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## Conservation Management Plan for Heritage Site in Malaysia: A Case Study of Brooke Dockyard, Kuching, Sarawak

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### ABSTRACT

Conservation Management Plan (CMP) and its implementation is a relatively new practice in the protection and safeguarding of heritage buildings and sites in Malaysia. The CMP is a vital legal document which details out the management strategy for historic assets, heritage sites and significant places; as well as prescribes future use, management, alteration, or repair to retain the significance of heritage buildings and sites. Without proper CMP implementation, gazetted heritage buildings or sites are at risk due to potential development threats that may affect their significant values. This article presents the fundamentals of the CMP as stated under the Malaysian laws, which are the National Heritage Act 2005 (Act 645), State of Penang Heritage Enactment 2011 (Enactment 14) and Sarawak Heritage Ordinance 2019 (Chapter 77). This study involves a qualitative research in examining provisions in the Malaysian heritage laws; as well as reviewing the contents of the CMP of Brooke Dockyard in Kuching, Sarawak as a case study. The study found that all three Malaysia heritage laws have similar provisions in aspects of authority, power, control, management, and designated criteria for heritage property. Specific provisions of the Sarawak Heritage Ordinance 2019 (Chapter 77) laws were found to be fully complied and well documented in the case study of the CMP of Brooke Dockyard. Hence, the CMP of Brooke Dockyard serves as an instrumental tool in safeguarding the significant values of this heritage building prior to its transformation into a maritime museum. The CMP provides guidance to envisage future care and use of Brooke Dockyard including new development proposals within the designated core and buffer zones. The CMP also portrays Brooke Dockyard as one of the significant heritage sites in Sarawak that should be conserved for the benefits of future generations.

**Keywords:** Heritage, gazette, building, site, conservation management plan, legislation

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JABATAN MUSEUM SARAWAK

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Conservation Management Plan (CMP) and its implementation is a relatively new practice in the protection and safeguarding of heritage buildings and sites in Malaysia. The CMP is a vital legal document which details out the management strategy for historic assets, heritage sites and significant places; as well as prescribes future use, management, alteration, or repair to retain the significance of heritage buildings and sites. Without proper CMP implementation, gazetted heritage buildings or sites are at risk due to potential development threats that may affect their significant values. This article presents the fundamentals of the CMP as stated under the Malaysian laws, which are the National Heritage Act 2005 (Act 645), State of Penang Heritage Enactment 2011 (Enactment 14) and Sarawak Heritage Ordinance 2019 (Chapter 77). This study involves a qualitative research in examining provisions in the Malaysian heritage laws; as well as reviewing the contents of the CMP of Brooke Dockyard in Kuching, Sarawak as a case study. The study found that all three Malaysia heritage laws have similar provisions in aspects of authority, power, control, management, and designated criteria for heritage property. Specific provisions of the Sarawak Heritage Ordinance 2019 (Chapter 77) laws were found to be fully complied and well documented in the case study of the CMP of Brooke Dockyard. Hence, the CMP of Brooke Dockyard serves as an instrumental tool in safeguarding the significant values of this heritage building prior to its transformation into a maritime museum. The CMP provides guidance to envisage future care and use of Brooke Dockyard including new development proposals within the designated core and buffer zones. The CMP also portrays Brooke Dockyard as one of the significant heritage sites in Sarawak that should be conserved for the benefits of future generations.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Since the inscription of Melaka and George Town as UNESCO's World Heritage Sites in 2008, conservation management plan (CMP) has become an authoritative document with respect to control, appraisal and maintenance of heritage buildings and sites listed or gazetted under the Malaysian laws. The CMP is a legal requirement as stated in the National Heritage Act 2005 (Act 645), State of Penang Heritage Enactment 2011 (Enactment 14) and Sarawak Heritage Ordinance 2019 (Chapter 77) with the aim of protecting the significant values of the gazetted heritage buildings and sites; and encouraging their preservation and conservation. These heritage buildings and sites have special features and attributes related to both tangible and intangible cultural heritage of Malaysia. These heritage assets may include any building, area, place or zone of buildings, monument, archaeological site, garden, park, tree, natural heritage or underwater cultural heritage that are at least fifty years of age. Presently, efforts to conserve and preserve heritage properties in many countries are confronted with issues and

challenges associated with rapid population growth, increased urbanisation, high demands for urban services, changing technologies and limited finance. In parallel, gazetted heritage buildings and sites in Malaysia are at risk of development threats which could affect their significant values. Some gazetted heritage buildings such as Sultan Abdul Samad Building and National Mosque in Kuala Lumpur; and Textile Museum, Old Courthouse, Fort Margherita and Brooke Dockyard in Kuching, Sarawak are being contested with issues of new modern development in their vicinity. The River of Life Project in Kuala Lumpur, for example, has transformed the Gombak–Klang river channel into a vibrant and livable waterfront. Nonetheless, justifications for constructing new modern structures in close proximity to the historic Sultan Abdul Samad Building, including a steel bridge crossing over the Gombak River, a boardwalk and fish pond along the Gombak River; and two modern glass – boxed observation towers, remained debatable. Similarly, public inquiries were raised with regard to a modern shopping complex and a luxury hotel building built within close distance to the Textile Museum and Old Courthouse in the heritage precinct in Kuching, Sarawak. At any rate, such new modern development has to a certain degree affected the significant values of these historic buildings by disrupting and disconnecting the unique setting and ambience of the heritage precinct.

It is acknowledged that the CMP has many legal bearings and implications; hence it is considered as a new technical procedure among government agencies responsible for heritage conservation in Malaysia. The aim of this article is therefore to present the fundamentals of the CMP as prescribed under the Malaysian laws to facilitate a better understanding and conduct of the CMP procedures. This article discusses the provisions for gazetted heritage buildings and sites under the Malaysian laws, and reviews the CMP of Brooke Dockyard in Kuching, Sarawak as a case study to illustrate the legal process and procedures. Several government agencies in Penang, Sarawak and Kuala Lumpur were solicited during the study to gather relevant data and information on their gazetted heritage buildings and sites. It is anticipated that an enhanced knowledge and understanding of the CMP may well assist relevant government agencies in Malaysia, particularly those in Sarawak including the Sarawak Museum Department (*Jabatan Muzium Sarawak*), Sarawak Public Works Department (*Jabatan Kerja Raya Sarawak*) and local planning authorities in outlining their strategies and priorities towards the implementation of the CMP in all heritage buildings and sites gazetted under the Sarawak Heritage Ordinance 2019 (Chapter 77).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO, 2013) has emphasised the needs for protection and management of property and heritage sites enlisted in the World Heritage Sites (WHS) in an effort to ensure that the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the heritage property (including core and buffer zone) is maintained or enhanced over time. Good practices of heritage site conservation in many countries have involved the implementation of specific laws, regulations and guidelines as formulated by policy makers in order to meet the target of protecting the