

Book Review

Penang's

Living Legacy

Kjell Skylstad⁺ Editor in Chief

Penang's Living Legacy – Safeguarding the City's Hidden Heritage

Ten years ago, on the 7th of July UNESCO voted to award the title of World Heritage Site to the "Historic Cities of the Strait of Malacca" meeting the criteria of Outstanding Universal Values (OUV) as unique example of a Southeast Asian multicultural trading community.

Then in April 2010 The Penang State Government established George Town World Heritage Incorporated (GTWHI) dedicated to "protecting, promoting and preserving George Town as a sustainable city." This formed the background for a group of GTWHI researchers in 2012 starting an urban mapping project focusing on traditional performing arts or cultural practice, traditional crafts and traditional trades. Among a total of 5,064 businesses in George Town 611 were found to operate traditional trades and occupations, with a total of 403 having been in business for the last 50 – 100 years. A total of 63 different trades were identified with 389 residents having artisanal, artistic and cultural skills

Introducing the present publication the GTWHI General Manager Lim Chooi Ping explains the aims and scope of the project "GTWGI's ultimate aim is to safeguard the city's intangible heritage and make it more sustainable. There are plenty of unique trades and skills that have been passed down through the generations but there is a danger that these will eventually die out...Once the surveys are carefully analyzed these will form the basis of future community socio-economic development and heritage planning programs".

⁺ Dr. Kjell Skylstad, Professor Emeritus, University of Oslo, Department of Musicology, Norway.

Starting in 2012 with making a heritage inventory of traditional traders, artisans and artists, the focus for the following year included religious festivals, routes and calendars. all interwoven into the city's living fabric. The inventory initially included 20 case studies of heritage practitioners embodying the history and spirit of George Town and chosen by community leaders. The present book features 36 heritage trades in all but it is an ongoing project with findings continually being downloaded on the project website.

The book is a remarkable guide for anyone out to discover the true spirit of Penang guiding his or her steps into a hidden cultural cityscape just waiting to be discovered be it the supplier of natural pigment and perfumes, the baker of the local coconut tarts, weaver of traditional rattan furniture, flower garland maker, martial artist, composer, traditional shoe maker, sarong maker and many others.

Penang's Living Legacy.
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