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A Comparative Study Of Before and After Conservation Work (Floor). Case Study: Pejabat Pos Lama, Ipoh, Perak

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Abstract

Malaysian economy has experienced booming growth over the last couples of years making the construction and building industry a very profitable one. Owing to the rising construction rate, there is a need to determine whether proper conservation guidelines and requirements are established and being implemented, enforced and undertaken by the authorities and the conservationists. This is especially critical when determining and identifying whether the quality level workmanship undertaken during the restoration process of a building retains the originality of the building and is true to its historical values. In Malaysia, conservation works are undertaken based on the mandated conservation policy and its general guidelines. In practice not all parts of the site or buildings can be protected and there is a need to determine the conservation works that are carried will achieve the expected required standard in terms of work quality. Thus, the procedure of the conservation work must be specific and detailed such as survey of the buildings’ condition. This research will only focus on the roof element in analyzing the comparison of the floor work before and after conservation works.

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1. Background

In conservation projects, performing the work in accordance with the set rules of conduct that comply with the principles of conservation helps maintain the authenticity of the building [3]. Methodology should concern original conditions either in terms of building materials, construction technique used and so forth. Materials used in Ipoh Old Post Office Building floors consists of a wood, cement and marble.

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Cement and marble were used on the ground floor while wood was used for the floor upstairs. For the verandah, marble was used as finishing and wood used in all the rooms except for the toilet and bathrooms.

The architectural design featured on Old Post Office building is a very interesting one. This building is adjacent to the Ipoh Town Hall building. Old PostOffice was designed by renowned architect AB Hubback and was built in 1914 and completed in 1916. Its design is much influenced by Neo-Renaissance Pr-Victorian architectural style with decorative highlights on the Greek and Roman column. In 1928, the eastern part of the building housed the Old Post Office and Telegraph office which was later relocated to Taiping.

The timber floor in the existing heritage building has suffered damage caused by wear and tear and dry rot. Other damages sustained also include termite attack, cut-out routes to facilitate installation of mechanical and electrical lines and exposure to the elements not to mention time and human use factors.

Figure 1: The old post office and telegraph before conservation work
2. Literature review

According to Marquis-Kyle et. al. (1992) [2], one of the fundamental reasons for conserving buildings is that they contain information that documents, photograph, drawings, film, or video cannot capture fully. Regardless of how skillfully a place may be captured on film or how evocatively it may be described; there is no substitute for the experience of being in the actual place. All this while in our country, the main aim of conservation projects has been to boost tourism by attracting foreign and local tourists alike. This point was further by the allocation given under the 9th Malaysian Plan Budget [4]. This highlights the importance of conservation of historical buildings and sites in order to generate income and further boost the tourism sector. This objective not only benefits the economic conditions of the locals but guarantees that heritage and historical sites are also preserved in the process. Furthermore most of the pre-war buildings tend to be shop houses. If these shop houses are renovated or demolished without any proper guidelines or financial help from the government, the town may lose its identity.

Conservation is based on a respect for the existing facade and should involve the least possible physical intrusion. It should not distort the originality of the existing facade. The traces of additions, alterations and earlier treatments on the fabric of a place are evidence of its history and uses. Conservation activities should assist rather than impede their interpretation (Article 2, Conservation Principals, Australia ICOMOS) [1]. Conservation requires the maintenance of an appropriate visual setting: e.g., form, scale, color, texture and materials. No new construction, demolition or modification which would adversely affect the setting should be allowed. Environmental intrusions which adversely affect appreciation or enjoyment of the place should be excluded (Article 8, Conservation principals, Australia ICOMOS) [1]. A building or work should remain in its historical location. The moving of all or part of a building or work is unacceptable unless this is the sole means of ensuring its survival. Some structures were designed to be readily removable or already have a history of previous moves, e.g. prefabricated dwellings and poppet-heads. Provided such a structure does not have a strong association with its present site, its removal may be considered. If any structure is moved, it should be moved to an appropriate setting and

![Figure 2 (a) and (b): (a) Floor Plan of Old Post Office and Telegraph (b): Ground Floor Plan; Left: First Floor Plan](image)

(a) Marble Floor Finishes
(b) Timber Floor Board
given an appropriate use. Such action should not be to the detriment of any place of cultural significance (Article 9&10, Conservation Principals, Australia ICOMOS) [1].

3. Objectives

The objective of this research is to compare the floor work of the building before and after conservation work was carried out. The main aim here is to determine whether conservation principles were adhered to during this project.

4. Methodology

Data was collected from secondary data source which consists of information taken from books, regulations, journals and other sources of information; and primary data source which consists of information gathered from informal interview of contractors, consultants and Jabatan Warisan Malaysia. The authors then collected data in a site survey conducted before and after the site was conserved. The duration of data collection was from 2008 to 2010. The authors were directly involved in the project from the beginning till when the project was complete. All the data and information was then processed to determine the relativity of the data gathered to the research or the study. Furthermore, the information processed was later categorized, synthesized and assessed to ensure all compiled data was indeed relevant to the research. Observations, findings and conclusions were then recorded by the authors.

5. Finding Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NO</th>
<th>ITEM DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>BEFORE (2008)</th>
<th>AFTER (2010)</th>
<th>COMPARISON ANALYSIS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Before the building was conserved, the floor finishing was cement render. During work on the floor, the original floor was found to have marble finishes.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>With evidence of the original floor found, the general worker is instructed to dig and explore the whole ground floor to unearth the original finishes.</td>
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ARTICLE 12 of Venice Charter [5] Replacements of missing parts must integrate harmoniously with the whole, but at the same time must be distinguishable from the original so that restoration does not falsify the artistic or historic evidence.

ARTICLE 2 of Venice
A few parts of the original floor were damaged prompting the contractor to search for similar material (marble) with the same colour and texture as replacement.

The Floor: after grinding and polishing.

Second floor finishing was originally timber. When it was inspected last 2008, the timber was badly rotten and deemed unsafe for habitation. During the conservation work, the timber joist was found to be in very good condition.

The entire timber joist remained unchanged while the floorboards were replaced using the exact type of wood (meranti) utilized for the previous floor.

The floor: ready for a coat of shellac.

The floor condition upon completion of conservation works.

Charter [5],

ARTICLE 4 of ICOMOS

The conservation and restoration of monuments must have recourse to all the sciences and techniques which can contribute to the study and safeguarding of the architectural heritage.

Article 3 of ICOMOS

Conservation is based on a respect for the existing fabric and should involve the least possible physical intervention. It should not distort the evidence provided by the fabric.

Article 13 of ICOMOS

Restoration is appropriate only if there is sufficient evidence of an earlier state of the fabric and only if returning the fabric to that state recovers the cultural significance of the place.

Article 15 of ICOMOS

Restoration is limited to the reassembling of displaced components or removal of accretions in accordance with Article 16.

Article 16 of
The contributions of all periods to the place must be respected. If a place includes the fabric of different periods, revealing the fabric of one period at the expense of another can only be justified when what is removed is of slight cultural significance and the fabric which is to be revealed is of much greater cultural significance.

6. Conclusion

The present situation in Malaysia shows that there is a growing appreciation of national heritage. At present, the Ministry of Heritage, Culture and Arts as the main authority plays an active part in the monitoring and control of the historical buildings in Malaysia. The principle of Conservation can be applied in the building conservation projects by referring to local and international guidelines, Acts and Charter. It is important that the principle should be followed so that the old and heritage buildings are safe to occupy. Furthermore after the conservation works is done, the building performance will be upgraded to achieve user satisfaction.

Through this research, the authors conclude that the conservation practices during this project followed all conservation principles such as the selection of building fabric, research on original material, methodology of the conservation practice and others.

References

[1] ICOMOS; (Rev. 1999); the Australia ICOMOS Charter for The Conservation of Places of Cultural Significance (Burra Charter);
[5] Venice Charter; (1964)