

**PLACE IDENTITY OF THE TRADITIONAL
COURTYARD “LATE STRAITS” ECLECTIC
STYLE SHOPHOUSES, GEORGE TOWN
HERITAGE CITY, PENANG**

AKRAM M ALI MAHDI ZWAIN

UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA

2021

**PLACE IDENTITY OF THE TRADITIONAL
COURTYARD “LATE STRAITS” ECLECTIC
STYLE SHOPHOUSES, GEORGE TOWN
HERITAGE CITY, PENANG**

by

AKRAM M ALI MAHDI ZWAIN

**Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

February 2021

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Alhamdulillah, with the mercy and the blessing of Allah SWT, this thesis finally could be completed. My infinite gratitude goes to my supervisor Professor Dr. Azizi Bahauddin for his precious time, patience, and thoroughness in guiding me to finalise the thesis. Also, I would like to thank my co-supervisor Dr. Safial Aqbar Zakaria for his invaluable feedback, encouragement, and support throughout this journey of Ph.D.

My special gratitude too goes to my beloved late mother and father, I dedicated this achievement as a token to commemorate their endless love to groom me up tirelessly till the end of their life. May they be granted a peaceful rest and blissful from the Almighty, Amen. Not forgotten also to my beloved family, the true backbone of mine for being couraging with a tremendous support throughout my study. Especially, for all the love and prayers in every step that I have taken. To my sister and her husband, and my brothers for all the encouragement they gave. Without them, I would not be where I am today.

My sincere appreciation goes to my friends that have helped me in Universiti Sains Malaysia whom I cannot mention one by one. I am very grateful to have good friends that support and assist me during my study. Finally, I wish to express my sincere appreciation to all my respondents for their willingness to take part in this study. My Allah SWT reward and give luck to all of you. Thank you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	ii
LIST OF TABLES	viii
LIST OF FIGURES	ix
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xivv
GLOSSARY	xv
ABSTRAK	xvii
ABSTRACT	xviii
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	
1.1 Chapter Overview	1
1.2 Background of the Study	1
1.3 The Theoretical Background of the Place Identity Aspects	5
1.4 Problem Statement	7
1.5 Research Questions	10
1.6 Research Aim and Objectives	10
1.7 Significance of the Study	11
1.8 Scope of the Research	15
1.9 Limitation of the Study	16
1.10 Background of the Study Area	16
1.11 Definition of Key Terms	24
1.11.1 Place Identity	25
1.11.2 Traditional Courtyard Shophouses	25
1.11.3 Shophouses Courtyard Straits Eclectic Style	27
1.11.4 “Late Straits” Eclectic Style (1910s-1940s).....	28
1.12 Organisation of the Thesis.....	29
1.13 Summary	34

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1	Chapter Overview	35
2.2	History of Identity Formation of Chinese Architecture in George Town	35
2.3	Conservation of Heritage Building for Sustainability	38
2.4	Heritage Buildings Implementation Challenges	40
2.4.1	Displacement and Loss of the Residential Population in George Town World Heritage Site (GTWHS)	42
2.5	Malaysian Chinese Buildings Formation and its Development	43
2.6	The Main Chinese Building Types in George Town, Penang.....	45
2.7	The Evolution of George Town Shophouses Styles.....	49
2.7.1	Background of Traditional Courtyard Shophouse.....	55
2.8	Typical Architectural Components of the Shophouses	57
2.8.1	Typical Exterior Architecture Building Components.....	57
2.8.2	Typical Interior Space and Design Components Identity.....	61
2.9	History Evaluation of Courtyard Form	72
2.9.1	Ancient Civilisation.....	73
2.9.2	Classical Civilisations	75
2.9.3	Middle Ages and Renaissance Civilisation	76
2.10	Courtyard Form and Components Regarding Place Identity	78
2.10.1	Courtyard Orientation.....	80
2.10.2	Courtyard Wall Enclosure	80
2.10.3	Courtyard Natural Components.....	80
2.10.4	Cultural Values	81
2.10.5	Cultural Aspects of Straits Chinese (Chinese Ancient Philosophy)...	82
2.10.6	Psycho-Social Benefit in Courtyard	84
2.10.7	Religious Benefit in Courtyard.....	85
2.10.8	Climatic Benefit in Courtyard	85

2.10.9	Architectural Benefit	85
2.11	Influencing Aspects of Tradition Courtyard Shophouses Identity Design	86
2.12	Typical Characteristics of Traditional Courtyard Houses	86
2.13	Identity Formation in Cultural Environments of the Traditional Courtyard ..	90
2.14	Place Identity and Space in House Environment	92
2.15	Research Theoretical Framework.....	94
2.15.1	Underlying Theory that Informed this Study	94
2.16	Conceptual Framework of the Study Design	97
2.17	Summary	101
 CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY		
3.1	Introduction	106
3.2	Research Philosophy of the Study.....	106
3.3	Research Design	109
3.4	Rationales and Strength for Qualitative Research Design	112
3.5	Grounded Theory Type of Qualitative Research Design	114
3.6	The Study Population and Case Study Adopted	116
3.6.1	Selection Criteria of the Traditional Courtyard Shophouses (Case Studies).....	118
3.7	Participants Selection for the Qualitative Phase	122
3.8	Data Collection for the Study.....	125
3.8.1	Preliminary Survey and Pilot Study	125
3.8.2	Architectural Documentation Data and Visual Data	126
3.8.3	Observations	127
3.8.4	Oral Interviews	128
3.9	Quality Assessment Strategy of the Study	130
3.10	Qualitative Data Analysis Techniques	131
3.11	Summary	137

CHAPTER 4 CASE STUDIES

4.1	Introduction	138
4.2	Selection Criteria of the Traditional Courtyard Lot. 3, 5, and 7 Shophouses (Case Studies) Regarding Place Identity	139
4.3	The Background of Lots. 3, 5, and 7 Shophouses Buildings Location	141
4.4	Visual Observation and Documentation of Architectural Components	145
4.4.1	Typical Architectural Components of the Buildings.....	146
4.4.2	Environmental Aspects and Cultural Identity	172
4.4.3	Place Identity Sustainability of the Case Study Buildings: Observations	190
4.5	Summary of the Chapter	199

CHAPTER 5 DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1	Introduction	202
5.2	Analysis, Findings, and Discussion of the Face-to- Face Interviews with Participants	203
5.2.1	Typical Exterior Architecture Building Components Identity	205
5.2.2	The Architectural Layout of the Courtyard Design Components	212
5.3	Environmental Aspects and Cultural Identity	232
5.3.1	Environment Aspect	232
5.3.2	Cultural Identity.....	239
5.4	Sustainability of the Traditional Courtyard “Late Straits” Eclectic Style Shophouses via the Place Identity: Checklist.....	248
5.5	Thematic Network Analysis.....	264
5.6	Summary of the Chapter	266

CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1	Introduction	267
6.2	Overview of the Study.....	267
6.3	The Main Findings of the Study.....	271

6.3.1	Architectural Formation Design Components that Expresses the Place Identity of the Straits Chinese	271
6.3.2	Environmental Aspects and Cultural Identity that Expresses the Place Identity of the Straits Chinese	275
6.3.3	Proposed Checklist of Courtyard Shophouse Eclectic Style Architectural Characteristics for Sustainability.....	277
6.4	Contribution of the Study	281
6.5	Recommendations	285
6.5.1	Recommendation for Industrial.....	285
6.5.2	Recommendations for Future Research.....	287
	REFERENCES	290
	APPENDICES	
	LIST OF PUBLICATIONS	

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 2.1	Summary of Previous Studies about the Shophouse Regarding the Place Identity..... 101
Table 3.1	Summary of the Study Research Philosophy 109
Table 3.2	Selection Criteria of the Traditional Courtyard Shophouses 119
Table 3.3	Background of the Respondents 123
Table 3.4	Representation of the Study's Quality Assessment Strategies 130
Table 4.1	Selection Criteria of the Traditional Courtyard Shophouses 140
Table 4.2	Summary of the Case Studies Shophouses Historical Usage 144
Table 4.3	Comparison and Similarities of Air wells in Lots. 3, 5, and 7..... 177
Table 4.4	Prefabricated Air Vents of Lots. 3, 5, and 7 179
Table 4.5	The Internal Partitions of the Lots. 3, 5, and 7 Buildings 180
Table 4.6	Three Shutters and Windows of Lots. 3, 5, and 7 Shophouses..... 184
Table 4.7	Summary Checklist of the Observation Notes for Lots. 3, 5, and 7 Case Studies 195
Table 5.1	Summary of the Proposed Checklist for Sustainability of Architectural Characteristics and Documentation for Traditional Courtyard 254
Table 6.1	Research Objectives, Methods, Analysis, and Types of Findings..... 270
Table 6.2	Summary of the Study Contributions 282

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1.1	Three Factors which Affect the Formation of the Place Concept 6
Figure 1.2	Captain Francis Light 17
Figure 1.3	Aerial View of George Town City 18
Figure 1.4	(Left) Map Showing Location of Melaka and George Town (Right) Map Showing Location of Malaysia and the Straits of Malacca..... 19
Figure 1.5	The Uniqueness Architectural and Cultural Landscape 20
Figure 1.6	Outstanding Multicultural Architectural Landscape in Penang..... 20
Figure 1.7	Map of George Town with Red Lines Indicating Street Grid and Map with Green Lines, the New Street Arrangement Applied by Francis Light’s Successor Laid out by Francis Light..... 21
Figure 1.8	The Historic City of George Town, Boundary of Core and Buffer Zone 22
Figure 1.9	(Left Fig) Red Circle Indicates Ikan Street in George Town Heritage City (Right Fig) Site Plan Indicating Shophouses Lots. 3, 5, and 7, Lorong Ikan 23
Figure 1.10	The Front Façade of Straits Chinese “Late Straits” Eclectic Style Shophouses Buildings Lots. 3, 5, and 7..... 24
Figure 1.11	The Six Main Heritage Shophouses Styles..... 26
Figure 1.12	Chinese Courtyard and the Shophouse Courtyard (air well)..... 27
Figure 1.13	Traditional Courtyard Shophouse..... 28
Figure 1.14	The Façade of “Late Straits” Eclectic Style Shophouse..... 29
Figure 1.15	Outline of the Thesis Structure 33
Figure 2.1	The Principal Provinces in Southern China of Immigrants to Malaysia 37
Figure 2.2	The Architectural Style of the Straits Eclectic Style Shophouses 44
Figure 2.3	A Typical Example of Chinatown 45
Figure 2.4	Views of a Typical Townhouse and Shophouse..... 47
Figure 2.5	The Interior Layout of a Typical Two-Storey Chinese Shophouse..... 48
Figure 2.6	Traditional Courtyard Shophouses Eclectic Style 50

Figure 2.7	The Shophouse Styles, Pre-Architect and Post-Architect	51
Figure 2.8	The Architectural Style in George Town Heritage City, Penang “Late Straits” Eclectic Style	53
Figure 2.9	Timeline of Shophouses Style in George Town Heritage City	54
Figure 2.10	Style and Configuration of China Courtyard House and the Courtyard Shophouses in Penang.	55
Figure 2.11	Column Head and Capital.....	58
Figure 2.12	Façade Parapet Walls of Shophouses	59
Figure 2.13	Bressummer Beams at Front Ground Floor Façade	59
Figure 2.14	Glazed Tiles with Floral and Colourful Geometric Patterns	60
Figure 2.15	Types of Gables and Gable Ends.....	61
Figure 2.16	Shophouse with Forecourt, air well and with Rear Court (Isometric View & Floor Plan)	62
Figure 2.17	Courtyard and (air well) in Traditional Chinese Shophouses.....	63
Figure 2.18	The Hall Partition on the Ground Floor of the Straits Chinese Shophouse	64
Figure 2.19	(A-D) Different Types of Staircase in Traditional Shophouses	65
Figure 2.20	Decoration of the Underside of Staircase	66
Figure 2.21	Fountain Feature with Planting in the Courtyard	66
Figure 2.22	Planting in the Courtyard Takes Advantage of the Good Lighting	67
Figure 2.23	Public, Semi-Public and Private Areas of Shophouse	68
Figure 2.24	Building’s Circulation	69
Figure 2.25	The Ceiling Height is up to the Second Floor	69
Figure 2.26	Main Door and <i>Pintu Pagar</i> Door of Straits Chinese Shophouses. ...	70
Figure 2.27	Terracotta Tiles of Shophouses	71
Figure 2.28	Tessellated Tiles	71
Figure 2.29	(A-C) Granite Slabs of Shophouses at Different Areas.....	72
Figure 2.30	First Floor Details	72
Figure 2.31	(A-D) Different Types of Courtyard Form in Africa.....	74
Figure 2.32	Plan of House at Ur, Mesopotamia.....	75
Figure 2.33	(A-B) Typical Layout of Chinese Dwelling and Courtyard Houses ..	75
Figure 2.34	Typical Layout of Japanese Traditional House	75
Figure 2.35	Typical Courtyard Dwellings Prevalent during Classical Civilisation	76
Figure 2.36	A and B: Comparison Between Spanish and Mexican Courtyard.....	77

Figure 2.37	The Landscape Typologies and Characteristics of Traditional Malay Kampong in Malaysia.....	78
Figure 2.38	Different Possible Forms for a Single Family in a Courtyard of One or Two Storeys.....	79
Figure 2.39	The Symmetrical Layout of the Forbidden City.....	83
Figure 2.40	Sections and Plans of Shophouse	87
Figure 2.41	The Traditional Courtyard Functions	89
Figure 2.42	Place Identity and its Components	96
Figure 2.43	Conceptual Framework of the Study's Aspects	99
Figure 3.1	Research Methodology Flow Chart.....	111
Figure 3.2	Selection of the Case Studies Stages and Procedures Flow Chart....	118
Figure 3.3	The Ratio of Shophouse Facade Styles in The Study's Area	121
Figure 4.1	Beach Street in early 1900s	141
Figure 4.2	Lots. 3, 5, and 7 Shophouses at Lorong Ikan, George Town, Penang	142
Figure 4.3	Wall Murals and Metal Artwork (Fish and Cow) by Local Artist at the Roadside of Lorong Ikan Showing the Identity of the Lane	142
Figure 4.4	Site Plan Indicating Shophouses 3, 5, and 7 in Lorong Ikan.....	143
Figure 4.5	Front Elevation of the Shophouses.....	145
Figure 4.6	Elongated Column Head (<i>Chi Tou</i>) and Capital.....	147
Figure 4.7	Parapet Wall at the Central Courtyard below the Shutters.....	148
Figure 4.8	The Bressummer Beam and Ionic Columns Act as Brackets.....	148
Figure 4.9	Wall Tiles (<i>Ceramic Majolica</i>) Below the Windows on Both Sides	149
Figure 4.10	The Fire Element Gable-End of Lots. 3, 5, and 7 Shophouses.....	150
Figure 4.11	Location of Courtyards in Lots. 3, 5, and 7 Shophouses Buildings .	152
Figure 4.12	The Wooden Partition of (5 and 7) Shophouses Buildings	153
Figure 4.13	Lot. 5 Staircase Taken from First Floor.....	154
Figure 4.14	Staircase Located in Lot. 7 Shophouse Showing the Timber Panel .	155
Figure 4.15	Staircase of Lot. 5 Shophouse Showing Timber Board (Horizontal)	155
Figure 4.16	Lot. 5 Staircase Stringer Detail Base.....	156
Figure 4.17	Water Fountain at the Shophouses Roof Garden Lots. 3 and 5.....	156
Figure 4.18	Potted Plants at the Courtyard of Shophouse Lot. 5.....	157
Figure 4.19	Ground Floor Spatial Usage Plan	159
Figure 4.20	First Floor Spatial Usage Plan	159

Figure 4.21	Partition Separating Lot. 5 Bedroom with the Corridor	160
Figure 4.22	Ground Floor Spaces Sequence of Lots. 3, 5, and 7 Shophouses.....	162
Figure 4.23	First Floor Spaces Sequence of Lots. 3, 5, and 7 Shophouses.....	162
Figure 4.24	Public and Semi-Public Areas of Lots. 3, 5, and 7 of Ground Floor	163
Figure 4.25	Semi-Public and Private Areas of Lots. 3, 5, and 7 of First Floor....	164
Figure 4.26	Exposed Timber Joists, Planks and Strip Ceiling (<i>Meranti</i>)	164
Figure 4.27	Ground Floor Main Door (External View) Lot. 7 Shophouse.....	165
Figure 4.28	Ground Floor Main Door (Internal View)	166
Figure 4.29	Location of the Internal Door on the Ground Floor	167
Figure 4.30	Location of the Internal Doors on the First Floor.....	167
Figure 4.31	Upper Timber Pivot	168
Figure 4.32	Location of the External Door on the First Floor at Lot.7.....	168
Figure 4.33	Hydraulic Cement Tiles at Ground Floor	169
Figure 4.34	Locations of Granite Flooring at Courtyard / air well Sink.....	170
Figure 4.35	Concrete Flooring at the Roof Garden.....	170
Figure 4.36	Location of Timber Flooring at First Floor	171
Figure 4.37	Tongue and Groove Connection of Timber Plank.....	171
Figure 4.38	Five-Footway Plan of Lots. 3, 5, and 7 Shophouses	174
Figure 4.39	Ventilation Diagram in Shophouse Lot. 3 Section	175
Figure 4.40	Potted Plants at the Courtyard of Shophouse	175
Figure 4.41	Air Vents and Porthole Air Vents.....	178
Figure 4.42	Natural Lighting Diagram in Shophouse Lot. 3 Section	181
Figure 4.43	Sunlight Streams through the Windows at the Corridor.....	181
Figure 4.44	Location of the Front Façade Windows on the Ground Floor.....	183
Figure 4.45	Location of the Shutters of Shophouse on the First Floor	184
Figure 4.46	Vintage Straits Chinese Screen at Lot. 3 Shophouse.....	187
Figure 4.47	Lot Number 7 Shophouse Courtyard next to the Open Kitchen.....	189
Figure 4.48	Locations of Defects on the Ground Floor	191
Figure 4.49	Locations of Defects on the First Floor	194
Figure 5.1	The Themes in an Identity of Place Approach in Traditional Courtyard Shophouses	204
Figure 5.2	Gable Walls in Chinese Courtyard Houses	210
Figure 5.3	Space Identity of Planning for the Rooms Surrounding the Courtyard	214

Figure 5.4	Daybed of Straits Chinese	214
Figure 5.5	Straits Chinese Furniture	217
Figure 5.6	Internal Decorative Carved Timber Partition of Courtyard Shophouse	226
Figure 5.7	The Staircase Located at Courtyard of Shophouse.....	227
Figure 5.8	Fountain Feature with Planting in the Courtyard	229
Figure 5.9	Windows Shutters Shophouses.....	234
Figure 5.10	(Left) Covering with Zinc-Made Awning and (Right) Courtyard Open to the Nature	236
Figure 5.11	Surface Decoration of Straits Chinese Shophouses.....	237
Figure 5.12	The Gates Between the Entrance and the Main Courtyard.....	242
Figure 5.13	Courtyard of Shophouse is Prepared for a Social Activity.....	246
Figure 5.14	Thematic Network Analysis of the Place Identity of the Traditional Courtyard “Late Straits” Eclectic Style Shophouses.....	265

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

GCAHB	Guideline for Conservation Areas Heritage Buildings
CHAT	Cultural Heritage Action Team
GTWHI	George Town World Heritage Incorporated
GTWHS	George Town World Heritage Site
GTP	George Town, Penang
GT	Grounded Theory
IFI	International Federation of Interior Architects
KOMTAR	Kompleks Tun Abdul Razak
MBPP	Majlis Bandaraya Pulau Pinang – City Council of Penang Island
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
OUV	Outstanding Universal Values
PHT	Penang Heritage Trust
QDA	Qualitative Data Analysis
SAPGT	Special Area Plan George Town
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WHS	World Heritage Site

GLOSSARY

Word	Meaning
<i>Chi Tou</i>	House Column Head
<i>Dado Panels</i>	Wall Tiles
<i>(Dar) in Arabic Language</i>	House
<i>Feng Shui</i>	Wind – Water
<i>Ge-Shan</i>	Decorative Carved Timber Screen
<i>(Kaki Lima) in Malay Language</i>	Five-footway
<i>(Gho Kha Ki) in Peranakan dialect</i>	
<i>Kampong</i>	Village
<i>Mahjong and Cherki</i>	A Traditional Nyonya Card Game
<i>Malay called (Lorong Ikan)</i>	Fish Lane
<i>Straits Chinese called (Kiam Hu Thnia)</i>	
<i>Pantang Larang</i>	Superstition
<i>Peranakan or Baba Nyonya</i>	Local Born
<i>Pintu Pagar</i>	Gate
<i>Pi Xiu</i>	Chinese Mythical Hybrid Creature
<i>Qing Dynasty</i>	Copper-Alloy
<i>Rumah Kedai</i>	Shophouse
<i>Straits Chinese called (Chim Chae)</i>	Air Well or Courtyard
<i>South of China called (Tianjing)</i>	
<i>Chinese called (Siheyuan)</i>	
<i>Arabic called (Sahn)</i>	
<i>Tiah Datuk</i>	First Hall
<i>Tiah Gelap</i>	Second Hall
<i>Malay called (Tanjung)</i>	George Town City
<i>Straits Chinese called (Pho)</i>	
<i>Yin and Yang</i>	Dark - Bright

**IDENTITI SETEMPAT HALAMAN TRADISIONAL “AKHIR ERA SELAT”
RUMAH KEDAI GAYA EKLEKTISISME, BANDAR WARISAN GEORGE
TOWN, PULAU PINANG**

ABSTRAK

Rumah kedai tradisional di Bandar Warisan George Town, Malaysia mempunyai ciri-ciri istimewa. Kesemua ciri-ciri ini mewakili sifat semulajadi kawasan tersebut dan identiti budaya masyarakatnya. Selama bertahun-tahun, halaman rumah kedai tradisional ini mengalami pengubahsuaian, perubahan dan keusangan menyebabkan timbulnya keprihatinan dari pihak-pihak yang berkepentingan. Banyak kajian menunjukkan bahawa kawasan yang paling terjejas dikalangan pelbagai rumah kedai ini ialah halaman tradisional “Tinggalan Selat” gaya eklektisisme. Kajian ini bermatlamat menyiasat identiti setempat yang merujuk kepada aspek seni bina, budaya dan persekitaran halaman tradisional rumah kedai di George Town, Malaysia. Kajian ini juga mencadangkan senarai semak ciri-ciri halaman seni bina untuk tujuan kelestarian dan dokumentasi yang dapat menggambarkan identiti setempat Selat Cina ini. Teori asas jenis kajian kualitatif dan jenis kajian konstruktivisme dalam kajian dunia falsafah telah digunapakai. 10 orang pakar dan 20 penghuni rumah kedai telah ditembual secara bersemuka, dan data diperolehi telah dianalisis melalui analisis asas. Dapatan-dapatan telah mengesahkan rumah kedai Lot bernombor 3, 5, dan 7 ini telah menonjolkan identiti setempat gaya seni bina Cina Selat. Dapatan menunjukkan komponen seni bina luaran yang menonjolkan identiti setempat Selat Cina adalah kepala dan puncak tiang, bahagian dinding luar, rasuk tanggung beban dan tiang ionik, jubin dinding (panel dado), dan dinding hujung atap. Untuk ruangan komponen dalaman, komponen yang menyerlahkan identiti setempat Selat China adalah halaman

rumah kedai tradisional, pisahan dalaman, tangga, air pancut, pokok-pokok di sekitar halaman, fungsi dan organisasi susun atur ruang, siling, pintu dan lantai. Juga, dapatan menunjukkan bagi aspek persekitaran yang menonjolkan identiti setempat Selat Cina, ianya terdiri daripada aliran udara semulajadi, cahaya semulajadi dan ruang dinamik. Pada identiti budaya, dapatan menunjukkan bahawa kepercayaan keluarga dan kesan sosial merupakan komponen-komponen yang menyerlahkan identiti setempat Selat Cina. Dapatan-dapatan daripada kajian ini mengumpulkan senarai semak untuk kelestarian halaman tradisional “Tinggalan Selat” rumah kedai gaya eklektisisme melalui ciri berkaitan kayu, konkrit/batu-bata/blok, besi/aluminium, komponen jubin, dan komponen yang belum dikategorikan. Kajian ini mencadangkan supaya semua penglibatan pihak berkepentingan utama bersama badan kerajaan, mengepalai dalam melihat semula polisi. Ini dapat membantu untuk memelihara halaman tradisional “Tinggalan Selat” rumah kedai gaya eklektisisme di Bandar Warisan George Town. Cadangan senarai semak yang mengandungi komponen senibina (luaran dan dalaman), aspek persekitaran, dan identiti budaya merupakan sebahagian implikasi praktikal dan dalam menambah perspektif baharu. Ini bakal membuka kajian baru yang lebih lanjut kepada mereka yang terkesan.

**PLACE IDENTITY OF THE TRADITIONAL COURTYARD “LATE
STRAITS” ECLECTIC STYLE SHOPHOUSES, GEORGE TOWN
HERITAGE CITY, PENANG**

ABSTRACT

The traditional shophouses in George Town Heritage City, Malaysia, has special characteristics. These features represent the nature of the place and cultural identity of the people. Over the years, the traditional shophouses courtyard modifications, alterations, and deterioration have become a source of concern to the major stakeholders. Studies have shown that the worst hit among the various shophouses is the traditional courtyard “Late Straits” eclectic style. This study aimed at investigating the place identity which refers to architectural, cultural, and environmental aspects of the traditional courtyard shophouses in George Town, Malaysia. Also, the study proposed a checklist of courtyard architectural characteristics for sustainability and documentation that would reflect the place identity of the Straits Chinese. Grounded theory type of qualitative research and constructivism type of research philosophical worldviews were adopted. Ten experts and 20 shophouse-occupants’ face-to-face interviews were conducted, and data derived were analysed via grounded analysis. Findings confirmed that Lots number 3, 5, and 7 shophouses expressed the place identity of the Straits Chinese architectural style. Findings found that the exterior architecture components that express place identity of the Straits Chinese were the column head and capital, parapet wall, bressummer beam and ionic column, wall tiles (dado panels), gables and gable ends. For the interior space components, the components that express place identity of the Straits Chinese were the traditional courtyard shophouses, internal partitions, staircases, fountain, plants at courtyard area, spatial layout organisation and function,

ceiling, doors, and flooring. Also, findings found that the environmental aspects that express place identity of the Straits Chinese were the natural ventilation, natural lighting, and dynamic space. For the cultural identity, findings found that the family beliefs and social impact were the components that express the place identity of the Straits Chinese. The research findings grouped the checklist for the sustainability of the traditional courtyard “Late Straits” eclectic style shophouses into wooden related, concrete/bricks/blocks related, steel/aluminium related, tiles related components, and uncategorised group components. The study recommended for all-inclusive engagement of the main stakeholders with the government taking the lead in policy review, among others. This will assist to sustain the traditional courtyard “Late Straits” eclectic style shophouses in the George Town Heritage City. The proposed a checklist which contains the architectural components (exterior and interior), environmental aspects, and cultural identity is part of the practical implications and add a new perspective. This will bring to the front burner’s new openings for further study.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Chapter Overview

The chapter provides an outline of this study. The outline is an introduction to the chapters and sections captured in this study. For Chapter One, it begins with the preamble of the study, place identity aspects theoretical background, problem statement, research questions, research aim and objectives, significance of the study, scope of the study, limitation of the study, background of the study area, definition of key terms, and organisation of this thesis. The following section focuses on the study's background.

1.2 Background of the Study

Humankind identity is constructed in places such as home environment. These aspects of identity are linked to place that can be described as "place identity." The term "place identity" has been in use since the late 1970s (Proshansky, 1978). In collective memory, place identities turn in to cultural and architectural identity that reflects the traditional values. Individuals generate their personal place identities and this renovate spaces into their own places. Many scholars, for example, Proshansky (1978), Casakin and Neikrug (2012), and Casakin, Hernandez, and Ruiz, (2015) have defined this concept "place identity" in relevant literature. Twigger-Ross and Uzzell (1996) described identity as a biological group which grows via adjustment (settlement), integration, and evaluating the social world; and moves over time. Thus, places are locations where people live and can be influenced by many factors such as previous experiences, attitudes, emotions, and beliefs (Casakin et al., 2015). Place identity can be described as a concept regarding place and identity in the field of urban

design and planning, environmental and landscape architecture (Simandan, 2011). Place identity involves two features of identification: the identity of the people and the identity of the place incorporated together as a concept (Lekus, 2018).

Smith and Bender (2017) stated that for the past 25 years, the concept “place identity” has been a significant issue in architecture and design. However, globalisation has made it difficult to describe the identity of place in cities such as George Town (Chai, 2011; Zwain & Bahauddin, 2020). Over the years, the design and use of domestic space is influenced by world standard as manifested in interior design changes (Phuong & Groves, 2010). Even with this renovation and modernisation influencing architectural design, there are still few architectural outfits that have retained their identity. Examples of traditional architecture, such as shophouses, can be found in many parts of George Town, Penang (GTP) (Omar & Syed-Fadzil, 2011). One of the unique attributes of the shophouse is that the building expresses the architectural language that responds to the local needs in common environment. Moreover, the shophouse architectural language within a heritage shophouse that follows the setting of the place identity expresses the reality of the cultural heritage.

In many studies, the style of shophouse would be used for buildings greater than 200 years. Omar and Syed-Fadzil (2011) identified the categories of the heritage shophouses in Penang as follows: Early ‘Penang’ Style (1790s -1850s), ‘Southern Chinese’ Eclectic Style (1840s - 1900s), Early ‘Straits’ Eclectic Style (1890s - 1910s), Late ‘Straits’ Eclectic Style (1910s -1940s), Art Deco Style (1930s -1960s) or Early Modernism Style (1950s -1970s). They are enriched in art and design components, enhanced with architecture. This type of structure expresses the influences of the European, Indian, Malay, and Chinese styles (In CHAT’s study as cited in Omar & Syed-Fadzil, 2011). The courtyard was introduced in the design via the Chinese

influence (Fels, 2002). A courtyard in the context of a shophouse and for the purpose of this study is one of the architectural design components used in tropical Straits Eclectic Style shophouses buildings for its social and environmental purpose (Zwain & Bahauddin, 2017).

This study focus is on “Late Straits” eclectic style. This type of shophouse is also known among scholars as ‘Chinese Baroque’ (Bristow & Lee, 1994; Henderson, 2002). Tan (2015) pointed that this style considers the latest style among six main historical styles of the traditional shophouse in the Heritage City of George Town. The author stated that the length of the “Late Straits” shophouses became shorter because of the possible disappearance of the courtyard component identity formation. The resultant effect of this was a single courtyard because of the introduction of modern facilities like electricity and electric fan.

From the early 20th century to date, the “Late Straits” eclectic style became one of the architectural styles predominant in vernacular shophouses in George Town, Malaysia. This style of shophouses seem to be one of the most eclectic creations and appeared between the 1910s and 1940s (Tan, 2015; Sabah & Samad, 2016). The Straits Chinese Shophouse “Eclectic Style” is a popular traditional housing form found in the old zone of George Town Heritage City in Penang. Modernity and lifestyles reflected in the architectural formation design components have become distanced from their traditional beliefs and practices (Lim, 2019). The disappearance of the traditional courtyard may be because some of the cities are facing rapid modernisation and urbanisation. Therefore, the need to be clear of the architectural formation regarding the place identity of the “Late Straits” Eclectic Style traditional courtyard that has been influenced by globalisation and modernisation cannot be over-emphasised because of one of the unique components, “Courtyard.”

A courtyard house, for example, shophouse, is a type of family residence with a long history with the main space of the building arranged around the central courtyard (Edward et al., 2006). Huang, Chiou, and Li (2019) argued that the courtyard dominates a significant position in architectural history and found that courtyard housing type has been employed to propose solutions to some issues associated with dense inner-city housing. Goharipour (2019) confirmed that scholars have issues with direct observation and interactions in central courtyard shophouses. Hassan and Yahaya (2012), Chai (2011), and Ahmad (1997) affirmed that the courtyard is one of the important components of the architectural shophouse. Also, the courtyard influences the connection amid interior design components, cultural values, architectural element, and environmental aspects that impact the identity formation of courtyard shophouse “Late Straits.”

Scholarly literature in this direction is impassive, empirical studies not fully in-depth, and existing guidelines from the National Heritage Department have not helped matter. This is because the cultural identity regarding courtyard is vague in the existing guidelines (National Heritage Department, 2012). These are some of the issues that demand attention from the underlying via a possible checklist of courtyard architectural characteristics. Also, the significant of courtyards in shophouses cannot be overemphasised. The need to retain the original heritage identity of these buildings cannot be over-emphasised and thus, one of the justifications for this study. The study intends benefits the shopowners, consultants, contractors, conservators, various government agencies, and heritage organisations in Malaysia and these will form part of the practical implications. Also, findings from this study would assist architects and interior designers to improve the preservation of heritage buildings sector by

extension. The following section would discuss the theoretical background of the place identity aspects.

1.3 The Theoretical Background of the Place Identity Aspects

The preceding section discussed on the background, while this section discusses the theoretical background of the place identity aspects. This includes the architectural aspects regarding space and place with emphasis on identity formation and perceiving the image of place identity. Proshansky, Fabian, and Kaminoff (1995) confirmed that the place identity is an approach in which a place informs the identity of people. Identity in a municipal area is defined by the area's elements tasks taking place within that area (Relph, 1996; Davenport & Anderson, 2005; Cheshmehzangi, 2015; Ujang & Zakariya, 2015).

Regarding space, Ayalp (2015) found that space is a three-dimensional volume. Lekus (2018) argued that person and space define each other and gives meaning vice-versa. This connection has physical, economic, cultural, and psychological dimensions. When the interface is considered from this view, the concept of place rather than space emerges. In this regard, place is a combination of people, space, and time. Hay (1998) affirmed that when human element comes into space, it becomes more of a place. Altman and Low (2012) described the place concept as the space which is giving meaning via person, group, or cultural procedures. This procedure is defined in the relevant literature as "place identity." Proshansky, Fabian, and Kaminoff (1983) described identity as a platform that emerge via the adjustment (settlement), assimilation and evaluating the social world; and moves over time. Hay (1998) identified three variables which affect the formation of place concept. First, the residence position in the place (superficial, partial, personal, a sense of place coming from the past. Second, age position; as a developing cycle of life. Lastly, the

connections that advance to adulthood; generally, marriage, no matter what space and time implies, place and occasion tells more. The researcher presents Hay’s (1998) formation of the place components in an illustrative format in Figure 1.1.

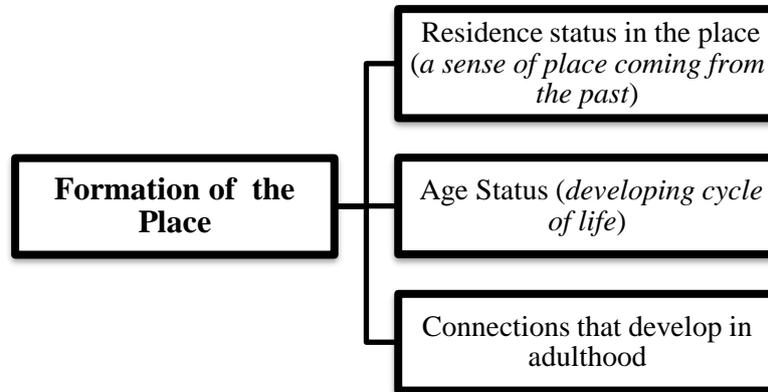


Figure 1.1 Three Factors which Affect the Formation of the Place Concept
Source: Adapted from Hay (1998)

Ayalp and Bozdayi (2013) declared that temporality is one of the significant spectacles in the place concept. People do not only make their spaces and the mapping of their lives but create the time-space (place) of their lives. The individual and his space relationship is a component of the concept of place (Soja & Chouinard, 1999; Gieryn, 2000). Several past studies demonstrate that the procedure is affected by the personal and global identity of the “extended self” (Droseltis & Vignoles, 2010).

The “extended self” concept is defined as “*the idea that places are experienced cognitively as a part of the self.*” They mentioned that “*The people and places that we encounter, and these identities affect our responses to new events*” (In Vignoles and Droseltis study’s as cited in Ayalp, 2012, p. 472). Thus, experiencing typical attributes in a certain place is an affective factor in view of place. Schutz (1980) and Auburn and Barnes (2006) affirmed that human beings view the globe via types (structured by our cognitive schemes). Roca, Lourenço, and Gaetani (2019) opined that cultural heritage covers the landscape images of the architectural structures by having universal value or landscape having in terms of history respectively.

The concept of place is physical as well as psychological. Stedman (2003) and Lekus (2018) affirmed that the sense of place is formed from the mixture of physical form, activity, and meaning. Place is mainly described by a physical environment developed based on its inter-connection with individual's internal psychological, social processes, features, and task done at the place (Ujang & Zakariya, 2015). Therefore, places as used in this study can be imagined, narrated, understood, interpreted, and perceived. The following section focuses on the study's research problem.

1.4 Problem Statement

The preceding section focused on the architectural aspects regarding space and place with emphasis on identity formation and perceiving the image of place identity. This section intends to discuss the research problem in a systematic approach; first, establish the "real world problem," followed in sequential order as presented in the research questions section. The courtyard is one of the important typological elements in a shophouse. However, traditional shophouses courtyard modifications, alterations, and deterioration have become a source of concern to the Penang people (Mydin, Keling, Sani, & Abas, 2014; Zwain & Bahauddin, 2020) and found that six shophouses in George Town deviation from the guidelines as stipulated. For example, building owners are concerned with the exterior while the internal including the courtyards are ignored or modified with modern facilities without cognisance of the traditional features that defined the place identity of the people. Recent studies including Zwain and Bahauddin (2020) shown that for over three decades, there have been excessive replacement of the traditional shophouses with multi-storey buildings. These actions have negatively affected the traditional shophouses in relation to the cultural continuity. Azmi, Ahmad, and Ali (2016) affirmed that given the significance of

cultural built heritage in conferring local distinctiveness, cautions need to be taken to improve the continuity and protection of the physical structures specifically where the place identity is rapidly weakening.

Among the various shophouses previously identified, the “Late Straits” Eclectic Style (1910s -1940s), also known as the Straits Chinese or “Peranakan” is slowly diminishing in George Town with new trend of globalisation influence and modernity (Lim, 2019). This is the real-world problem of the study. There is the need for urgent attention from the relevant stakeholders because of the possible daily deterioration of Straits Chinese culture with a negative outcome on the fading away of their identity. This may become a threat of losing the George Town Heritage City as enlisted and recognised by UNESCO.

Several scholars such as Tan (2019), Mydin et al. (2014), Sodangi, Khamidi, and Idrus, (2013), Sodangi et al. (2011), Idrus et al. (2010), Kamal et al. (2008), Ahmad (2005) among others confirmed that conserving heritage buildings remain poor despite the establishment of the National Heritage Department, National Heritage Act, and coupled with the existence of several heritage trusts and legislations concerning heritage conservation in Malaysia. Tan (2019) found that the Sustainable Tourism Strategy Document produced by George Town World Heritage Incorporated (GTWHI) raises critical issues such loss of traditional trades, inadequate systematic comprehensive and correct interpretation of local cultural heritage, gentrification, and endangerment. This may be ascribed to inadequate clear guidelines for custodians of these heritage buildings in regarding maintenance mechanism. The existing guideline is impassive regarding the cultural identity of the “Late Straits” eclectic style shophouses, especially in the aspect of the courtyard, knowing that the Straits Chinese culture is inclusive, to say the least (Tye, 2012). The same is missing on the

environmental aspects and architectural mechanism, leading to covering of courtyard openings and other modifications such as lightings, building components among others that are “anti-cultural identity of the Straits Chinese.” In an interview conducted by Hoo (2018) with one of the renowned heritage experts and publisher (Khoo Salma Nasution) affirmed that the cultural identity diversity has been sadly reduced to a trichotomy of (Malay, Indian, and Chinese) but our social history is much more nuanced than that; peoples’ identities tend to overlap.

Therefore, few written documentations or records on the checklist of courtyard architectural characteristics for sustainability and documentation of traditional courtyard “Late Straits” eclectic style shophouses that represents the place identity of the Straits Chinese in Heritage City, George Town, Penang regarding the architectural design components and the cultural identity exist from preliminary investigation. The courtyard is recognised as one of the major contributors for the conservation and documentation of the heritage components identity (Zwain & Bahauddin, 2017). Hence, the urgent need for a checklist of courtyard architectural characteristics. This checklist will double as instrument for sustainability of the architectural language and documentation for traditional courtyard “Late Straits” eclectic style that could represent the cultural heritage identity cannot be over-stressed. This is one of the issues missing in the present guideline, hence, justified the need for this study. This will involve a pragmatic review that is all-inclusive and practicable in application with emphasis on place identity that can reflect the cultural value of the Straits Chinese. Thus, this is the main issue of this research, and emerged from here is the third research question that summarised the study with a defined goal. The next section presents the research questions that emerged from this section.

1.5 Research Questions

The preceding section focused on the research problem in a systematic approach; first, establish the “real world problem,” followed in sequential order as presented in the research questions section. This section would present the research questions that emerged from the problem statement as follows:

1. What is the gap in existing guideline of the place identity of traditional courtyard shophouses regarding architectural formation design components to sustain the cultural identity of the Straits Chinese?
2. What is the gap in existing guideline of the place identity regarding the environmental aspects and cultural identity of the architectural design components, and how they can be preserved in an accurate record of the traditional courtyard “Late Straits” eclectic style shophouses?
3. What is not available in the current conservation documents that initiate the need for a checklist of courtyard architectural characteristics for sustainability and documentation of traditional courtyard “Late Straits” eclectic style shophouses that represents the place identity of the Straits Chinese?

1.6 Research Aim and Objectives

The preceding section listed the three main research questions of this study. This section would present the research aim and objectives to propose answers to the research questions. The main purpose of this study is to investigate the place identity of the traditional courtyard “Late Straits” eclectic style shophouses in George Town Heritage City, Penang, concerning their architecture and interior design of shophouses. This is to propose a checklist of courtyard architectural characteristics for sustainability and documentation that would reflect the place identity of the Straits Chinese. The main objectives targeted at achieving the study aim are as stated:

1. To investigate the place identity of traditional courtyard shophouses regarding architectural formation design components to sustain the cultural identity of the Straits Chinese.
2. To analyse the place identity regarding the environmental aspects and cultural identity of the architectural design components, and how they can be preserved in an accurate record of the traditional courtyard “Late Straits” eclectic style shophouses.
3. To develop a checklist of courtyard architectural characteristics for sustainability and documentation of traditional courtyard “Late Straits” eclectic style shophouses to represents the place identity of the Straits Chinese.

1.7 Significance of the Study

The preceding section presented the aim and objectives of this study. This section discusses the study’s significance. Among the main issues to be discussed in this section to justify the need for this study is the slowly diminishing of the traditional courtyard shophouses “Late Straits” eclectic style, lacuna in the existing guideline, inadequate awareness concerning the relevance of the place identity of traditional courtyard shophouses “Late Straits” eclectic style among others. This would form part of the contribution and implication of this research to the body of knowledge. Also, this study would increase the awareness of place identity and reawaken cultural and traditional identity design elements that are inadequate and encourage people to maintain these traditional courtyard shophouses components in the future. The study’s findings intend to assist designers and architects enhance the shophouses heritage industry in GTP. The need to approach places in their respective context cannot be over-emphasised because of their complexities regarding their identities.

The main objective of this study is to examine the significance of the formation environmental, architecture and cultural aspects of the place identity values of the Traditional Courtyard Shophouses “Late Straits” eclectic style in the George Town heritage city, Penang. Culture is strongly interrelated with the environment. Home environment plays a major role as a platform for people to express their cultural values. Therefore, in people’s environmental view, home environment plays a key role to experience places (Ayalp, 2012). The study aims to introduce and discuss the interior space elements’ values and meanings, which reflect cultural identity of the courtyard components. Place and meaning are in-built into place identity concept. From such perspective, the formation of the place identity of Traditional Courtyard Shophouse eclectic style is conversed within the setting of cultural identity. Also, the interior design identity formation of the Traditional Courtyard Shophouses is thoroughly elaborated in these concepts.

First, few literatures available such as Lim (2019), Zwain and Bahauddin (2017), Tan (2015) among others confirmed the gradual deteriorating of the traditional courtyard shophouses as previously discussed in the preamble and research problem sections. This has taken the form of renovations, modifications, and conversions that is anti-place and anti-cultural identity respectively. If nothing pragmatic is proposed, the next generation may not be able to feel and see the expressions of place and cultural identity of the Straits Chinese displayed within and outside the “Late Straits” eclectic style type of shophouses. This is one of the uniqueness and justifications for this study.

Second, although the government via the enactment of the National Heritage Act, followed by the established National Heritage Department and coupled with the existence of many heritage trusts and legislations regarding heritage conservation in Malaysia yet the traditional courtyard shophouses “Late Straits” eclectic style is fading

away. This indicates a lacuna in the existing guideline, which is part of what this study would achieve via unexplored dimension that includes all-inclusive of the main stakeholders as earlier identified (government agencies related to George Town Heritage City, property owners, government officers, building professionals, contractors, community groups, non-governmental organisations, and the general public). In addition, this study would bring to the lime-light the significance of place identity of traditional courtyard shophouses “Late Straits” eclectic style. Thus, one of the main contributions of this study is to conserve and document the heritage components identity.

One of the main practical implications and contributions of this study to the body of knowledge will be to articulate the inadequate awareness regarding the relevance of the architectural characteristics components of the traditional courtyard “Late Straits” eclectic style shophouses because the courtyard is one of the key components when it comes to conservation and documentation of heritage components. Therefore, without checklist of courtyard architectural characteristics (documentation) as reference, it may be problematic to find the source. One of the possible reasons may be because the dying of the old master-craftsmen and unwillingness of the upcoming generations to carry on the craftsmanship. This may affect the conservation and repair activities. The awareness regarding place identity of traditional courtyard shophouses in terms of architecture, interior design, and cultural values, if becomes unknown, may cease to exist hence, the need for this study. This research covers the excellent combination components of architecture and interior design between Malaysia unique architecture and interior design of Straits Chinese shophouses.

The physical design of the traditional courtyard shophouse in term of architectural and cultural has not received in-depth research compared to other aspects that affect identity of place as evidence from paucity of literature regarding place identity of the subject matter. Also, attention has not been given to exploring review of a checklist of courtyard architectural characteristics for sustainability and documentation of traditional courtyard eclectic style shophouses. The significance of this aspect increases whether the shophouse design in question is a heritage courtyard. Thus, the need to develop a checklist of courtyard architectural characteristics. This study attempts to address this issue for the case of posterity and sustainability of heritage courtyard. Even with some scholarly works, such as Phuong and Groves (2010) and Ujang (2012) concerning place identity and sense of place, there is no visible agreement on definition and measurement variables on shophouse courtyard. Place identity should include cultural and environmental aspects. This aspect has been addressed in this study. Moreover, place can define the exclusive characteristics, both tangible and intangible of a location.

Zwain and Bahauddin (2019) attempted to propose possible solutions regarding place identity in the eclectic style interiors of vernacular courtyard shophouses in Heritage City with emphasis on the interior yet findings were not all-inclusive because stakeholders that would have proposed possible solutions were left out from their study. Thus, justify the need for this study to capture both architectural components, environmental aspects that address the external, and the cultural values regarding place identity emerging from the major stakeholders in the field. This study is possibly the first research to be conducted regarding place identity traditional courtyard “Late Straits” eclectic style shophouses at doctoral level and to propose a checklist of courtyard architectural characteristics to be used for better sustainability

and reflect the cultural identity of the Straits Chinese. Therefore, there are additional five justifications for this research as highlighted below:

- 1) Regarding the cultural and environmental sustainability, the study results would fill in the literature gap and create a better understanding of the place identity of traditional courtyard shophouses. The outcome will sustain both culture and the environment components.
- 2) To provide the institutional framework for sustainability via the reviewed guideline of the traditional courtyard shophouses with emphasis on place identity regarding the Straits Chinese community and their cultural architectural displayed in shophouses.
- 3) To enhance the culture resources and the positive impact on the design style of the shophouses in GTP.
- 4) To offer some experience sharing and references for future scholars in the related field.
- 5) To serve as a reference for key stakeholders when embarking on shophouse projects in the future.

1.8 Scope of the Research

The preceding section focused on the study's significance. This section discusses the study's scope of work. It is important to define feasible scope of work in a case study research regarding time and place (Baxter & Jack, 2008). In this regard, place identity and cultural identity architecture were discussed with emphasis on the typical courtyard elements of traditional "Late Straits" eclectic style shophouses. This study focuses on place identity of Traditional "Peranakan Chinese" Straits Chinese courtyard shophouses eclectic style within the context of image formation through the cultural identity and family beliefs regarding the architectural design components, cultural values, and environmental aspects. Emphasis of this study would be placed on the

ways in which “Late Straits” eclectic style traditional courtyard shophouses replicate the living experience of inhabitants and their views on place identity. The following section would highlight the limitation of this study.

1.9 Limitation of the Study

The preceding section discussed the scope of the study. This section discusses the study’s limitation. This study focused on place identity of the traditional courtyard “Late Straits” eclectic style shophouses in the George Town Heritage City. A traditional courtyard shophouses design may be influenced by several variables. In this research, the focus was on variables that influenced the designs of the place identity regarding the design style elements, interior design components, cultural values, and environmental aspects of the traditional courtyard. This study adopted three shophouses (Lots. 3, 5, and 7) respectively as the case study buildings along Ikan Street, George Town. One of the limitations is that the study is limited to “Late Straits” eclectic style type of shophouses in George Town. Also, this study focused on the shophouses with only one courtyard. These three shophouses were built in 1926, and hold great value in terms of architectural, cultural, and historical aspect (Jeff, 2016) but these limitations do affect the robustness of this study findings. The following section would briefly discuss the study’s area background.

1.10 Background of the Study Area

The preceding section discussed the study’s limitation. This section discusses the study’s background. This empirical study for was conducted in George Town Heritage City, Penang. The history of Penang started in 1786 when Captain Francis Light (Figure 1.2) created the 1st British trading post in the Island for trade between the Archipelago, India, and China. In the year 1786, Francis Light, the founder of Penang began work on the physical development of the trading settlement in George

Town. Light was granted the title of Superintendent and it was in his interest to develop Penang such that British trade could be brought into the Malay States. Penang Island is the high peak of tourism attraction and commercial activities. The city has a narrow strip covering 760sq.km over on the mainland, known as Seberang Perai whilst the Island covering is about 285sq.km. George Town, the capital of Penang, was declared a city on January 1st, 1957 by Queen Elizabeth II of England and that same year, Malaysia gained her independence. Regarding the population size, George Town is the 6th largest municipality in Malaysia with several universities and colleges, including commercial hubs (Lee, 2014).



Figure 1.2 Captain Francis Light
Sources: Seng (2019. p, 4)

In 1974, George Town and the rest of Penang Island were brought together and called Penang Island Municipal Council (Lee, 2014). The George Town Heritage City is one of the melting pots for culture and religion in Asia with an estimated population of about 1,770,000 based on the adjusted Population and Housing Census of Malaysia 2010 (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2019). In Pulau Pinang as at 2010, Chinese was 56.4%, followed by Bumiputera 33.7%, Indians was 9.5%, and lastly others was about 0.4% (Statistics for Local Authority Areas, 2010). This is accomplished with different culture and religion festivals celebrations that enhances cultural heritage of the city with a distinct place identity as reflected in their culture and living

environment. To the Malays and Indians, George Town was referred to as “Tanjung” whilst the Chinese called it “Pho,” this implies a town (Lee, 2014). This makes the city one of the preferred cities in Malaysia that attract tourists because of the heritage shophouses and the outcome drives the economy positively to the advantage of the state. Though some challenges are facing some of these shophouses, which this study intends to explore and propose possible ways with emphasis on the place identity of the Strait Chinese. George Town became a UNESCO World Heritage Site (Figure 1.3) on 7th July 2008 and inscribed as one of the historic cities of the Straits of Malacca. The city is one of the evidence to the centuries of maritime trade that shaped Malaysia and had relevant impact on the region (UNESCO, 2015).



Figure 1.3 Aerial View of George Town City
Source: <http://www.starproperty.my>

The west of Peninsular Malaysia is the location where the historic city (George Town, Penang) is located and bordered by the historic Straits of Malacca to the west (Figure 1.4). The city is 325 kilometers north of Kuala Lumpur and located off the coast of northern Peninsular Malaysia. The State of Penang comprises of Penang Island and (Seberang Perai). Penang as a state attracts Europeans, Arabs, Armenians, Jews, Burmese, Thais, and Achenese. Others are Malay groups, Tamils, Gujeratis, the Sikhs of India; Hokkien, southern Chinese groups and later the Japanese and the Filipinos (Figure 1.5).



Figure 1.4 (Left) Map Showing Location of Melaka and George Town (Right) Map Showing Location of Malaysia and the Straits of Malacca

Source: <http://www.gtwhi.com.my/introduction/george-town-world-heritage-site.html>

The city of George Town is better appreciated regarding cultural heritage because of the long-standing heritage buildings across the city that expresses the place identity of the people that lives there. Ahmad (2006) asserted that these heritage buildings over the decades are the major components that expresses the tangible cultural heritage of the people. George Town cultural heritage elements are rich and enriches life in the town with special identity to express the people. This may be one of the reasons the societies want to maintain, share, and preserve on to future generations. This tangible cultural heritage component strengthens the society identity and sovereignty. The tangible heritage includes: the built cultural heritage, monuments, natural environment, and objects. They provide areas and spaces for diverse life activities, for example, play, work, study, worship, and experience life (Lee, 2016).

In the wisdom of UNESCO, the convention for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage was ratified in 2003. This will enhance the generation to generation transmission via communities and groups in reaction to their environment. The ratified convention will improve continuity, cultural diversity, human creativity, and place of identity regarding nature and historical background (UNESCO, 2003, Article 2).



Figure 1.5 The Uniqueness Architectural and Cultural Landscape
 Source: <http://penangshophouse.com.my/>, (2016)

The building of the Penang Island as a unique place over the decades is a combination of efforts from different backgrounds, cultures, and religions (Mohamed, Ahmad, & Ismail, 2002). Tjoa-Bonatz (2000) affirmed that the movement of people from across Asia and other parts of the world shown a society of multi-ethnic sojourners. The George Town built heritage city has many monuments, religious buildings, shophouses rows, pre-war historical buildings, European influence style buildings, recreational space, among others.

Architecture of George Town Heritage City is a combination of the Indian, Chinese, European classical style, Islamic Malay, and later, Art Deco motives (Figure 1.6). This architectural combination was made possible because of the peaceful co-existence among the different culture and religion over the years. This is possibly the reason the Buddhist temples, Hindus temples, churches, mosques, and shophouses standing side by side across the George Town City (Mohamed, Ahmad, & Ismail, 2002).



Figure 1.6 Outstanding Multicultural Architectural Landscape in Penang
 Source: <http://penangshophouse.com.my/>, (2016)

The building design pattern in George Town from the colonial era to the independence era later went through architectural style evolution. The development and style pattern were influenced by the conquerors. This was enhanced via the British policy of free trade to multiple nationalities. The costumes and culture of these multi-nationalities had impact on the local architecture identity (Chun, Hasan & Noordin, 2005). In Malaysia, the four major group of people (Malay, Indian, Chinese, and the European) have influence on building styles, so classification has been tailored to that direction too.

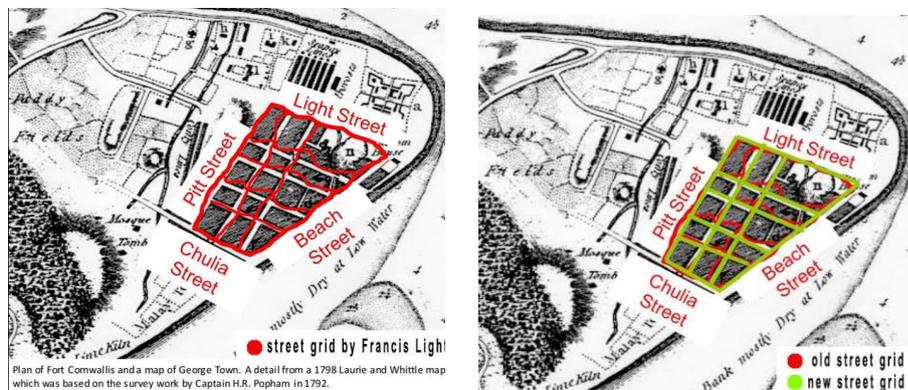


Figure 1.7 Map of George Town with Red Lines Indicating Street Grid and Map with Green Lines, the New Street Arrangement Applied by Francis Light's Successor Laid out by Francis Light

Source: <https://www.slideshare.net/penangshophouse/1-early-history-of-george-town-may-2011>

Francis Light laid the grid of streets (Figure 1.7) to mark the commercial centre of the trading port. From the year 1795-1798, the trading settlement was further developed by Francis Light's successor, Lieutenant Governor Major MacDonald (Arts-Ed, 2016). The haphazard streets of George Town were straightened out in a more orderly fashion. As a UNESCO World Heritage Site, George Town is divided into two zones. These two zones are called the core zone and the buffer zone (Figure 1.8). The core zone area is the main town and smaller than the other part of the World Heritage Site during Captain Francis Light regime. The other part is known as the buffer zone. In 19th century, the buffer zone was expanded and developed.



Figure 1.8 The Historic City of George Town, Boundary of Core and Buffer Zone
Source: <http://www.gtwhi.com.my/images>

The original main area (Core Zone) accommodate some townhouse structures, constructed with wooden structure with top roofing and have been replaced with brick construction because of several fire occurrence that damaged many parts of George Town. This research engaged three traditional courtyard “Late Straits” eclectic style shophouses buildings, which include Lots. 3, 5, and 7. The shophouses were constructed and ownership belongs to the “Peranakan Chinese” Straits Chinese family with the surname “Wong” from 1926. Ahmad (1994) and Khoo (2007) emphasised that the Peranakan Chinese or Straits Chinese are identified with the Straits Eclectic style. The latter author opined that the “Peranakan Chinese” Straits Chinese had gone. This may be because of degeneration and deprivation. Also, the possible cause is that many of them were converted to Christianity and the changes over the years of the Malaysian society. The buildings (Lots. 3, 5, and 7) are located on the Lorong Ikan (*Fish Lane*) and are categorised as a World Heritage Site; displaying “Late Straits” eclectic style and are within George Town’s Buffer Zone (Figure 1.9).



Figure 1.9 (Left Fig) Red Circle Indicates Ikan Street in George Town Heritage City (Right Fig) Site Plan Indicating Shophouses Lots. 3, 5, and 7, Lorong Ikan
 Source: [http:// www.visitpenang.gov.my](http://www.visitpenang.gov.my)

In the selection of the traditional courtyard shophouses to consider for this study, 256 cases (Late Straits-eclectic style) were selected first, with emphasis on shophouses that expresses place identity of the Strait Chinese in George Town Heritage City during the preliminary investigation. From the 256 cases, 20 cases were selected at the second stage, and finally, three (3nos.) cases came out from the 20 cases. They are Lots. 3, 5, and 7 located at Lorong Ikan, within the George Town Heritage City. This collaborated George Town World Heritage Incorporation submission that Lots. 3, 5, and 7 are classified as category II heritage buildings that display the architectural features that expresses the Straits Chinese back to before early 20th century. The buildings in the heritage site are classified into four categories. The first two are grouped under the rules of protection, adaptation, and conservation. Whilst the 3rd and 4th are grouped under compatible development (GTWHI, 2019).

Zaharizubir, Hussain, and Isip (2018) stated that Category II contain the buildings that demands special attention regarding preservation of the heritage features in the buildings. The “Late Straits” eclectic style shophouses Lots. 3, 5, and 7 are hidden gems located in Lorong Ikan, a part of George Town Heritage City, Penang that is not frequented by locals. However, it is easy to tell that the building is more

than what it seems (Figure 1.10). Inscribed in black paint, upon the first column of shophouse Lot. 3, is the year the building was built, “1926.” Almost a century old.



Figure 1.10 The Front Façade of Straits Chinese “Late Straits” Eclectic Style Shophouses Buildings Lots. 3, 5, and 7

The shophouses Lots. 3, 5, and 7 have been selected for this study because it is the utmost valued and reliable artefact and one of the most important identity of George Town Heritage City; and built in the late 19th century. Apart from that, the original furnishing and finishes of the building are still intact (GTWHI). Jeff (2016) affirmed that the building holds several historical stories in its architecture and design. This is one of the justifications to investigate the architectural and cultural documentation for future reference. The following section would briefly define key terms used in this research.

1.11 Definition of Key Terms

The preceding section focused on brief discussion of the study’s background. This section highlights the definition of key terms employed in the study. The intention is to prevent possible misconceptions of the words used, which include place identity, traditional courtyard shophouses, and Straits Eclectic style type of shophouses.