

Preserving Heritage: The Maintenance of National Heritage Anglican Churches in Malaysia

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Shirley Jin Lin Chua¹, Azlan Shah Ali², Wee Phong Ow³

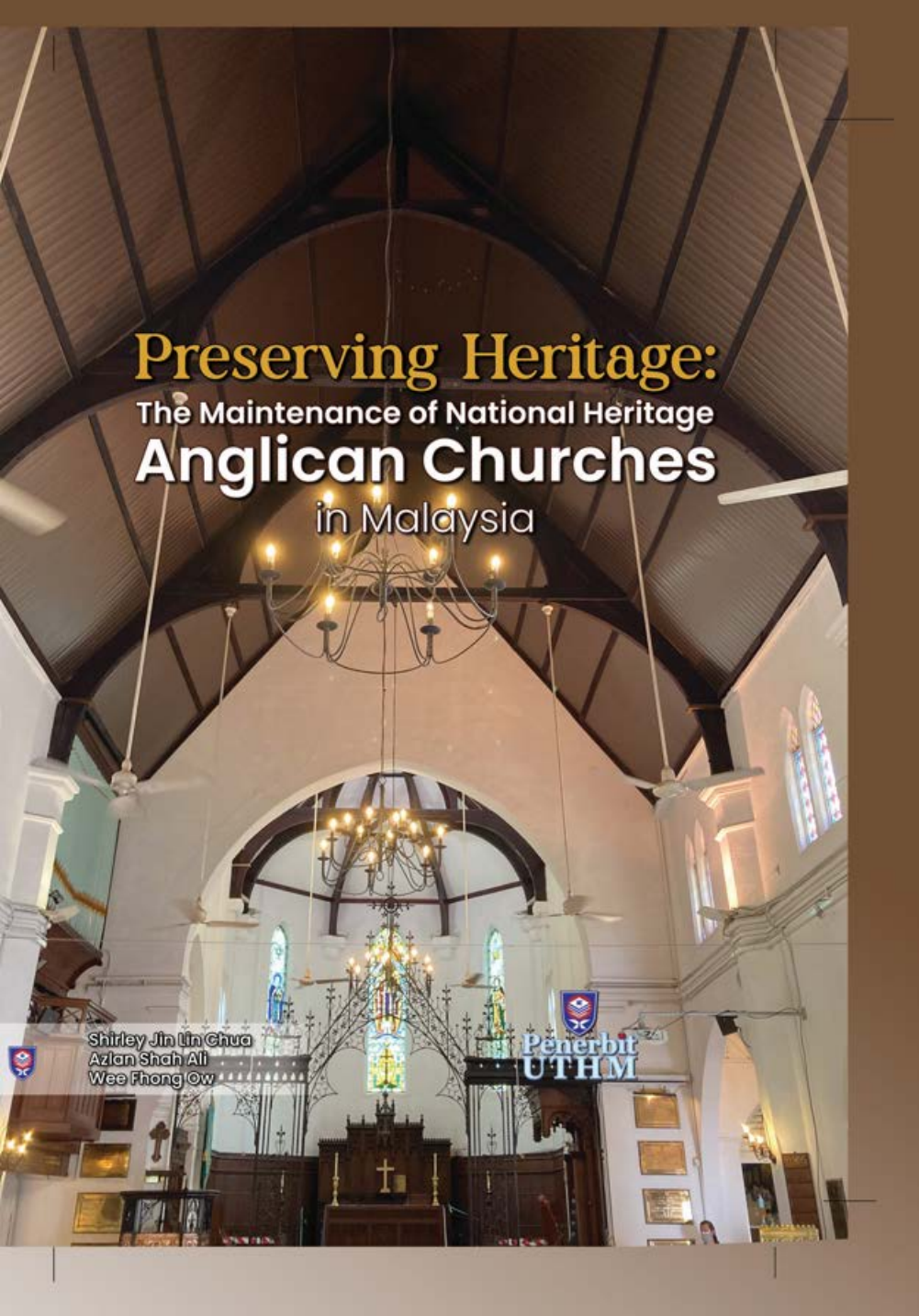
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Abstract: This book is a journey through time and space, through ornate arches and intricately carved pews, and through the hearts of those who have tirelessly ensured the conservation of these Anglican churches. It is a testament to the unwavering faith that binds communities and transcends the boundaries of time and culture. As the custodians of this cultural and spiritual legacy, it is with great pride and reverence that we present this book. It serves as an exploration of the intricate fusion of faith and heritage, offering a window into the soul of Malaysia. Through these pages, we invite you to embark on a journey of discovery, understanding, and appreciation for the monumental task of preserving our national heritage.

We are deeply grateful to the Malaysian Department of National Heritage, architects, custodians, conservators, historians, volunteers, and all those who have generously shared their knowledge and experiences to make this project possible. Without their dedication, this book would remain an unfulfilled dream. May the pages that follow inspire an enduring commitment to the maintenance and preservation of our National Heritage Anglican Churches, ensuring that they stand as timeless symbols of faith, culture, and history for generations to come.

Keywords: Heritage, churches, cultural, maintenance



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Preface

In the midst of the vibrant tapestry of Malaysia's cultural heritage, there stand towering monuments of faith, history, and architectural grandeur—our National Heritage Anglican Churches. These sacred structures have been witnesses to centuries of change, silently echoing the stories of those who have gathered within their hallowed walls.

“Preserving Heritage: The Maintenance of National Heritage Anglican Churches in Malaysia” is not merely a book; it is a testament to the dedication, passion, and collective endeavour of countless individuals and organizations who have committed themselves to preserving the sanctity of these remarkable places of worship. Their work is a labour of love, a bridge between the past and the future, and a manifestation of our shared commitment to preserving our national heritage.

This book is a journey through time and space, through ornate arches and intricately carved pews, and through the hearts of those who have tirelessly ensured the conservation of these Anglican churches. It is a testament to the unwavering faith that binds communities and transcends the boundaries of time and culture. As the custodians of this cultural and spiritual legacy, it is with great pride and reverence that we present this book. It serves as an exploration of the intricate fusion of faith and heritage, offering a window into the soul of Malaysia. Through these pages, we invite you to embark on a journey

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1

Anglican Churches

1.1 Introduction

A wide range of architectural styles and historical structures that contribute to the nation's identity. The country's rich cultural and historical influences, rooted in its multicultural community, have left a significant mark on its built environment. Beyond their spiritual importance, places of worship play a central role in the lives of many, spanning generations. Given the economic value of tourism, maintaining these places of worship is crucial. David (2017) emphasizes the importance of preserving prominent religious sites, noting their status as major tourist attractions. Neglecting their upkeep could significantly impact a country's revenue. Visitors are drawn to these sites not only for their spiritual significance but also for their historical, cultural, and aesthetic uniqueness, including distinctive architecture.

The term "Church," originating from the Old English word 'cirice,' refers to a place where Christians gather for worship. Hurlbut (1967) observes that in ancient times, up until the end of the second century, Christians primarily held their worship services in private homes, remote areas, at the graves of martyrs, and in the crypts of catacombs. Due to the difficult conditions of that era, characterized by poverty, oppression, and lawlessness, Christians would gather whenever and wherever they could.

Christian assemblies for worship often take place in a larger common area. Hurlbut (1967) further noted that these activities typically

1



2

Building Components and Elements of Anglican Churches

2.1 Introduction

Older buildings throughout Malaysia form an essential part of the National Heritage stock. Structures built between 1800 and 1948, which are gazetted as Heritage Buildings under the National Heritage Act 2005, are commonly referred to in Malaysia as “Pre-war Buildings” (Baharuddin et al., 2014). Examples of Pre-war Buildings include mosques, churches, post offices, and shop houses. As most of these structures were constructed before Malayan Independence, the design and technology used primarily reflect the influence of colonial architects. For example, St. George’s Church in Penang (1818) was designed by William Petrie, a British officer of the East India Company, and Sultan Abdul Samad Jamek Mosque (1909) was the work of Arthur Benison Hubback, an English architect and soldier. Consequently, it is not surprising that one of the significant challenges faced by these Pre-war Buildings is the lack of technical expertise needed for their maintenance and repair (Baharuddin et al., 2014). Furthermore, a report by Babulal (2019), highlights that the River of Life project, intended as a city beautification initiative by the Malaysian Government, inadvertently created an unfavourable environment for older buildings across the Klang Valley, ultimately worsening their performance deterioration.

Performance deterioration is inevitable for all building components, primarily due to aging, wear and tear, and external factors (Straub, 2009). Since performance loss is often reflected in identified defects,



3

The Defects of National Heritage Anglican Churches in Malaysia

3.1 Introduction

The authors sourced the list of National Heritage sites in Malaysia from the Department of National Heritage. The focus on National Heritage structures was intentional, as these buildings are recognized for their significant value to the nation. Upon reviewing the list, it was found that all the National Heritage churches listed were Anglican churches. Consequently, the four Anglican churches in Malaysia were selected to investigate on their defects and the current maintenance practices in place. The intention is to develop a maintenance framework to create awareness on maintenance of these National heritage churches.

The authors visited each of the four churches to gather essential information. This information has been compiled and is presented in the following sections, listed in alphabetical order:

- i. All Saints' Church, Taiping
- ii. Christ Church Melaka, Melaka
- iii. St. George's Church, Penang
- iv. St. Mary's Cathedral, Kuala Lumpur



4

Building Maintenance for Anglican Churches

4.1 Introduction

Building maintenance refers to the analysis of maintenance requirements associated with various building structures, elements and the assets contained within them (IWFM, 2018). It involves developing maintenance programmes by evaluating building usage, services, and control systems. This process does not end with the creation of these programmes but extends to managing and monitoring them. Furthermore, building maintenance encompasses the assessment and application of various management systems and technologies to prolong the life cycle of a building, while minimizing unnecessary deterioration (Peng, 2013).

4.2 The Current Maintenance of National Heritage Anglican Churches in Malaysia

The maintenance of Anglican churches in Malaysia faces significant challenges. Most notably, there is a general absence of comprehensive maintenance plans. For the four Anglican churches in Malaysia discussed in Chapter 3, St. George's Church has developed such a maintenance plan, but it remains under revision, and efforts to obtain the outdated version from the building custodian have been unsuccessful. This situation reflects a broader trend in Malaysia, where maintenance awareness is low, and building owners often adopt a reactive approach, addressing only those issues that directly impact users. Such a strategy, focused solely on corrective measures,



5

Maintenance Model for Anglican Churches

5.1 Introduction

To develop a maintenance model for Anglican churches, a questionnaire survey was conducted with experts in facilities management to gather their professional opinions on the significance of various spaces within a church, as well as the importance of specific disciplines associated with each space type. By identifying the relative importance of each element, this research aimed to provide critical insights for prioritizing maintenance tasks. The survey methodology utilized both the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) and the Analytical Network Process (ANP), two well-established techniques in multi-criteria decision analysis.

The 32 respondents who passed the screening process were confirmed to have appropriate expertise or knowledge in the field. The majority of respondents were architects, followed by asset/facility management consultants and maintenance managers—professions highly specialized in construction and building management, often requiring advanced education. Given their roles, these professionals are frequently involved in decision-making processes related to building maintenance, and their responses are assumed to be credible, accurate, and unbiased. The educational backgrounds of the respondents were well-distributed across various professions in the construction industry, ensuring a comprehensive perspective in the study's findings.



6

Conclusion and Way Forward

6.1 Conclusion

This book revolves several key topics that collectively contribute to the development of a maintenance model for Anglican churches. These topics include an overview of Anglican churches, their historical context in Malaysia, typical church layouts, relevant Malaysian legislation concerning church maintenance, and the various building components and elements of Anglican churches. The narrative begins with an investigation into the maintenance of National Heritage Anglican churches in Malaysia, aiming to assess the building portfolio, identify defects, and evaluate the current maintenance practices in place.

Most of these churches lack a formal maintenance plan. While St. George's Church does have a maintenance plan, it is still undergoing revisions. Building owners typically address only what is visibly broken and has an immediate impact on users, relying predominantly on corrective maintenance. This situation is compounded by the absence of a comprehensive maintenance plan and, more critically, a properly trained maintenance team. The most significant challenges faced in preserving Anglican churches in Malaysia include budget constraints, accessibility issues and aesthetic considerations. All custodians identified budgeting as a major challenge. Even St. George's Church, which received support from the Department of National Heritage Malaysia, struggled with funding. For churches relying solely on congregational donations, sustaining maintenance

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