’ (2010: 12). He poses the question ‘Who are “the Malays”?’ and importantly what it means to be ‘Malay’ (2008). In addition, he puzzles over the issue of ‘race’ and ‘ethnicity’ as applied to the Malays (2010: 10, 13). He suggests that the emergence of the idea of ‘Malay’, for him, ‘comes into view’ during the fifteenth-sixteenth century Melaka sultanate, when we see reference to ‘Malay’ or ‘Melayu’ in the Melakan *Malay Annals* (*Sejarah Melayu*) and in Magellan’s expedition word-list (ibid; and see Reid, 2001:30).

It was then during high colonialism from the nineteenth century and the European preoccupation with categories, classification, identifying and mapping that the concept of a ‘Malay race’ (*bangsa Melayu*) crystallized and when the wider Malay world (which still has some resonance) was divided into nation-state-based Malay identity (Milner, 2010: 13). But Milner finds the roots of this emerging Malayness located, as has Worden, in the institution of the sultanate and the relation between the ruler and the subject; in Milner’s words ‘a *raja*-centred world’ (ibid: 15; 2008: 127). The Melaka Sultanate, with its power and authority based on descent, the association of the ruler with Islam and Allah, and the loyalty, respect and obedience owed to the ruler by his subjects expressed in the concepts *daulat* and *derhaka*, and its structure of government was therefore the model of successor sultanates on the Malayan Peninsula (Zainal Abidin, 1983: 101-110; and see Chandra Muzaffar, 1983: 48-50).

Milner draws attention to the different ways in which Melaka was deployed in post-independence nation-building in Malay(si)a. In the court epic *Hikayat Hang Tuah* Milner draws attention to Tunku Abdul Rahman’s translation of the Melakan hero, Hang Tuah’s loyalty to his sultan to his support for ‘the Malay race’ (2008: 159). More than this ‘In almost every major address to the party, Tunku Abdul Rahman, UMNO President and Prime Minister for the first thirteen years of Merdeka [independence], stressed the importance of adhering to this concept. He differentiated his colleagues on the basis of their loyalty to him’ (Chandra Muzaffar,1983:51). This was also sometimes translated into loyalty to the United Malays National Organisation and particularly to its collective leadership, but as Malay politics and the Malaysian political system more generally developed in the post-independence period it became loyalty to the Malay community which carried the utmost importance (ibid: 63).

Milner argues further that rather than the concept of Malay as a ‘racial’ category, which is a more recent political construction, we should think of it as a ‘cultural style’ or ‘civilization’, and again, with reference to the epic of Hang Tuah this perspective can be traced back to the Melaka sultanate. The emphasis was not so much on genealogical relationship or biological unity but on ‘Malay ways’ and the ‘ways of Melaka’ (2010: 24-26). In this regard people can ‘become Malay’; they take on ‘Malayness’; and this was a characteristic of Melaka in that Malays were described in the court literature as ‘hybrids’ and the Malay community as open and flexible. As Milner says ‘”Malayness” had the capacity to be communicated to newcomers’ (ibid: 25). In recent years and in the interests of post-colonial nation-building the concept of ‘Malay’ has become increasingly an ideological one which, in certain contexts, has translated Melakan openness into a national policy of assimilation of those who are not Malay.

The historical importance of Melaka in nation-building therefore resulted in its becoming increasingly part of the politicization of heritage and that role in turn fed into government plans to promote tourism in its national plans for economic growth. Yet, as we have seen, there were two particular contradictions in this post-colonial project. First, there were no material or physical remains left of a Malay-Muslim heritage in the historic core of Melaka that extended back to the golden years of the pre-Portuguese sultanate that were available to deploy for national and tourism purposes. Secondly, the need to promote economic growth within the context of the New Economic Policy (NEP) so that it could be harnessed to a redistribution strategy in favour of the *bumiputera* and which did not alienate the other ethnic groups and which in turn would provide the basis for rapid capital accumulation, required state-directed and promoted economic development. In the case of tourism what was favoured in the 1980s and 1990s was the development of large-scale tourism projects with their related infrastructure and not so much the conservation and protection of heritage. The tension and contradiction between heritage and modernization has been a persistent theme in the recent history of Melaka and in the wider Federation of Malaysia.

**Malaysian Tourism Development**

From a very modest tourism industry in the 1970s the emphasis in the federal and state governments’ development plans in the last three decades has been firstly on large-scale tourism developments and only more recently on heritage and history. A major boost to tourism development came with the significant increase in the tourism budget under the Fourth and Fifth Malaysia Plans (1981-1990) (Maeda, 1998: 17). In examining tourism development and economic growth strategies it should also be emphasized here that when Malaysia launched its New Economic Policy through the Second Malaysia Plan (1971-75) and up to the end of the Fifth Malaysia Plan (1986-1990), the guiding principles were not only characterized by affirmative action on behalf of the indigenous population, particularly the Malays, but they also focused on promoting economic growth. In other words, capitalist development was necessary to ensure that some of the fruits of growth could be redistributed for the benefit of the Malays and to build a modern, educated, urbanized, entrepreneurial and prosperous Malay population. In regard to the tourism sector, and specifically in the case of Melaka, the focus was increasingly on the construction and development of new facilities and large capital-intensive infrastructure projects such as hotels, beach resorts, marinas, theme parks, shopping malls and golf courses (Cartier, 1998a). These developments were presided over by the Tourism Development Corporation of Malaysia which was established in 1972 and which formulated the first national tourism development plan in 1975. A separate Ministry of Tourism and Culture was established in 1987 from a merger between the Culture Division of the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports and the Tourism Development Corporation, and then became the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism in 1992 which gave further impetus to tourism growth. Its responsibilities were directed to policy, licensing and enforcement of policies and legislation (Cartier, 1998a: 156). Tourism was then given another boost with the founding of the Malaysian Tourism Promotion Board (‘Tourism Malaysia’) in 1992 responsible for advertising and marketing (ibid). The first Visit Malaysia Year promotion and the Malaysia Tourism Policy Study were undertaken in 1990 (Maeda, 1998: 17). The main source of funding for tourism development is the federal government; the state government provides land, property and other facilities; and the local authorities grant development approval (ibid).

In Melaka’s case the new tourism developments took place outside the historic core of old Melaka from the early 1980s, but in any case most of the main developments were in other parts of the Federation, particularly Penang and Kuala Lumpur and a string of beach resorts along the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia and on islands like Langkawi. Melaka has seen rapid economic development (in both large-scale tourism projects and industrial ventures) but its historic core area has remained largely intact, though surrounding the core are several high-rise developments which can be seen from St Paul’s Hill (see below).

The theme parks and large-scale leisure developments are located mainly inland from Melaka town. At Bukit Auyin there is a hill resort with a geomancy theme park; nearby at Ayer Keroh, some 15 kilometres north-east of Melaka town, there are the Taman Mini-Malaysia and Taman Mini-ASEAN, these are parks in which wooden models of Malaysian and regional traditional house forms have been constructed in forest settings. At Alor Gajah there is the A’Famosa Waterworld, a water park with an Arabian Nights theme pool for boating and a nearby golf resort. Melaka state also has the second largest zoo, a butterfly and reptile sanctuary, a bee farm, a crocodile farm, a turtle management centre, a tropical fruit farm, a recreational forest, and several golf courses, for example at Ayer Keroh, Ayer Panas, Jasin and Bukit Katil, (ibid: 162-164, 166). Modern facilities and high quality golf courses attract visitors from nearby Singapore and the wider region including Japan, Taiwan and Korea. There have also been beach resort developments at nearby Tanjung Bidara and Pulau Besar.

In the first stage of tourism development in the 1980s there was also very little in the way of interest in heritage and historical tourism since a considerable number of the heritage sites (both in Melaka and George Town) were related primarily to a colonial and a non-Malay, non-Muslim past. Although there was a gradual increase in awareness of the importance and potential of heritage conservation and related tourism activities in the 1980s, it was not until the 1990s that the importance of heritage landscapes began to be incorporated into the Malaysian government’s strategic planning for economic development, and Melaka began to play an increasing role in this shift in tourism policy. This was, in part at least, in response to a changing global market in heritage and probably prompted, not in small part, by the actions of such bodies as UNESCO’s World Heritage Committee and the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) which works closely with UNESCO. Heritage and the living cultures in which it is embedded and expressed therefore have become a global business, and most governments around the world have signed up to the World Heritage Convention.

The Malaysian government was attracted to the market potential of heritage and wider cultural tourism as another strand in its overall policy to expand its tourism sector. Jenkins remarks pertinently that ‘UNESCO listing does not exist without tourism’ (2008: 247). In the case of Melaka this was crucial for generating employment; from the mid-1980s central Melaka began to lose some of its traditional trades and residents as a result of the relocation of businesses, the competition from new leisure-related developments outside the old town, the outmigration of young people and the pressures to redevelop heritage properties (JICA, 2002: 12). To reflect the increasing importance of heritage issues as well as the emphasis on tourism development the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism was reorganized in March 2004 into two bodies: the Ministry of Tourism with its agency the Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board (or Tourism Malaysia) ([www.tourism.gov.my](http://www.tourism.gov.my)) and the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Heritage ([www.motour.gov.my](http://www.motour.gov.my)). The responsibility for heritage management and policy has therefore been separated from that for tourism policies and promotion, and yet both ministries are in various ways engaged in heritage tourism issues ([www.heritage.gov.my](http://www.heritage.gov.my)). In 2006 a federal Department of National Heritage was established and with the further politicization of heritage the responsibilities of the Ministry of Culture were widened in 2008 to become the Ministry of Unity, Culture, Arts and Heritage. At the state level there are also official bodies responsible for tourism; in Melaka it is the Melaka State Tourism Promotion Division and the Tourism Unit ([www.melaka.gov.my](http://www.melaka.gov.my)). Conservation and heritage matters are the responsibility of the Municipal Council and its Conservation Committee and the Melaka Museums Corporation ([www.unescobkk.org](http://www.unescobkk.org)).

But even then in Malaysia the shift to an interest in heritage and history has not precluded a strong and continuing commitment to the construction of large-scale tourism- and leisure-related projects. It is these that generate a high level of tourist revenue rather than the quiet and protected streets of an urban heritage quarter which generally do not lend themselves to a large volume of visitors. The importance of promoting mass tourism rather than niche tourism is obvious. Indeed in 1997 just before the decision to join with Penang in applying for inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage List the Chief Minister of Melaka announced the decision to proceed with four ‘megaprojects’ or ‘leisurescapes’ designed to triple the number of tourist visitors to Melaka to 4.5 million annually (Cartier, 1998a: 151). By the late 1990s urban transformations around the historic core of old Melaka were obvious: new retail outlets, shopping malls, hotels, apartments and office blocks (Maeda, 1998: 6).

Malaysian analyses of the tourism market suggested that domestic tourists and those from the Southeast Asian region particularly Singapore, would not only wish to gaze on colonial and historical landscapes and would therefore need other leisure attractions whilst there was scope for the marketing of heritage to Western tourists (ibid: 152). The emphasis on ‘megaprojects’ is also linked to the important contribution which the construction industry makes to Malaysia’s economic development and the increasing shift from manufacturing industry to construction, real estate and services during the 1990s (ibid: 153-156). The process was facilitated following an amendment to the Land Acquisition Act in 1987 by giving the state the power to acquire land which was considered necessary for economic development, which could then be transferred to individuals or corporations for ‘privatised use’. The developers of large tourism projects were also given tax and investment incentives (ibid: 155).

The official focus on ‘megadevelopment’, in Cartier’s words, resulted in the destruction of Melaka’s original harbour and waterfront – arguably its historic raison-d’être – to be replaced by a large swathe of reclaimed land at Mahkota Melaka and Taman Melaka Raya on which have been constructed high rise buildings, hotels, offices, apartments, shopping malls, and a sea world amusement park (2001: 201). Significant parts of the waterfront are now taken up with large shopping complexes: the Dataran Pahlawan Megamall and the Mahkota Parade; there is the enormous ‘Eye on Malaysia’ viewing wheel with 42 gondolas situated in a large leisure park at the mouth of the Melaka River, and in nearby Bandar Hilir the 80-metre Menara Taming Sari, ‘the first revolving gyro tower in Malaysia’ (Tourism Malaysia, 2009a: 10). The reclamation work continues and has had serious consequences for the ancient Portuguese community and its sea-based livelihood in that its coastal location has been transformed into an inland one (ibid). But these transformations demonstrate the tensions to which I have already referred: according to Cartier parts of Melaka’s heritage have effectively been destroyed and the reclamation and urban development have compromised any attempt ‘to advance an authentic tourism imaging strategy based on the historic port’ (2001: 201). It was also one of the main reasons why earlier applications to include Melaka on the UNESCO WHS list were rejected (see below). Cartier concludes her analysis of large-scale capital investment projects in Malaysia by drawing attention to the crucial role that tourism plays ‘in the larger development process’ and in this environment ‘the conservation status of historic landscapes limits their development potential and, in the era of megadevelopment projects, marginalises their significance in the state’s tourism profile’ (1998a: 171).

Yet the tension between conservation and development is particularly acute in Melaka. Rightly or wrongly it was a prevailing view in the state government and among responsible academic advisors that one way to overcome the constraints on development in the historic urban core was to reclaim land and take the pressure off what is now the UNESCO WHS. Some 30 years ago Hamzah Sendut argued that it would not be feasible to redevelop ‘the historical parts of the city’ and instead ‘[p]lanned development of the waterfront should be used to create a new urban core which would absorb much of the burden of urban growth’ (1983: 487). When he wrote his paper reclamation work was already under way. Hamzah concludes that the objective ‘would be to create a balanced and harmonious growth between the old and new parts of the city’ (ibid). In the context of Melaka’s economic development needs the policy to modernize and bring commercial, retail and leisure activities onto reclaimed land makes sense, but it still has an impact on the historic core of Melaka, as Cartier has explained, in that it has broken the connection between the heart of old Melaka and the sea and harbour. It has also had an enormous visual impact when viewed from the top of St Paul’s Hill. The heritage area has become an enclave surrounded to a significant degree by high-rise buildings. The Lonely Planet guide remarks that ‘Despite an abundance of historical monuments, many locals argue that the city’s distinctive heritage is under threat from modernisation’ (Richmond, 2004: 211). More than this ‘The historic waterfront retreated so far inland...that it endangered the traditional livelihood of the Portuguese fishing community’ (ibid) (see below).

**Reclaiming Malay Heritage**

Particularly since the introduction of the New Economic Policy one of the major issues which faced the Malay-dominated federal and state government in central Melaka was how to give material weight to the symbolic and historical importance of the Malay sultanate, given that urban landscapes are a means to express, give meaning to and enter into discussion about ethnic and national identities. A major development which was designed to reclaim it for the Malays and Islam was the construction in wood of what was said to be a replica of the fifteenth century Sultan Mansur Shah’s Palace (*Istana Kesultanan Melaka*) which was opened by Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamed in July 1986 (Cartier, 2001: 198; Maeda, 1998: 5). It is claimed to be based on sketches in the *Malay Annals* which, as the earliest Malay written text, sets out the character of and principles underlying this exemplary Malay-Muslim sultanate and those Malay heroes who demonstrated the community values which needed to be upheld (Cartier, 2001: 203). It houses a Cultural Museum (*Muzium Budaya*) whose exhibitions present a Malay- and sultanate-centred history of Melaka and Malay cultural achievements; it dwells on court ceremonial and ritual and on the attributes of the traditional Malay-Muslim polity (*kerajaan*). Importantly it is a re-creation of the past, but one which transposes the original location of the palace from St Paul’s Hill itself to the foot of the hill. The palace is also surrounded by the Historic City Memorial Garden ‘in Islamic design’ (Worden, 2010: 135). More recently a Melaka Sultanate Water Mill, based on Islamic technology, was built in 2008 on the Melaka River (Tourism Promotion Division, 2009: 6). Cartier says ‘The new Sultan’s Palace functions to recreate history and even out perceived inequities in the representational historic landscape by featuring a prominent landmark associated with the first sultanate in Malaysia and the arrival of Islam to the peninsula’ (1998a: 160).

In addition, most of the European buildings which were bequeathed the independent Malaysian state have been converted into museums which celebrate not a colonial legacy but one which serves a local agenda; the Stadthuys for example, opened in 1982, houses the Museum of History and Ethnography (*Muzium Sejarah dan Etnografi Melaka*) and presents the history of the sultanate and European and Japanese occupation, Melakan society, cultures and everyday life (ibid). The Museum of Literature (*Muzium Sastera*), on the hill slope above the Stadthuys in a building formerly occupied by the Melaka State Development Corporation and part of the Stadthuys complex, and opened in 1995 yet again celebrates the Malay history of Melaka with historical documents, Malay literary genres, local Malay writers and national literary figures (ibid). The British Clubhouse is home to the Proclamation of Independence Memorial and the Malay Governor’s Collections ‘have been placed in Seri Melaka, the residence of the Dutch and then the British Governors’ which is located on St Paul’s Hill near the church (Worden, 2010: 135). Close to the Stadthuys on Jalan Kota is also the Melaka Islamic Museum (*Muzium Islam Melaka*) which occupied a beautifully restored building which used to be home to the Melaka Islamic Council (*Majlis Islam Melaka*); it focuses on the historical relations between Islam and Melaka (www.virtualmuseummelaka.com). The Malay and Islamic World Museum (*Muzium Dunia Melayu dan Islam*) in Bastion House on Jalan Kota, the former building of the British-owned Dunlop Company until 1986, again reinforces some of the central themes of Malaysian nation-building. The Malaysia Youth Museum (*Muzium Belia Malaysia*) opened in 1992 is close by Christ Church and the Stadthuys and was designed in recognition of the contribution made by young people to the building of the nation; it pays particular attention to UMNO Youth, which is the youth branch of the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), the pre-eminent political party in Malaysia. To reinforce the overwhelming national importance of this Malay political party at the foot of St Paul’s Hill in the museum district along Jalan Kota there is also the Melaka UMNO Museum which, through photographs, letters and other documents describes the history of the party which was founded in Melaka and its contribution to the securing of independence and in building a modern nation. Reinforcing the political and national messages which abound in the historic core of Melaka, a recently opened exhibition on St Paul’s Hill is the Democratic Government Museum which occupies the State Legislative Assembly building, opened by the Governor of Melaka on 31 August 1961; the Assembly has recently moved to new premises in Ayer Keroh. The museum is designed to trace the development of parliamentary democracy in Malaysia since independence ([www.virtualmuseummelaka.com](http://www.virtualmuseummelaka.com)). Another museum on Jalan Kota is the People’s Museum (*Muzium Rakyat*) opened in 1992 and located in the former Municipal Council building which contains a miscellany of local cultural materials and displays; the building also houses a Kite Museum, which draws attention to the importance of kites in Malay culture and across the world, and a Museum of Enduring Beauty which illustrates how beauty is conceived and perceived across cultures. There is a Royal Malaysian Navy Museum (*Muzium T.L.D.M.*) close to the central area which traces and celebrates the history of the national navy and its contribution to the nation. As part of the Maritime Museum Complex and opposite the naval museum on Jalan Merdeka near the mouth of the Melaka River is a sixteenth-century replica of the Portuguese man-of-war, the Flor de la Mar, the flagship of Afonso de Albuquerque, the Portuguese admiral and conqueror of Melaka. But even in a replica of a Portuguese vessel the exhibitions are devoted to the heyday of the sultanate and its demise with the arrival of the Europeans. Cartier concludes even in the 1990s that ‘In each of these museums, the state promotes national culture in the textual descriptions accompanying displays or photographs’ (1998a: 161).

Melaka has a high density of museums on and surrounding St Paul’s Hill and these serve two functions. Most of them place the Malays, Islam and the nation at the centre of the urban landscape; they are an artificial recreation of heritage and the nation displayed where the Malaysian nation is said to have begun. But as places for tourists to visit and gaze on and hopefully to ponder and absorb the messages and symbols conveyed, they also serve a leisure function. Cartier remarks of the state’s heritage tourism plans that museums ‘answer to the need for activity oriented tourist experiences’ (1998a: 160). From the perspective of the state government, which has entertained ambitious plans to establish a wide range of museum and heritage sites, they are designed to contribute to what is seen by officialdom as an authentic heritage experience.

The obverse of this incorporation of Melaka heritage into Malay culture was the attempt to remove or marginalize Chinese heritage. Cartier has examined in detail the disputes and conflicts over government plans formulated in 1984 to transform the site of the traditional Chinese cemetery at Bukit China (Chinese Hill or Sam Po Hill) into a mixed-use site for offices, retail outlets and condominiums along with a cultural-historical centre which included a hotel, sports centre, cultural theatre, library, research institute, handicraft area, mosque, pagoda and temple (1993:359-360; 1997: 555-586). The earth would be removed and used in reclamation work which was then under way at the nearby waterfront. The government plans were also in competition with a private sector bid. This 42-hectare site to the southeast of the central urban area was, as Cartier explains, ‘an important *fengshui* landscape’ which also served as ‘the local jogging park’ (2001: 199). The cemetery dated to the sixteenth century and ‘may be the oldest remaining traditional Chinese burial ground in the world’ (1993: 359). It was also the site of some 12,500 Chinese graves some of which date from the mid-seventeenth century and said to be the most historic and largest Chinese cemetery outside mainland China (ibid: 364; Maeda, 1998: 8)).

In the event a local preservation movement which was organized by the trustees of the Cheng Hoon Teng Temple, who were also trustees of the cemetery, succeeded in carrying its case to the national government and to the international conservation movement as well as to Chinese organizations within and outside Malaysia. The movement also gained the support of the respected former Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman (Cartier, 1993: 362). Moreover, the Temple organization had in its possession an ordinance of 1949 which prohibited the development of the burial grounds (ibid: 364). As a result of the campaign the development project was abandoned in February 1985 (Cartier, 1997: 555-586; 1993: 361). The very arguments which the government used to demonstrate the importance of Melaka as a historic site were also used by the preservation movement; in other words the Chinese cemetery was argued to be ‘an unparalleled landscape of Malaysian national history’ (2001: 200). In particular, Bukit China was seen as a site which was the setting for important events occurring at each major phase of Malaysian history and it also provided material evidence of Malay historical involvement in and presence at the site. Two large unidentified high status Malay graves (probably of Sumatran origin) date from the sultanate period and a significant number of other Malay graves are located there. This evidence of Malay interment contributed to the case which the preservation movement argued in that they proposed that the presence of both Malay and Chinese dead at Bukit China pointed to the harmonious relationships which existed between these two communities in ancient times (Cartier, 1993: 367). Bukit China was also the site of early Portuguese settlement, with a church, monastic quarters and a garden, though these were destroyed by an attack from the Acehnese and ‘the structures and gardens of Bukit China did not survive the Dutch siege of 1641’ (ibid: 368). The campaign was successful and government plans were dropped, providing a large, ancient and sacred heritage site which also serves a community function near the heart of old Melaka.

**Malaysia, Melaka and UNESCO**

Given its importance in the early Malay and Muslim history of what came to be called Malaysia and its contribution to the culture of the wider Malay-Indonesian world, the Malaysian government submitted its first application to UNESCO for Melaka’s consideration for inscription as a World Heritage Site in the late 1980s (Cartier, 2001: 194). Prior to this there had already been calls to preserve Melaka’s physical heritage and the communities which inhabit and use them since the only buildings which were given attention in the 1970s and 1980s were in private hands: the Tengkera mosque, the Cheng Hoon Teng temple and the Sri Poyyatha Vinayagar Moorthi temple, St Peter’s Church and other religious buildings (Sandhu and Wheatley, 1983c: 567-568; and see Hamzah Sendut, 1983: 487). Even at that time Sandhu and Wheatley remarked on the inappropriate modern developments on St Paul’s Hill (‘egregiously inapposite excrescences’), the rubbish dump at the rear of the Stadthuys and the weeds and bushes sprouting from its roof and walls, and the ‘obscenely disfiguring water-tower on Bukit Senjuang’ (ibid: 568). They note that the remaining old Indian-style houses had already been demolished in the 1950s (ibid). In particular they called not for the ‘museum-like’ preservation of such streets as Jalan Tun Tan Cheng Lock but at least to protect and enhance the facades along the street and some other architectural features in addition to supporting Hamzah Sendut’s proposal for the pedestrianization of the main historic streets (ibid: 469).

The problems of urban conservation were exacerbated after 1997 with the Repeal of the Control of Rent Act which had been introduced in 1966 to prevent the exploitation of tenants in property built before 31 January 1948 (Wan Hashimah and Shuhana, 2005: 9). The Act served to prevent the eviction of tenants or the demolition of property and therefore ensured that inner city communities and particularly shophouse residents continued to enliven the cultural and economic life of these long-established urban districts. It also discouraged urban redevelopment and the modernization of property but because returns on tenancies were low landlords were reluctant to undertake the maintenance and repair of their properties (ibid: 9-10). The consequence for urban communities has been especially severe in George Town, Penang where the scale of population relocation and eviction, and the occurrence of vacant property have been much greater than in Melaka. However, it has affected Melaka in that some artisans and trades people in the old town have ceased their business or shifted elsewhere (ibid: 11). Foreign buyers from as far away as Singapore and Taiwan have moved into Melaka to open tourism-related businesses and this, in turn, has led to tensions between the municipal authorities and those responsible for urban conservation on the one hand and development-oriented property owners on the other. One expression of these tensions was the demolition of three shophouses in December 2002 belonging to a foreign owner in the conservation area (ibid: 12). It was also claimed that between 2000 and 2002 the conservation area lost 42 buildings which were demolished as part of the process of modernization and the desire to develop properties to take advantage of tourism opportunities (Richmond et al, 2004: 220). ‘The concern is that tourist development has become a higher priority than conservation’ (ibid).

In addition in 2002 researchers from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) were critical of the amount of litter and solid waste remaining uncollected and treated in curb side drains in central Melaka and the unsightly exposure of electricity supply lines outside heritage buildings (JICA, 2002: 6). The improvement in information for tourists, the development of museums and museum displays, encouragement of cultural events (for example festivals, dance, music, and domestic arrangements in the Eurasian-Portuguese community), and the promotion of craft industries are also highlighted in their programme for the future development of heritage tourism (ibid: 469-470).

In response to calls for a stronger measure of heritage protection, keeping streets clean of litter and other debris, generally enhancing the physical environment and with an eye to the development of tourism the Melaka state government had passed the *Preservation and Conservation of Cultural Heritage Enactment for the State of Melaka* in 1988 (UNESCO, 2008a). This also followed a seminar held in Melaka in 1988 to discuss heritage conservation. In addition, on 15 August 1989 the federal government declared Melaka Malaysia’s historic city in order to promote tourism and to strengthen the submission for UNESCO World Heritage Site inscription; this was done independently of Penang and George Town. The History Museum had been opened in the Stadthuys in December 1982; the restoration and conservation of the Stadthuys was undertaken in the late 1980s and the Museum re-opened in 1992 (Maeda, 1998: 5). In 1993 the *Cultural Heritage Enactment* was placed under the newly established Melaka Museums Corporation and the Corporation was given the power to gazette property as heritage. To support these responsibilities the Conservation Trust Fund was formed, and from 2001 this has been used to finance selected building conservation projects which gave further strength to the Malaysian Antiquities Act of 1976 (under which various prominent heritage buildings in Melaka had already been listed from 1977) in introducing incentives and penalties in order to protect the architectural and built heritage of the historic core of the town. The state government had also gazetted ‘Old Melaka’ as a Grade One Conservation Zone within the state’s *Draft Structure Plan* and it had begun to identify and include a conservation are within its urban development plans from the late-1970s (Jenkins, 2008: 139). Yet, as we have seen, this has not been sufficient in all cases to protect heritage properties.

The key decision to combine George Town and Melaka in one submission followed Richard Engelhardt’s study visit to George Town in February 1998 (Jenkins, 2008: 138-139). Engelhardt, UNESCO’s Regional Advisor, was invited by the state government of Penang at a time when there was an official shift in policy towards urban conservation and an increasing momentum from conservation and heritage NGOs. The Executive Council of the Penang State Government then took the decision on 7 May 1998 to nominate George Town for UNESCO WHS inscription. Simultaneously the Melaka State Government was also preparing its resubmission documents for inscription. A further step in this process was taken when a seminar was organized in July 1998 by the Malaysian National Commission for UNESCO together with the various Malaysian ministries with responsibilities for culture, heritage, education, tourism and the environment and the Department of Museums and Antiquities on the theme of ‘Nomination of Cultural and Natural Heritage of Malaysia to the UNESCO World Heritage List’ (ibid: 138).

The importance of securing World Heritage status for George Town was given an even greater urgency in the following year. Years of urban development, inappropriate redevelopment and demolition of heritage properties in the historic core of George Town and on the margins of the central urban area (including the illegal and high profile demolition of the historic Metropole Hotel and the earlier demolition of shop houses and the construction of the Penang New Urban Centre along with the 65-storey KOMTAR tower and Prangin Mall shopping complex), resulted in The World Monuments Watch with the prompting of the Penang Heritage Trust (established in 1986) to include George Town on the list of the *World’s Hundred Most Endangered Sites* in 1999 (ibid: 103). The repeal of the Rent Control Act in 2000 which had served to prevent or slow the demolition or modernization of residential and commercial accommodation in the historic core of George Town, with the associated relocation or eviction of tenants, also posed a threat to the survival, character and integrity of the built environment (Jenkins and King, 2003). Threats apparently remain even after UNESCO inscription with the pressures for new high-rise development in the core and buffer zones of the George Town WHS. Interestingly in a recent edited book on Penang, which was endorsed by the Chief Minister, Lim Guan Eng, in his Foreword on ‘A Blueprint for Sustainable Development’ and based on a forum held in June 2009 on ‘Restructuring and Reshaping Penang’, there seems little in the state’s future plans which would indicate that George Town was declared a World Heritage Site the year before (Ooi Kee Beng and Goh Ban Lee, 2010). In this volume which sets out the planning and development priorities of the state government the official preoccupation is with the development of industry, technology, business and services and, almost as an afterthought we find a paragraph on the importance of ‘keeping our island’s historic treasures’ to ‘nourish our roots and develop other qualities, from a strong Penang identity to increased revenues from tourism’ (Ramasamy, 2010: 287).

After the heritage seminar in July 1998 Engelhardt proposed that Malaysia should consider the submission of a joint nomination to UNESCO from the states of Penang and Melaka; this would immediately avoid the difficulties generated by rivalry and two submissions in competition. In addition, Melaka, in spite of its well organized heritage management structures had already failed to secure UNESCO listing on two previous occasions; its submissions had been evaluated and rejected by ICOMOS. In Penang the slow pace of legislative action, weaknesses in the implementation of conservation and preservation measures and the absence of the necessary heritage management organization suggested that both states could strengthen their case if they pooled their resources, experience and expertise. Engelhardt’s advice was based on the fact that ‘George Town has a large area of both cultural and built heritage but [it] lacked the legislative and political commitment, whereas Melaka demonstrated its conservation infrastructure but its Heritage Zone was considered too small for listing as an independent site’ (ibid: 139). Moreover, the historical and symbolic importance of Melaka to the Malay political elite in its nation-building policies also helped counterbalance their perceptions of George Town as a European colonial creation, even though the material evidence of the Malay presence in Melaka was largely absent whilst in George Town there was clear and direct evidence of Malay and Muslim settlement in the imposing mosques located in the historic core. In addition, an independent submission from Penang’s state government, which is dominated politically and demographically by the Chinese community, may well not have been endorsed by the Malay-dominated federal government. In any case, the Penang submission had to express and give due emphasis to the Malay contribution to the history and development of George Town (ibid: 140).

Another advantage which Melaka had over George Town was that a significant percentage of the buildings, particularly within the St Paul’s Hill zone were government properties and therefore protection and conservation policies could be much more effectively implemented and managed. The Melaka Museums Corporation also offered its advice and guidance to private owners on the use and change of use of buildings, discounts given on the appropriate building materials for renovation and repair, the employment of skilled craftspeople and detailed plans and drawings of the buildings for reference. The administration of the heritage of the historic core was placed in the hands of the Corporation in cooperation with the City Council. Advice was provided by a Preservation and Conservation Committee which was chaired by the Chief Minister of the State of Melaka (ibid: 139).

Nevertheless, until the state government of Melaka took the decision to join forces with that of Penang, which was officially endorsed in May 1999, their impressive heritage management system had not been able to convince ICOMOS and UNESCO of Melaka’s positive intentions with regard to protection and conservation prior to this. Its first individual application to UNESCO in the late 1980s for inclusion on the tentative list of the World Heritage Committee was rejected because of the considerable amount of reclamation and urban development (including high- and low-rise office, retail, hotel and residential accommodation) that had taken place on the waterfront on either side of the Melaka River in what was the ancient harbour area of the sultanate, along with some inappropriate redevelopment, restoration and adaptive reuse in and around the historic core (Worden, 2010: 143; Cartier, 1993: 361). Originally the coastline came almost to the foot of St Paul’s Hill where the major colonial buildings, which are now in the heritage site, looked out over the Straits and the estuary of the Melaka River. They are now enclosed by high-rise buildings and are no longer in immediate contact with what was the traditional port area.

In this respect, Carolyn Cartier in her detailed research on Melaka’s heritage and tourism industry in the 1990s, argued that the very raison-d’être of Melaka as a cosmopolitan port centre had been severely undermined. Reclamation work had also adversely affected the inland fishing and shrimp-fishing livelihood of the coastal Portuguese-Eurasian community most of which had been relocated to Ujong Pasir, in a colonial planned low-income residential area to the south of the urban core in the 1930s (Cartier, 1996: 50-51, 2001: 201; 1998a: 168-169, 1998a: 168; Pires, 2008). A community which was an important part of the living cultural heritage of Melaka had been uprooted and their ability to represent the historical development of the port undermined. The Portuguese who now reside in Melaka are in effect the result of intermarriage between various European, Eurasian and local populations; they are a long-established population, significantly hybridized, and tracing their ancestry from the early arrival of the Portuguese at Melaka in the early sixteenth century. They also provide another important element, as do the Baba Chinese, in the cosmopolitan history of Melaka. Yet in some respects their identity has also been subject to a government project to construct the Portuguese community and its focus around a government-sponsored Portuguese Square (Medan Portugis) and a heritage village in order to boost cultural and heritage tourism (Pires, 2008; O’Neill, 2008; Sarkissian, 2000). The Portuguese are also reconstructing their own identity and making claims to their status as an indigenous population (Fernandis, 2004).

These transformations of the physical and living urban landscape were part of the Malaysian government’s emphasis on large-scale tourism- and leisure-related projects, and, in spite of the more recent official shift to a higher level of heritage consciousness, have continued to be supported by both state and federal governments. A second application to UNESCO in the late 1990s similarly failed but this time because of the lack of recognition in the submitted documentation of the contribution of the resident communities to the urban landscape, particularly the Straits Chinese community in Melaka, their historical development and the multicultural environment of the urban core (ibid). This was of course a consequence of the importance assigned to Melaka in Malay-Muslim history and its role in building a Malay-dominated post-colonial nation-state. The problem of the direction in which urban development had taken in Melaka and the emphasis on poorly conceived tourism projects also resurfaced (Worden, 2003, 2010:143).

Another major problem for the state government was to find ways of injecting some life into the historic areas of Melaka and into the cultural and economic life of Chinatown. As Sandhu and Wheatley observed in the early 1980s ‘the old centre of Melaka has been left behind in the development race....At ten o’clock on a Saturday night, when Jalan Bunga Raya and Jalan Bendahara are still thronged with weekend crowds and their motor traffic reduced to a crawl, the old [Dutch] square is deserted....(1983c: 571). One way to accomplish this was to raise the national and international profile of Melaka’s heritage and to promote tourism and those activities which service it. In this regard the securing of UNESCO World Heritage Site status was crucial.

The momentum for the joint Melaka-Penang submission was maintained when, together with UNESCO, the two state governments organized a conference and workshop in both George Town and Melaka as part of the round of UNESCO annual meetings. Based on the theme of ‘Adaptive Reuse of Historic Properties’ the meeting examined issues of heritage preservation and conservation in the context of processes of urban transformation and sustainable urban development in the interest of not only supporting the material infrastructure but also the living cultural environment of urban quarters. As Cartier also notes Malaysia introduced conservation legislation in the 1980s but ‘Historic conservation is a new practice in Malaysia, and has taken some unpredictable forms’ (1998a: 158).

An enormous amount of research and data collection undertaken by official bodies, NGOs and expert consultants went into the preparation of the dossier for submission to UNESCO’s World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS; the work was undertaken mainly in 2001 and the dossier submitted in early 2003 (Jenkins, 2008: 145). Melaka and George Town were included in the UNESCO Tentative List on 26 February 2001, pending site visits and a full assessment of the submission by ICOMOS (see UNESCO, World Heritage Centre, Melaka and George Town [Malaysia], No 1223, 2008a). In 2002 the Japanese International Cooperation Agency was commissioned to undertake an evaluation of the policies necessary to improve and conserve the urban environment (JICA, 2002). It relied heavily on secondary literature, particularly the State of Melaka’s Structure Plan (2002), the Melaka Heritage Plan for the prominent streets in Chinatown (1994), the development plan for the conservation zone (1994), the Melaka River rehabilitation scheme (2002), and the *Action Plan for Conservation in the Historic City of Melaka* (2002) undertaken by Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM), which included a tourist survey in 2000. The Japanese team also conducted its own tourist survey of tourists with a sample of 200 visitors and organized public participation workshops and a forum group. The UTM survey revealed that the majority of domestic and international tourists questioned were satisfied with the quality of the accommodation and the variety of attractions, including the authenticity of the heritage site, though they were not impressed with the quality of the tourist guides (cited in JICA, 2002: 5).

The World Heritage Centre then returned the dossier in 2003 for further significant amendments and the final submission from the ‘State Party’ of Malaysia was made on 29 January 2007 (p.73). Importantly UNESCO wanted the title of the dossier changed to *The Historic Cities of the Straits of Malacca: Melaka and George Town* which served to leave open the opportunity for the future inclusion of ‘historic cities’ from Thailand and Indonesia; the old town of Phuket in southern Thailand immediately comes to mind with its close cultural, historical and architectural connections with George Town, though like Melaka the size of the heritage district is too small to warrant a stand-alone inscription. UNESCO wished to stress the interconnections between sites in relation to trade, migrations, and cultural exchange in the focal international waterway of the Straits of Malacca.

The International Council for Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) undertook the evaluation work on behalf of UNESCO. A Technical Evaluation Mission was sent from 24-31 August 2007 following which ICOMOS requested further information from the bodies which submitted the application which comprised: a further justification for the selection of the two urban sites within the wider area of the Malacca Straits; to deepen the comparative analysis to include other colonial towns in the wider region; provide additional information on the integrated management system for both sites; and provide a schedule for the adoption and implementation of the management plan. In Melaka’s case the Conservation Management Plan Report had been approved by a full meeting of the City Council on 30 January 2008 (Malaysian State Party, 2008). On receipt of the further information ICOMOS approved the report from Malaysia on 11 March 2008 and Melaka and George Town were inscribed on the World Heritage List on 7 July 2008 during the 32nd session of the World Heritage Convention held in Quebec City, Canada from 2nd to 10th July (UNESCO, 2008b).

On the basis of the case submitted by the State Party ICOMOS considered that the ‘outstanding universal value’ of the sites was justified and demonstrated (UNESCO, 2008a). The crucial case for inscription was given by ICOMOS, on the basis of the documentation that it had received and its own evaluation of the sites, as follows: that the property ‘exhibits an important interchange between several areas within Asia on the one hand, and a number of European countries on the other, over a span of five centuries. This concerns the development of architecture, technology, monumental art and town planning’. The two sites ‘show different stages of development and the successive changes over a long span of time and are thus complementary’. The submission argued that Melaka and George Town are ‘exceptional examples of multi-cultural trading towns.... forged from the mercantile and civilization exchanges of Malay, Chinese and Indian cultures, and three successive European colonial powers for almost 500 years, each with its imprint on the architecture and urban form’. ICOMOS also concluded that the sites ‘bear an interesting testimony to the living cultural tradition of multi-culturalism of Asia, and a co-existence of many religions and ethnic groups with their individual cultures and customs....This multi-cultural heritage is expressed in many ways, including the great variety of religious buildings, ethnic quarters, the many languages, worship and religious festivals, dances, costumes, art and music, food and daily life’. The sites ‘reflect a mixture of influences which has created a unique architecture, culture and townscape without parallel anywhere in East and Southeast East Asia, with an exceptional range of shophouses and townhouses......They are also preserved in great numbers, forming large coherent areas, and still keep their functions, which make them an outstanding example of an architectural ensemble’ (UNESCO. 2008a: 77, 78).

**Managing a World Heritage Site**

The official body in Malaysia which coordinates and presides over the state’s heritage is the federal Department of Heritage in the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Heritage. The federal Department of Museums and Antiquities also has a role to play in administering the Antiquities Act of 1976 (and the buildings gazetted under the Act) and ensuring that museums at the state level also discharge their responsibilities for the protection, conservation and enhancement of local heritage resources. In the case of Melaka the task of administering the UNESCO site falls to the City or Municipal Council (The Historical City of Melaka Municipal Council) (through its Conservation Unit and Conservation Committee which is ultimately responsible for policies, administration and management and for securing finance), the Town and Country Planning Department (for approval or refusal of projects and offering advice on the policies, administration and management of cultural heritage to the municipal authorities) and the Melaka Museums Corporation which has the task of administering the UNESCO site (in research, surveying and information gathering). Other public bodies with an interest in the tourism development side of heritage are the State Economic Development Corporation, the Malacca Tourist Promotional Unit, Malaysia Handicraft Corporation and the State Cultural Office (Maeda, 1998: 17). There are many more interested parties from the private sector (NGOs such as the Malacca Heritage Trust, Malaysia Heritage Body and the Melaka History Association, and the tourism industry: the Melaka Tourist Association, Melaka Hotels Association, and the Melaka Tour Guides Association) (Malaysian State Party, 2008: 91).

It has to be remembered that UNESCO listing does not directly bring in funds; these have to be found by the authorities in the country concerned. Conservation, repair and renovation of heritage properties are also expensive and there is a particular difficulty when heritage properties are not in government hands but are privately owned and the owners do not have the resources or the inclination to undertake appropriate conservation and renovation work. In the case of the conservation of the Cheng Hoon Teng temple and the conversion of the Puri Hotel for example, craftsmen were brought from mainland China as they had the skills to undertake the work which could not be done locally; some materials also had to be sourced from outside Malaysia (Wan Hashimah and Shuhana, 2005: 14). Expertise in managing and planning heritage and in architectural conservation and renovation is usually expensive.

Two of the major problems which the heritage zone has faced are population growth and housing shortage as well as traffic congestion which are a direct consequence of the street pattern, the multi-functional character of shophouses, and the compact, narrow streets without open or public spaces and the lack of pedestrian sidewalks and footpaths, an urban landscape which had begun to be established as long ago as the Dutch period. Hamzah Sendut says, ‘The overall impression is one of overcrowding, traffic congestion, air and noise pollution, and, in the absence of effective action to rectify the situation, a gradual deterioration of the urban environment into a potential slum area’ (1983: 486). The JICA study too emphasized the accumulation of litter, the capacity of bins to contain the level of waste, and the failure to clear waste in open curbside drains and the back lanes of properties as significant problems which were contributing to a deteriorating urban environment compounded by excessive traffic and the pollution occasioned, indiscriminate on-street parking, and uncontrolled loading and unloading of vehicles (2002: 8). These urban problems were summarized succinctly by Sandhu and Wheatley in the early 1980s and some of the solutions which were being proposed at that time seemed radical: ‘to initiate a massive programme of urban renewal in the inner city, replacing shophouses with high-rise apartment blocks, as has been done on a very large scale in Singapore’ (1983c: 567). Sandhu and Wheatley reject this as a practicable solution, given the lack of vacant land in the city, the expense of acquiring land and redeveloping urban sites, and the social and economic dislocation it would cause to the residents and, more importantly, given their emphasis on the importance on protecting Melaka’s distinctive and valuable urban and cultural heritage, as unthinkable in conservation and historical terms. Another solution to which they direct attention was in fact proposed by Hamzah Sendut on the basis of what had already been embarked upon by the municipal authorities, and this was to transfer the central functions of the then Melaka to a new city centre on reclaimed land; as the areas for expansion were limited and of course southwards the sea formed a barrier (1983: 487-492). Hamzah Sendut suggested this waterfront development as an extension of the old centre of Melaka and noted that reclamation had already begun on 100 acres of land near the old waterfront with a further 200 acres planned (ibid). He too emphasized the importance of protecting the heritage ‘within the old town, St. Paul’s Hill and Bukit China’ so that a waterfront development encompassing retail, office, residential, commercial and leisure functions, with pedestrian precincts and open spaces, ample car parking space, and sites for mass tourism would serve ‘to create a balanced and harmonious growth between the old and new parts of the city’ (ibid). It is this solution of development on reclaimed land which has been pursued with the most vigour. Indeed, major reclamation projects were instituted between 1986 and 1988 in the area which has been named Melaka Raya.

Another strategy was to promote in a planned and controlled way as part of a master plan, suburbs and satellite towns; this too has been adopted with new suburban development and the transfer of various administrative functions and tourist activities to such places as Ayer Keroh, 11 kilometres from Melaka Town; Ayer Keroh and its tourist facilities are also linked directly to the north-south federal highway to Kuala Lumpur and Singapore (Maeda, 1998: 15). There has also been island and beach resort development along the coastline north and south of central Melaka (ibid: 13). Finally, and in relation to the traffic problem Sandhu and Wheatley suggest the introduction of ‘some sort of surgical operation’ to control traffic flow. At that time the City Council had already imposed parking fees and instituted a one-way system (Sandhu and Wheatley, 1983c: 563).

Clearly the problem of traffic congestion is extreme in a confined heritage area with narrow enclosed streets focused on a limited number of river crossings. As the Management Conservation Plan indicates there are ‘five finger-shaped radial roads’ which connect the suburban areas with the town centre. More problematical is that these radial roads all connect to the main roads in the conservation area and they are channelled into four bridges, two of which (Tan Kim Seng and Chan Koon) are within the conservation area, and one within the buffer zone (2008: 51). The two major tourist streets in Chinatown – Jalan Tun Tan Cheng Lock and Jalan Hang Jebat – are therefore two of the main access routes between the western and the eastern part of the town centre on either side of the Melaka River, and unfortunately are major route ways for through traffic. As the Plan states, ‘The streets now have to cope with traffic volumes beyond which they were designed to cope’ (ibid). What is more the situation is exacerbated by the volume of tourist traffic and particularly tour buses, many of which come into the Town Square. All this creates bottlenecks at the intersections between the main roads in the conservation area and the bridge access.

The only bridge which takes some traffic away from historic centre is the new Coastal Bridge on reclaimed land towards the mouth of the Melaka River connecting the western residential districts of Klebang and Bukit Panjang with the eastern commercial districts of Melaka Raya and the residential and commercial area of Ujong Pasir. The JICA study proposed various traffic calming measures, exclusive zones for pedestrians, with a contiguous network of pedestrian walkways, five-foot ways and a riverside promenade (JICA, 2002: 14). Some of these problems continue, although the municipal government has undertaken a range of protective and conservation measures, and the major streets in the conservation area are of necessity part of a one way system in that, in most cases, streets cannot be widened. However, these routes are not pedestrianized and traffic still has priority in the historic residential area. Neither are the walkways in front of the shophouses totally unobstructed for pedestrians in spite of the fact that some work has been done on widening walkways and attempting to remove obstacles which are generated by the shops and other establishments.

An important dimension of an urban cultural heritage site is also the active use of the site by residents and those who work there as a living social cultural community. There is no doubt that outsiders have moved in to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the rapid increase in tourists and some artisans and small shopkeepers have moved out. However, with the rapid increase in tourists there has been an increase in employment for food vendors, craftspeople, souvenir stalls, bullock cart operators, trishaw cyclists and taxi drivers, tour guides, as well as those working in retail outlets, hotels, lodging houses, home-stays, and, of course, in the large out-of-town leisure facilities (Maeda, 1998: 23-24). The turnover in businesses and accommodation and the recent rises in rent levels have meant that there is an increasing problem of vacant heritage building space. The Conservation Management Plan estimated this at about 10% of ground floor space and 17.5% of the first floor accommodation (Malaysian State Party, 2008: 38). This will always be a problem where accommodation is privately owned, but the Municipal Council can seek to ameliorate this in various ways and at least ensure through the owners that the building does not deteriorate and that its facade does not become unsightly and spoil the streetscape. In the extreme they can compulsorily take over the property under the Land Acquisition Act 1960. A cursory survey of buildings in 2010 suggested that some buildings were in a poor state of repair, though some were clearly undergoing active renovation. The city authorities do look actively for opportunities for the adaptive re-use of properties whether for residential, retail or other services and they have instituted a categorization of building use with regard to specific streets and buildings, traffic flow and parking, the architecture and building structure, noise, smell and smoke pollution, and the general pattern of land use and atmosphere, which they attempt to implement as conscientiously as possible (ibid: 38-50).

There are, for example, uses which must be maintained including religious places, vendors of religious items, certain residences, craft and artisan shops, traditional restaurants, wholesale activities, clan and guild houses, and historically significant buildings; those which are encouraged according to district and traffic, for residence, art galleries, antique shops, offices, museums, cafes, small retail outlets, and guest housing; those which are encouraged with appropriate controls including traditional wholesaling, warehousing and storage, workshops and pubs and cafes; and finally uses which are prohibited which are supermarkets, emporia and other shopping complexes, certain kinds of wholesaling, and workshops and light industry.

**Melaka and Tourism**

In their interpretative summary of their monumental two-volume edited work on Melaka Sandhu and Wheatley argued for the development of heritage tourism (1983c: 566). At the time they were writing tourism, as a source of revenue and employment, ‘had been exploited only to a minimal degree’ (ibid). Hotel rooms available stood at about 600 and hotel employment less than 400 (ibid). A decade earlier in 1970 there were no international standard hotels in Melaka, few attractions and no systematic tourism promotion. Although tourist arrival statistics are somewhat unreliable by 1975 visitors were recorded at a modest 76,000 though this probably does not capture the numbers of domestic day-trippers (Maeda, 1998: 4-5). By 1982, with the increasing emphasis nationally and locally on tourism development these had increased apparently to 660,000 which seems a rather large and unlikely increase, though again more realistic if it included day-trippers. However, with considerable growth in federal funding for tourism development through the 1980s and the support of the State Economic Development Corporation from 1982 it does seem feasible that visitor numbers had exceeded the one million mark by the early 1990s (ibid: 4-5). As we have seen heritage attractions started to be developed in the 1980s; the History Museum was opened in the Stadthuys in Melaka in 1982 and the building underwent renovation and conservation in the late 1980s; the Sultanate Palace and Museum was also opened officially in 1986 (ibid). The first international standard hotel was up and running in Melaka by 1984 (ibid: 6).

We can therefore begin to identify the beginnings of a serious attempt to promote heritage tourism in the 1980s. Nevertheless, emphasis in the 1980s was on large leisure projects (in Cartier’s words ‘megadevelopment’) designed to increase substantially the flow of tourists into the state, many of whom would then usually visit the heritage areas for a day or stay overnight. Visitor arrivals have mushroomed since the mid-1990s. Maeda gives a figure for 1995 of 1,329,334 arrivals. The tourism statistics for Melaka indicate that by 2001 there were 2.5 million arrivals, in 2005 this had almost doubled to 4.6 million and by 2009 there were 8.9million visitors (asmaliana.com; various years). In 1995 about half the visitors were Malaysians, almost 17% from Singapore, 7% from Taiwan, 5.5% from mainland China, 5.4% from Japan and 4.5% from Hong Kong (Maeda, 1998: 18). In other words the majority of the foreign visitors were ethnic Chinese. The average length of stay was 1.3 nights and visitors usually travelled from Kuala Lumpur or Singapore on a day trip or staying for one night. Melaka was therefore seen as a ‘transition point’ between the capital and Singapore and as a major attraction for Chinese, who aside from the modern tourist facilities, golf courses, and other leisure attractions, came to Melaka presumably to gaze upon southern Chinese heritage in old Melaka (ibid).

At the official and popular promotional level there has also been a shift in emphasis in the Malaysian Tourism Ministry’s presentation of Malaysian heritage (Tourism Malaysia, 2009c). Tourists are invited to ‘come and experience the heritage of all Asia’; the promotion makes much of the different populations which have come from various parts of Asia and the Middle East to the ‘crossroads’ of Malaysia, and ‘a succession of Europeans’ (ibid: 2-3). Certainly Melaka plays a part in this picture; it exemplifies ‘ancient kingdoms’ which through trade brought people from China, India, Persia and Arabia, and from Europe (the Portuguese, Dutch and British). Rather than Malay pre-eminence what is emphasized is ethnic and cultural variety (a ‘mosaic’), the mix of cultures, multi-ethnic harmony, ‘a peaceful blend’, and a ‘colourful spectrum’ (ibid: 2-4). Moreover, heritage is depicted not so much in terms of built forms and artefacts, but much more in terms of living cultures, celebrations and festivals, costumes, music and dance, games and pastimes, cuisine, and handicrafts (ibid: 6-36, 47-56). The section on architectural heritage covers some ancient or old forms, but it makes play of the fact that Malaysia has also ‘created its own world-class icons’ (ibid: 37). The two examples featured are both from Melaka and are both European in origin - Christ Church and Porta de Santiago – as well as Straits Chinese shop houses there (ibid: 45-46).

Yet, as we have seen, the promotion of heritage for tourism development and purposes of national image and identity, even in the case of Melaka, is only part of a much wider set of constructions. The major state government guide to Melaka endorsed by the Chief Minister says ‘But Melaka is not just about going back in time....[there is] the new Melaka, a thriving city and business centre, that has taken its rightful place in the development of Malaysia as we know it today, particularly its business profile’ (2004: 23). The place of protection and conservation in heritage sites becomes worryingly uncertain when we are told in effect that Melaka has transformed its cultural and natural treasures into economic opportunities: landscapes into recreational activities (for tourism, golf, trekking); cultural identities into ‘a showcase for the tourist’; and antiquities and handicrafts into ‘a shopping paradise’ (for bargain hunters) (ibid). This is a clear and positive statement about the commoditization of culture and nature. A ‘sleepy hollow’ in the 1980s, Melaka experienced ‘a vigorous surge of economic activity’. Reinvigorated it ‘now responds to the pulse of commerce’ (ibid: 25).

Interestingly the Melaka State’s Tourism Promotion Division advertises a range of leisure interests and activities in its literature. In its brochure *Melaka Tourism: 12 Subsectors* predictably it opens with ‘Melaka’s appeal lies in its rich and colourful past. Melaka is renowned as the place where the history of Malaysia began (2009: 2)’. The Tourism Division then moves into the presentation of a diverse tourism product: ‘Today, there’s a lot more to Melaka in addition to its fascinating stories, legends and historical attractions’ (ibid). After an introductory section on ‘History’ (comprising the main historic sites with the addition of a Melaka tree and a bullock cart ride) and ‘Culture’ (which describes the main ethnic groups but then includes a curious catch-all of attractions: the Tranquerah Mosque, the Baba Nyonya Heritage Museum, Mini Malaysia and Mini ASEAN Park, Jonker Walk, the Chitty Museum and Auyin Hill resort), the brochure covers ‘Recreation’, ‘Sport’, ‘Shopping’, ‘Convention’, ‘Health’, ‘Education’, ‘Agro’ (tropical fruit farm, Tropical Fruit World and an ‘Aboriginal Living Native Village’, homestays), Makan-makan’ (cuisine), ‘Melaka My 2nd Home’, and ‘Youth’ (ibid: 3-31). Previous surveys of tourist interests do highlight the main attractions of the civic/heritage buildings and museums, the weekend evening heritage walk through Jonker Street and cruises along the Melaka River, but these still seem not to be capable of maintaining a mass tourism industry in Melaka state. Indeed Maeda drew attention to the undeveloped character of the banks of the Melaka River for tourism purposes in the 1990s, though there have been various leisure developments during the last decade (Maeda, 1998: 12, 22). Overall heritage is certainly there but it is embedded in a large leisure and tourism industry and one designed to appeal to a wide range of tourists both domestic and international.

There is no doubt that tourist information has been improved. The tourism information services have produced a range of informative cards on heritage and other leisure sites in the state. Each card is underlined with ‘Melaka World Heritage City UNESCO’ and the nationally promoted slogan ‘Visit Historic Melaka Means Visit Malaysia’. The Conservation Management Plan made a particular point of emphasising the importance of information provision in the context of the development of cultural and heritage tourism, through the establishment of district- and community-based interpretative centres (which would include mosques, temples and hotels and would charge an entrance fee). There does not seem to have been much progress in this area. Another is tour-guided heritage trails; there is certainly evidence of heritage walks in the historic centre, but there has also been criticism in some tourist surveys of the quality of the tour guides in Melaka. The Lonely Planet guide provides a walking tour through Chinatown and it seems that a significant number of Western visitors use this rather than a tour guide (Richmond et al, 2004: 218-221). It is more likely that Asian tourists will visit with the aid of a guide. There is also the Jonker Walk project which comprises a street market on Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights when the area is closed to traffic; it seems to have brought some life to the town centre, but there has also been criticism from some local residents that it is intrusive and noisy and that traffic restrictions and increased rents have driven long-established traders and artisans out of business (ibid: 220).

The Tourist Information Centre has a range of leaflets and cards four tourists, but what seems to be missing is a consolidated, comprehensive and reader-friendly guide to the heritage site; either a handy pocket-sized guide to the main sites or a more detailed and considered explanation of why Melaka is a UNESCO site and what it is in the historic urban centre that the casual visitor should endeavour to see. There are the books by Bonny Wee (2009) and Paddy Schubert and others (2004), but these are really not suitable for an informed tourist market. It would appear that most foreign tourists who search for information on Melaka still resort to such trusted travel guides as Lonely Planet (see below).

The modern, vibrant atmosphere of the urban area is evoked in the high rise developments which can be seen from the top of St Paul’s Hill and which have taken place on the reclaimed land stretching along the waterfront and inland from the mouth of the Melaka River. These are also located within walking distance of the old British open area (*padang*), now taken over by a nightly ‘Light and Sound Show’ which focuses on Melakan history and the achievement of Malayan independence. There are also high-rise developments on the other side of the river beyond the Chinese district. In an important sense these developments put in question the authenticity which UNESCO seeks in its inscription of sites. The new build which dominates the skyline was one of the main reasons for the earlier UNESCO rejection of Melaka’s submission. The expansion of these modern leisure facilities continued during the time that Malaysia was preparing its joint submission with Penang and awaiting the evaluation and decision from ICOMOS. In addition to the major shopping malls of Mahkota Parade, Hang Tuah Mall, Plaza Melaka Raya and Pasar Raya, there are many high-rise hotels including the Century Mahkota, Equatorial, Golden Legacy, Seri Costa, as well as office accommodation, apartments and condominiums. In other parts of Melaka there are other high-rise developments including the City Bayview Hotel and the Renaissance.

In order to gauge more recent reactions to Melaka as a tourist site we conducted a survey of 104 tourist visitors (54 foreign and 50 Malaysian visitors), conducted over two weekends (27-30 August and 3-6 September 2010) with the assistance of a team from Universiti Putra Malaysia supervised by Professor Jayum Jawan. The questions focused on whether or not tourists had knowledge of Melaka as a World Heritage Site before their arrival, whether this influenced their decision to visit the town, and their reactions to the site and the heritage properties they had seen. There were also questions relating to the characteristics of the tourists (age, gender, educational level), length of stay, accommodation used, and other activities pursued there. A very good range of foreign nationalities were questioned, though there tended to be a focus on younger age groups and those from a university and/or professional background; some of those questioned were students who were spending a study period in Malaysia or Singapore. The nationalities comprised British (8), Thai (7), German (7), Dutch (4), Chinese (4), Indonesian (3), Canadian (2), French (2), Maldivian (2), Polish (2), Singaporean (2), American (1), Australian (1), Bangladeshi (1), Belgian (1), Egyptian (1), Finnish (1), Hungarian (1), Indian (1), Iranian (1), Italian (1), and Japanese (1). Most of the respondents were between 18 and 35 years of age; there were 26 males and 28 females, the majority had or were following tertiary education courses. There were 26 respondents who did not know that Melaka was a UNESCO World Heritage Site; 28 did know; of those who did, some had already visited other UNESCO sites in the region, including Ayutthaya, Angkor, Luang Prabang, George Town, Hoi An, My Son and Halang Bay. Information about the site was usually gathered by word of mouth from friends or family, the internet, and importantly from travel guide books, particularly Lonely Planet in which Melaka is described in superlative terms: ‘one of Malaysia’s premier destinations’; its ‘unique personality draws from its rare compendium of Peranakan shophouses, Portuguese and Dutch architecture, Victorian vestiges, Buddhist, Taoist and Indian temples and Islamic mosques’; ‘food lovers can sample some of Malaysia’s best cuisine here’; ‘the cultural mosaic that makes Melaka such as intriguing port’ (Richmond et al, 2004: 213-214). Melaka was primarily seen as a historic and interesting place to visit and a stopping off point on what Lonely Planet styles as part of ‘the grand tour’ (with Kuala Lumpur and Singapore as the Peninsular Malaysian end points) (ibid: 17). Melaka’s proximity to Singapore was sometimes given as the main reason for visiting the site.

Most respondents were visiting Melaka for the first time and were not travelling as part of a tour or package with their own tour guide. The length of stay was between one and four days, and though some visitors were staying in good quality local hotels, most of them opted for guest houses and home stays. Their overall reactions to the site were overwhelmingly positive; usually responding that Melaka met their expectations or exceeded them and remarking on the historic atmosphere of the place, its culture, the quality of the restoration and conservation work, the interesting architecture and narrow streets, the friendliness of the people, and the good food and shopping. An earlier survey by Universiti Teknologi Malaysia undertaken in 2000 found a similar positive reaction to the facilities and attractions, and the importance of Melaka’s history and architecture (cited in JICA, 2002). In our survey some tourists also liked the fact that the site was relatively small and that sightseeing was manageable on foot or by trishaw. When asked what improvements might be made or what they disliked about their visit, a significant number indicated that there was too much traffic in the centre of the site, it was too crowded, and there was an interesting comment on the lack of guidance and information in the local tourist office, the distance of the sea from the historic centre of Melaka, the high rise buildings around the site and the ferris wheel, litter, vacant buildings, the absence of bazaars with local products, the low quality of the souvenirs, and the need for more festivals and ‘living’ culture.

There were some interesting differences between the responses of the foreign visitors and Malaysians. Only six of the 50 respondents did not know that Melaka was a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Most had also visited the site more than once and Melaka was seen as a place for a day-trip, weekend or vacation. Invariably Malaysians referred to the important position of Melaka in Malaysian history and in national heritage terms rather than as a multicultural site; visitors emphasized the importance of not forgetting their history and the need to get to know more about it. Clearly the official emphasis on the central position of Melaka in the formation and development of Malay culture and identity and on Melaka as a site of cultural development, encounters and exchange had also been conveyed to Malaysians through the school curriculum, history textbooks, and in the national media, newspapers and television. Some of the young Malaysians had visited Melaka on a school trip or had been there to undertake a study project. As well as gazing on heritage, including A Famosa, the colonial buildings, shop houses and the Melaka River, when asked about the reasons for visiting, a large number of respondents referred to their love of good Nonya food, the importance of shopping, visiting family and friends, relaxing and having fun. Obviously many more Malaysians stay with friends and relatives, but a good number also booked into hotels on weekend packages. Length of stay was usually not more than four days, and more often one or two nights or a day trip.

As with the foreign visitors the reactions to the site were primarily positive and most Malaysians indicated that there had been improvements in the maintenance and renovation of buildings, the urban infrastructure and in the development of modern facilities including shopping. There seemed to be fewer issues for Malaysians in the development of high rise buildings around the heritage site. Nevertheless, as with the foreign visitors, there were complaints about the intrusiveness of the traffic and the fact that the centre of the town was very crowded in the narrow streets. Because more Malaysians visit Melaka using their own transport there were also remarks about traffic jams and requests for more parking areas; for those staying outside Melaka town and wanting to visit the heritage site there were comments on the lack of good public transport and access to taxis. Interestingly several of the respondents complained that Melaka was too hot and there were not enough shady places and shelters in the town to rest out of the direct sunlight. Some Malaysians also remarked on the lack of signage and information for tourists in both English and Malay.

Importantly, the responses of over 100 tourists suggest that overall Melaka has provided them with a positive experience. It appears that those responsible for managing the site are getting a number of things right. Clearly the majority of visitors, especially Malaysians know about Melaka’s UNESCO status and attach importance to the heritage value of the site. However, one major issue raised by many of the visitors is the problem of traffic which threatens to choke the site and it does intrude into the enjoyment and experience of the site.

**Some Concluding Remarks and Observations**

In spite of the problems which the management bodies responsible for Melaka’s heritage have to address, our questionnaire survey suggests overall that visitors were positive about their touristic experiences. We must, however, be aware that the sample may be skewed in relation to certain background characteristics (age and educational background for example). Nevertheless, our findings indicate that foreign tourists are more likely to be searching for authenticity in the heritage buildings and in their appearance, and they wish to see something of the living cultural communities which give the buildings and the site meaning and vibrancy. Domestic visitors, on the other hand, most of whom are fully aware of the historical significance of Melaka and its place in the national psyche, are much more concerned with the provision of facilities (such as transport, parking, food, and shady places to rest) and in ensuring that they can enjoy themselves in their leisure activities with family and friends. However, both foreign and domestic tourists are also concerned about the provision of reliable and user-friendly information and guidance about the site. Even a casual observer will quickly find that there are no authoritative and well written guides to Melaka, either in English or Bahasa Malaysia.

What is very clear in our ongoing research is that there is still a major tension between heritage conservation and the concern to promote economic development and large-scale infrastructural projects, including the continuing land reclamation in and around the historic port, and the construction of new mega-tourism facilities which continue to spread along the coastline in the vicinity of the old town. On balance it would seem that development rather than heritage conservation and protection is favoured. This tension has also been expressed in the decision to repeal the Rent Control Act which has served to undermine the living cultural communities in Melaka (though not as much as in George Town). Nevertheless, Melaka does have a well developed heritage management structure and it has succeeded in retaining and supporting a considerable amount of the historic core area, even though the landscapes and vistas from St Paul’s Hill leave much to be desired from an historical, aesthetic and architectural perspective. In this connection the site is already compromised but it is difficult to contemplate what might have been done to meet the needs of the historic core and its protection and at the same time develop other modern facilities (for accommodation, retail, leisure, support services) which the tourist requires.

Having said all of this a major problem which is threatening to endanger the tourist enjoyment of the historic site is the volume of traffic, the noise and pollution it generates and the problems it poses for pedestrians who are attempting to gaze on the streetscapes in relative safety and calm. Given the street layout and the constraint of having to cross the river on the limited number of bridges which are routed through the heritage area, this will be difficult, but some restrictions on traffic and some pedestrianisation will have to be introduced sooner rather than later.

A final observation, which returns us to the theme of cultural politics and identity in Malaysia, are the ways in which the site is presented and promoted by government agencies in the tourism and related literature in that there has been a noticeable shift in emphasis during the last decade. As we have seen up to the 1990s there was an official preoccupation with the importance of the Malay-Muslim contribution to the site and its place within Malaysian national historiography, illustrated in the failure to give due credit to the multicultural character of Melaka in an earlier submission to UNESCO for WHS status. Since the late 1990s, however, in the process of applying for UNESCO listing, along with Penang and George Town, and in securing inscription in 2008, the emphasis for both ‘historic cities’ has been on cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism, and on the bringing together of communities from across Asia and from Europe. Nevertheless, in practice, and in the St Paul’s Hill civic zone area of Melaka, public agencies, particularly those responsible for the large number of state-funded museums and the associated museum displays and exhibitions, still tend to promote a Malay-dominated communalism and the importance of Malay culture and Islam in Malaysian history. It has been left primarily to private entrepreneurs in the commercial-residential core of Melaka to present the Straits Chinese contribution to the site’s history through such enterprises as the Baba Nyonya Heritage Museum and Malaqa House Museum. A related question is: how does this emphasis in what one might term state-directed and funded museums meet the interests and needs of visitors, many of whom are ethnic Chinese from Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia and further afield from mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan?

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