THE VIRTUAL MUSEUM AND DIGITAL HERITAGE PRESERVATION IN KAMPONG BHARU

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my beloved parents, who have supported me throughout my studies up to LAM Part II. They have been my strength and inspiration especially in tough times when I thought of giving up, who continually provide their moral, spiritual, emotional and financial support to get me to where I am today.

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ABSTRACT

Kampong Bharu is an urban village located right in the middle of Kuala Lumpur city centre, which is being encroached by many upcoming and already completed high-rise mega projects. Recent changes in its plot ratio to 1:10 have made matters even worse as developers scramble to grab a piece of the pie. Due to its strategic business location, Kampong Bharu's heritage is slowly being eroded with many architectural heritage buildings and structures being lost from existence. This village holds many important histories towards the development of Kuala Lumpur that we have come to know. Yet there is a lack of celebration of the heritage and history of Kampong Bharu. This study reviews the ways digitisation and digitalisation can help benefit the heritage preservation of Kampong Bharu and the challenges it faces. This study explores the various methods and case studies in preparing future heritage centres that focus on digital and virtual exhibitions.

ABSTRAK

Kampong Bharu adalah sebuah perkampungan bandar yang terletak di tengah-tengah pusat bandar Kuala Lumpur. Ia sedang dicerobohi oleh banyak projek mega telah siap ataupun dalah pembangunan. Perubahan terbaru dalam nisbah plot kepada 1:10 telah menjejaskan lagi keadaan apabila pemaju-pemaju berebut untuk mengambil keuntungan daripada pembangunan tanah Kampong Bharu. Oleh kerana lokasi perniagaannya yang strategik, warisan dan sejarah Kampong Bharu semakin terhakis dengan banyak pembangunan baru dan juga kehilangan bangunan-bangunan warisan seni bina yang penting. Kampung ini menpunyai banyak sejarah penting ke arah pembangunan Kuala Lumpur yang telah kita ketahui. Namun terdapat kekurangan sambutan terhadap warisan dan sejarah Kampong Bharu. Kajian ini mengkaji cara pendigitalan dan pendigitalan yang boleh membantu memanfaatkan pemeliharaan warisan Kampong Bharu dan cabaran yang dihadapinya. Kajian ini meneroka pelbagai kaedah dan kajian kes dalam menyediakan pusat warisan masa depan yang memfokuskan kepada pameran digital dan virtual.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

2D	-	2 Dimensional
3D	-	3 Dimensional
AI	-	Artificial Intelligence
VR	-	Virtual Reality
AR	-	Augmented Reality
LCD	-	Liquid Crystal Display
MAS	-	Malay Agriculture Settlement
PKB	-	Perbadanan Pembangunan Kampong Bharu
NFT	-	Non-Fungible Token
BH	-	Berita Harian
UNESCO	-	United Nations Educations, Scientific, and Cultural Society

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Introduction

Heritage is a piece of our history that has been maintained for the present and will be passed on to future generations. Heritage is described as the meanings linked to the past in the present, and it is considered a form of knowledge defined within social, political, and cultural settings. (Graham. B, 2002). Kampong Bharu being a site filled with historic identities is facing a challenge of modernistic redevelopment. As of late, more and more heritage aspects of Kampong Bharu are slowly being eroded, physically demolished or left to be forgotten. The Covid-19 pandemic which has hit the world hard has also contributed to the loss of social, cultural and economic preservation of Kampong Bharu. Throughout the years, this village has seen many transformations in its skyline with more and more high-rise buildings being built within. It is a threat to the preservation and conservation of the village identity. Therefore, this paper studies the various ways a digital heritage centre can positively contribute to its surrounding environment and the different components that a heritage centre should provide that would bring more social, cultural and economic benefits towards the preservation and growth of Kampong Bharu.

1.2   Problem Statement

The study area consists of Kampong Bharu which is well known for its market at Chow Kit and food street at Jalan Raja Muda Musa. It is a hidden gem in the middle of Kuala Lumpur city centre and makes it a special place to visit. Kampong Bharu dates back to 1900 when the first Malay Agricultural Settlement (MAS) scheme was formed as requested by Sultan Abdul Samad. Though 1 year later it was declared unsuitable to cultivate padi. An abundance of history and heritage can be traced back

to this village such as the settlement of the Mandailings and also the tin miners along the Klang River. Much of this history has been poorly preserved or documented yet alone exhibited to showcase its vast history that is present at Kampong Bharu. Despite all this precious information, the village lacks a place to present and showcase all this history to the visitors and locals alike. To make matters worse, more heritage buildings are being demolished or left to rot without being cared for as national treasures. Therefore, it is important to preserve what is left of its heritage by providing a platform to showcase and carry out various social, cultural and economic activities of Kampong Bharu. Like Kampong Bharu, Heritage centres in urban areas are often the keystones of unique urban neighbourhoods worldwide (Boeri et al., 2016; Girard, 2014; Yung et al., 2017) and therefore plays an important role in safeguarding the historic aspects of a place.

1.3   Research Aim

This study aims to address the potential roles and methods of digitisation in preserving the heritage of Kampong Bharu

1.3.1   Research Questions

The research questions of the research are:

(a)   Can preserving heritage through digitisation bring about social, cultural and economic benefits?

(b)   What are the components required in a heritage digitisation centre?

(c)   How to digitise and implement digital heritage?

1.3.2   Research Objectives

The research objectives of the research are:

(a)   To recognise the roles of digitisation in preserving heritage.

(b)   To identify the different architectural components in a digital heritage centre.

(c)   To explore the ways in digitising heritage and implementing it in heritage centres.

1.4   Significance of Research

This research aims to identify the various social, cultural and economic benefits of preserving and showcasing the history and heritage of Kampong Bharu digitally. According to the Cambridge dictionary, heritage is defined as features belonging to the culture of a particular society, such as traditions, languages, or buildings, that were created in the past and still have historical importance. Kampong Bharu has had a rich heritage since the early days of the Mandailings settlement and was a tin mining hub of the past. Unfortunately, the current redevelopment plan by the government body - Perbadanan dan Pembangunan Kampong Bharu, has other mega master plans in mind for the 300 acres urban village that involves amalgamation of many land parcels to form bigger plots of land for skyscrapers (PKB, 2019). Therefore, it is of great importance that a heritage centre be erected to safeguard the identity and history of Kampong Bharu and at the same time benefit the locals and visitors alike.

1.5   Research Scope

This study focuses on how a heritage centre using digital media and content integrate social, cultural and economic programmes into its everyday activities and space planning. This includes studying the design for urban spaces, circulation and museum programming through various case studies. Currently, many museums are

single functioning buildings with less mixed uses. Therefore, during downtimes, off-hours, or even a pandemic outbreak, museums around the world are not being fully utilised. This can be seen at the nearby Bangunan Warisan that has been jumping between a gallery and an abandoned building countless times. (BH Online, 2017) More can be done in enabling a multifunctional building program that can withstand the test of time that the future will bring.

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Appendix A – List of Virtual Reality Museums

1. KOREA Cubically Imagined VR

   http://cubicallyimagined.kr/en/main/

2. The Great Wave of
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3OAAf2Eo1Gs&t=5s&ab_channel=Parti
   cipant

3. VR Starry Night Van Gogh

   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G7Dt9ziemYA&ab_channel=VRMotion
   Magic

4. Loka Local Virtual Tours

   https://www.lokalocal.com/virtual-reality

5. How Museums are Using Virtual Reality

   https://www.museumnext.com/article/how-museums-are-using-virtual-
   reality/

6. The Museum of the World

   https://britishmuseum.withgoogle.com/

7. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and Foundation

   https://artsandculture.google.com/streetview/solomon-r-guggenheim-
   museum-interior-streetview

8. Musée d'Orsay, Paris

   https://artsandculture.google.com/partner/musee-dorsay-paris?hl=en

9. National Gallery of Art, Washington DC

   https://artsandculture.google.com/partner/national-gallery-of-art-washington-
   dc?hl=en

10. National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea

    https://artsandculture.google.com/partner/national-museum-of-modern-and-
    contemporary-art-korea?hl=en