THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE IDENTITIES OF KAMPONG GLAM

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Abstract

This dissertation aims to explore how identity is constructed in new ways within the contested boundaries of public and private spaces in Kampong Glam. As the Singapore economy continues to progress, objects in the physical landscape are subject to change. Hence, important historical landmarks which serve as possible identity markers are threatened in the face of modernisation. Additionally, as Singapore's population continues to grow more cosmopolitan, issues of identity start surfacing. Today, identity is no longer defined solely through racial constructs. It has become increasingly multi-faceted and complex when examined through postmodern and postcolonial issues of power, space and femininity.

Thus this dissertation proposes new and alternative ways of perceiving identity and its derivation through an interdisciplinary approach of adopting concepts from various critical cultural theorists such as Homi Bhabha, Jürgen Habermas and Jane Rendell. By applying their theories within specific sites in Kampong Glam, I hope to present a fresh perspective of not only understanding how identity is derived, but also excite readers to think about how their identity is formed within the activities of their everyday life.

This dissertation is divided into three main chapters, each discussing different aspects of identity that can be discerned within the site of Kampong Glam. While different groups of people will be studied in each chapter, the examination of the built heritage will range from the monumental, such as the Sultan Mosque and the Malay Heritage Centre, to physical spaces such as the shopping streets of Haji Lane and Arab Street through the understanding of metaphorical feminine and contested constructs of space. This paper will also provide a critique on the existing and proposed urban developments adopted by planning authorities of Singapore.

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Figure 1: Location of Kampong Glam on the Raffles' Town Plan from 1823-33
[Source: URA, Historic Districts: Conservation Guidelines for Kampong Glam Conservation Area (URA, 1991)]

Figure 2: Clockwise from top right – The original Sultan Mosque, The present Sultan Mosque, The newly refurbished Malay Heritage Centre, Istana Kampong Glam before refurbishment)
[Source: In the same order –URA, Historic Districts: Conservation Guidelines for Kampong Glam Conservation Area (URA, 1991), http://www.flickr.com/photos/janinef71/453234949/ (Apr 9, 2007), http://www.flickr.com/photos/sftrajan/2200433025/ (Jan 17, 2008), http://www.flickr.com/photos/snapsg/2570295468/ (2004)]

Figure3: Map depicting the concentration of Malay-Muslim gatherings in Kampong Glam.
[Source: 'Kampong Glam Shophouses, http://www.streetdirectory.com/asia_travel/travel/travel_id_4479/travel_site_14125/ (accessed 5 May 2008)]

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[Source: Clockwise from top right: http://www.flickr.com/photos/therapeutik/1350726268/ (2007)
http://www.flickr.com/photos/kookii/200462048/ (Jul 28, 2006)
http://www.flickr.com/photos/lcy/36027082/ (Aug 21, 2005)]

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[Source: Jane Perkins, Kampong Glam: Spirit of a Community, 1984]

Figure 6: Layout of streets of Arab Street, Haji Lane and Bali Lane and the adjacent shophouses.
[Source: Drawing by writer based on map taken from URA, *Historic Districts: Conservation Guidelines for Kampong Glam Conservation Area* (URA, 1991)].

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[Source: Greg Fealy and Virginia Hooker (eds.) *Voices of Islam in Southeast Asia: A Contemporary Sourcebook*, (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2006) Map found right after the cover page.]

Figure 8: Conservation Boundaries, Plan
[Source: URA, Conservation Guidelines for Kampong Glam Conservation Area, 1991]

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In the multi-cultural landscape of Singapore, identity is one of the major issues that remains hotly debated today. Singapore is a city-state unique in the region, where the advent of trade and mass immigration heightened during the colonial era resulted in the amalgamation of a diverse group of people. These people identified themselves by locality, religion, the dress they wore, the trades they were in. It was only after the British census that race was adopted as the predominant form of identification. Hence in this dissertation, I intend to understand how identity is constructed within the contested boundaries of public and private spaces in Kampong Glam. Identity in Singapore is often understood in racial terms based on paternal ancestry, and is categorised into four main racial groups that consists of the Chinese, Malay, Indian and Other that includes a significant proportion of Eurasians. However, racial constructs are only one of the many different ways in which identity can be formulated. In postcolonial studies, like those of Homi K. Bhabha, identity is recognised as part of a continually developing whereby its definition depends on spatial, temporal and social dimensions.

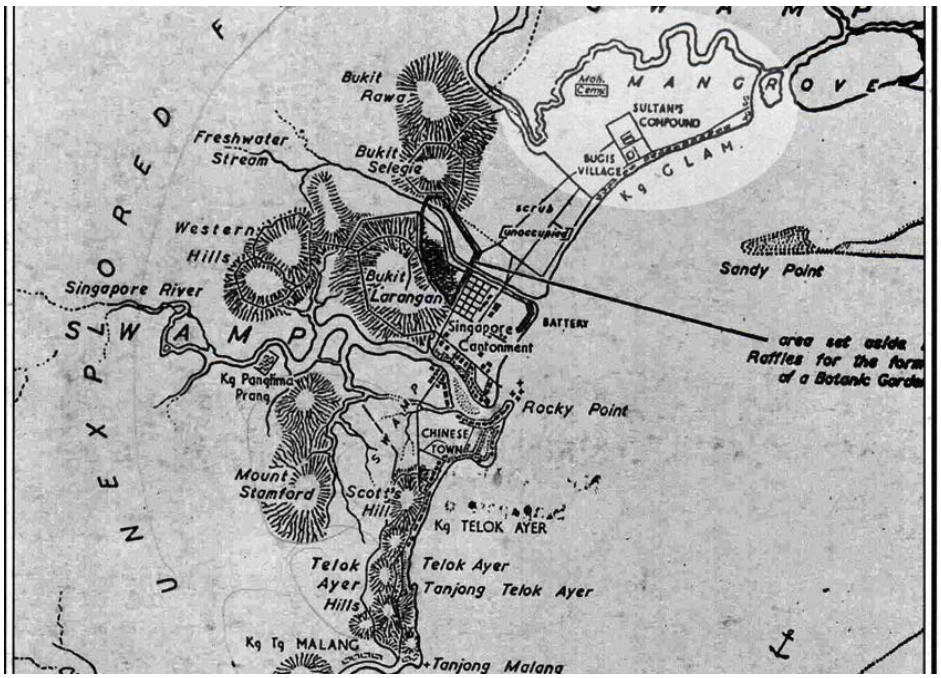

Figure 1 Location of Kampong Glam on the Raffles' Town Plan from 1823-33

Kampong Glam was chosen as the site for investigation in this paper because it presently exhibits the dilemma of identities within; be it of the local Malays, Muslims, or the shoppers along Haji Lane and Arab Street. The site was deemed as the original residential area for Malay king and his family and quickly became a popular place for trading activities due to its proximity to the sea and the presence of prominent merchants in the early 1880s.[1] Contrary to popular belief, Kampong Glam contained a diverse community, though the presence of Sultan Mosque, Malabar Mosque and Hajjah Fatimah Mosque indicated the predominance of a Muslim community. Not long after it was founded and officiated as a Muslim settlement by Raffles in 1823, there was a population of Chinese, Indians, Boyanese, Javanese and a small group of Arabs living and working together.[2] Even though the name *kampong* suggests a laid-back residential slum area, the converse is true in this scenario. Kampong Glam was a self-contained entrepôt town, where people carried out their businesses with foreigners and daily activities.[3] In addition, traders would often visit Kampong Glam for various goods and services, such as cloth, perfumes, religious Muslim items, and was recognised as an important Islamic hub that catered for pilgrimage services during the Haj. It was not until the early 1960s that the process of urban renewal was carried out. Resident communities were slowly driven out in stages and high-rise towers such as the Gateway and Golden Landmark and the Crawford Housing Estate were built replacing the existing shophouses for economic purposes.

As a result of urban renewal, the site area of Kampong Glam has been drastically reduced to less than a third of its original size and the remaining shophouses have been gazetted within

[1] Jane Perkins, *Kampong Glam: Spirit of a Community* (Singapore: NUS Press, 1985) p.13.
[2] Tania Li, 'The Formation of the Singapore Malay Community', in Tania Li (ed.) *Malays in Singapore: Culture, Economy and Ideology* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1989) pp.93-8.
[3] Rahil Ismail, 'Ramadan and Bussorah Street: the spirit of place', *GeoJournal*, v.66 n.3 (Dec 2006) pp.244.

the conservation area.[4] While streets such as Jalan Pinang and Pisang, Bussorah, Baghdad and Arab Street still remain popularly visited by Muslim families, it is perhaps due to its proximity to the Sultan Mosque that the community and their activities still continue to flourish around that area. However, other streets remain deserted with nondescript shops such as nightclubs and some are far removed from the history of Kampong Glam, where historical trades and occupants have been evicted. While new shops have been introduced as an attempt to revitalise the area, their inability to respond to the heritage of the place has led to the appearance of new forms of identities and communities. The influence of these new shops will be discussed in Chapter 2 and 3.

This dissertation also seeks to put forward a critical view of URA's establishment of Kampong Glam as a site of heritage and history. Through the process of urban renewal, streets have been cleaned; dilapidated buildings such as the shophouses and the Istana compound were restored to habitable conditions. Although the physical landscape of Kampong Glam has been reconditioned, residents who formed the nucleus of the place were evicted in the 1960s to various HDB apartments situated nearby.[5] Furthermore while shophouses were released for retail space, the Istana was converted to a Malay Heritage Centre that aimed to 'capture the essence of Malay history'.[6] This not only misrepresents the cosmopolitan history of Kampong Glam, but also contributes contentious identities onto the site.

As Kampong Glam has its meanings reinvented and is introduced with new ones, the first chapter shall seek to understand the operational aspects of forming an identity, namely

[4] Imran bin Tajudeen, 'State Constructs of Ethnicity in the Reinvention of Malay-Indonesian Heritage in Singapore', in *Folio 08* (May 2008) p.166.
[5] Perkins, *Kampong Glam: Spirit of a Community*, p.55.
[6] 'Urban Redevelopment Authority', *http://www.ura.gov.sg/rediscover/images/wmKampongGlam-Book.pdf* (accessed 5 May 2008)

through mandated official narratives and through the experience of everyday activities within the site of Kampong Glam. This study will be based on the pedagogical (mandated) and the performative (user informed) identities as postulated by Homi K. Bhabha. In addition, this analysis will focus on monuments such as the Sultan Mosque and the Malay Heritage Centre, as well as the outlying areas where many spill-over activities of the Malay and Muslim users take place.

The second chapter turns its attention towards the understanding of how space is appropriated and imbued with identity of its users within the public shopping spaces of Arab Street and Haji Lane and Bali Lane. This section will introduce and ground the theory of the public sphere by Jürgen Habermas, a German philosopher and critical theorist who initiated the discourse of the public sphere, which in this dissertation, is represented through acts of dress, movement and attitude in the streets of Kampong Glam. These two shopping spaces are representative of the paradoxical notion of how spaces of shopping, while understood as public entities, can transform and turn inward on themselves, forming private spaces that are atypical of shopping spaces in the likes of the ubiquitous shopping centres in Singapore. In addition, this chapter will put forward multiple ways of understanding site and the identity that it is typically bound by, liberating Kampong Glam from the regimented control of its identity; that is through the idea of femininity, a concept that is thought of as incongruent to the masculine and patriarchal image of the religious site.

The third and final chapter turns back towards the spaces engaged by the Malays and Muslims, this time through the contested spaces of the Malay and Muslim cemeteries, as well as the Aljunied *Madrasah*. While recognised within the Malay community as historically valuable, these spaces have ironically been left out of the conservation development by the

planning authorities. Thus this chapter tries to understand the impact this new intervention has on the people in Kampong Glam. In addition, even though the racial construct of the Malays has been a colonial one, the urban redevelopments within Kampong Glam have further signified the need to understand and promote sensitivity to their threatened and fragile identities.

The methodology used in this dissertation will be based on physical elements such as buildings and spaces within Kampong Glam. In addition, groups of people, such as shoppers along Arab Street and Malay communal gatherings at coffee-shops in Bussorah Street will be studied through various site observations and visits. These observations will be interpreted together with the theories and concepts of the various academics cited to form new interpretations of identity on site. In addition, this dissertation proposes an interdisciplinary approach that employs and develops fields of inquiry such as post-colonialism, feminism, public sphere and spaces, ethnic and racial socio-political constructs. These investigations are not taken to be remote to the field of architecture; they too form queries into the study of space as well as the activities that are within it. These concepts in fact help specify and direct discussions of the multi-faceted identities in Kampong Glam.

While it is acknowledged that Kampong Glam is inherently a place that has much cultural meaning that may not be fully recorded in books and articles, and that I as a writer and researcher do not directly identify with the Malay and Muslim community, I hope that the fresh perspective I bring will allow for new interpretations, hence allow new meanings and identities to emerge within the historical space of Kampong Glam.

Figure 2: Clockwise from top right – The original Sultan Mosque (Undated. Before 1924), the present Sultan Mosque in 2007, the newly refurbished Malay Heritage Centre in 2008, Istana Kampong Glam in 2004 before refurbishment

This chapter will introduce and discuss the concepts of the pedagogical and the performative as postulated by cultural theorist Homi K. Bhabha. In this context, he questions the complexity of identity positions, which he postulates is situated between the nominal (named and prescribed) and experiential (performed) notions of identity. This chapter will focus on 'DissemiNation: Time, narrative and the margins of the modern nation', an article within his book 'The Location of Culture'. Subsequently, I will explore how his theory may enable one to critically assess the problematic issue of identity within the religious and cultural realm of Kampong Glam.

In 'Ramadan and Bussorah Street: The Spirit of Place' Rahil Ismail expresses that Muslim-Malays renew their sense of identity by visiting the place which symbolises their definition of

identity. This is especially heightened when they used to shop for food at makeshift food stalls along Bussorah Street during the *Ramadan* period. *Ramadan* takes place on the ninth month of the Muslim calendar, during which Muslims perform day fasts. This obligatory fast is preparatory to *Hari Raya Puasa*, a celebration of fasting and a time to renew relationships with people.

While communal gatherings are an important part of the festivities, Ismail also states that the identity of Kampong Glam is premised on Islam, and is reinforced through the physical build-up of the place. This comprises the Sultan Mosque and the relevant Muslim merchant trades, *madrasahs* (Muslim schools), the *Istana* (Malay Palace, now the Malay Heritage Centre), and the burial grounds. These spaces and buildings are held as signifiers of the Muslim and Malay identities and group belonging. However, while the physicality of objects is representational of one's identity, he also acknowledges that the activities of shopping for food in a bazaar and interaction with people of similar identities reaffirms one's identification with a place: - 'Having a certain identity – ethnic or cultural is supported in large part if there are spaces or places in which one can meet others of a similar identity and social background who can affirm this identity'.[7]

This pattern in turn relates to the concept of identification by Richard Jenkins, who states that there is no specific means of defining what identity is except through the process of identification.[8] By identification, Jenkins suggests that identity is continually being reassessed and therefore it should avoid reification or fixity. Similarly, he states this concept through two terms, nominal and virtual identification; where the former is acquired through the cumulative process of labelling and the latter is defined as what 'nominal identification

[7] Rahil Ismail, 'Ramadan and Bussorah Street: the spirit of place', *GeoJourna*l, v.66 n.3 (Dec 2006) p.246.
[8] Richard Jenkins, *Social Identity* (London: Routledge, 2004).

[would mean] experientially and practically over time to its bearer'.[9] This dual-processed identification is thus linked to Ismail's observation where Muslim shoppers reinforce their identity as Muslims during the fasting season. Not only is Bussorah Street distinguished during Ramadan, but the continual habits of gathering at a fixed location and time strengthens the shoppers' identity as Muslims. Identities are further heightened as these activities are carried out within the proximity of the Sultan Mosque, an important Muslim landmark and within Kampong Glam itself, the first Muslim enclave in Singapore.

Of Pedagogy and the Performative

Bhabha's work argues for the redefinition of our current knowledge of identity formation, particularly in postmodern and postcolonial locations such as Singapore and the Southeast Asian region where colonial mindsets have confronted traditional practices and habits of identification by the locals. In the introduction of 'The Location of Culture', Bhabha sets his case for the placement of culture at the periphery or at the 'beyond', 'The in-between spaces [...] that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself'.[10] This establishes his position of the liminal, otherwise termed as the 'beyond', and is described as the in-between condition, held betwixt the authoritative and static definitions of groups of people through official narratives, and the flexibility of identity gained through the performance of everyday activities.

Bhabha's position asserts a postmodernist perspective that undermines the rules of stability and static meanings encountered in modernist and colonialist situations. He perceives modernity as problematic as it establishes itself through the use of binaries; that while it seeks to be stable, it in fact requires the presence of an 'Other' to support its definition. The

[9] Jenkins, *Social Identity*, p.7.
[10] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (Oxon: Routledge, 1994) p.2.

Other is often singled out as opposite to one's own identity, yet this definition is arbitrary. Both definitions of the Other and of the self are established based on each other, and thus cannot be fixed and stable. This circular reasoning highlights modernity as a shifting concept, and is therefore undermined.[11]

Likewise, the pedagogical, or the official narratives of the nation cannot be wholeheartedly subsumed as the definitive identities of groups of people. Bhabha sees that the authorities have created self-interpreted, hence imagined identities to the communities they govern. Therefore, he embraces that it is through the lived historical memory and subjectivity encountered by the subjects that have narrative authority, rather than relying solely on the problematic officiated history. As a reiteration, Bhabha sees that culture has a dual identity, one that is mandated, and the other which is constantly evoked through the performance of everyday life. The latter, otherwise known as the performative, is defined through the activities carried out by users within a place. Pedagogy can be seen as a starting point for the performative to manifest itself through the users' experience, and by means of repetition, the performative creates new definitions of identity which feedbacks to the pedagogical. Thus Bhabha seeks to restore definitions of identity, which he believes takes place ostensibly in between the pedagogical nature of state-sponsored narratives and the subjectivity in the experience of peoples' everyday lives.

Bhabha's work is necessary to my research paper as the investigation he sets up corresponds to the issues Kampong Glam is facing today. The place has been imposed with inconsistent identity themes by the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) of Singapore, expressed through the renewal of the former Istana as the grounds of the new Malay Heritage Centre

[11]Bhabha, *The Location of Culture,* p.208.

(MHC), as well as through various publications such as pamphlets and website material from the Singapore Tourism Board (STB).[12] The presence of the heritage centre is ironic, it acknowledges the existence of the Malay community in Kampong Glam; yet ignores the cosmopolitanism of the area, where the presence of other cultural groups such as the Arabs and Indians has been plainly overlooked.[13] The authorities have therefore oversimplified Kampong Glam with the character of 'Malay-ness' that evidently does not dominate the site. In addition, this 'Malay-ness' is often confused with the religion of Islam. Although 85% of Muslims in Singapore are Malay[14], based on preliminary observations and casual conversations with shopkeepers on site, Kampong Glam is in fact not inherently Malay but intrinsically Muslim. However, it should be noted that all Malays are Muslims, as constituted in the requirements in being Malay in Singapore.[15] Thus, at least in this particular instance, it is possible that official narratives can be entirely confident of consistency and coherence, but is unreliable to fix the identity of a people.

The Case of Identity in the Malay / Muslim Realm

This section follows a continuation of the concept of the pedagogical and the performative within the context of Kampong Glam. It will discuss two specific landmarks on site, namely the Sultan Mosque and the MHC. These iconic landmarks serve as the basis to understand

[12] Kampong Glam has been touted as an Ethnic Quarter which boasts the likes of the Sultan Mosque, Malay Heritage Centre, as well as shopping along Arab Street and Haji Lane. See also http://www.visitsingapore.com/publish/stbportal/en/home/what_to_see/ethnic_quarters/kampong_glam.html and http://www.ura.gov.sg/circulars/text/dc08-03.htm.

[13] Many streets in Kampong Glam such as Arab Street, Bussorah Street and Baghdad Street were named after Arabian cities. This highlights the strong presence of the Arabs in the area. In addition, *madrasahs* such as the Alsagoff Arab School and the Madrasah Aljunied Al-Islamiah School were established by prominent Arab traders. See also URA, Kampong Glam Historic District (Singapore: URA, 1995) p.17.

[14] John Funston, 'Singapore', in Greg Fealy and Virginia Hooker (eds.) *Voices of Islam in Southeast Asia : A Contemporary Sourcebook* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2006), p.71.

[15] Timothy P. Banard, 'Texts, Raja Ismail and Voilence: Siak and the Transformation of Malay Identity in the Eighteenth Century', in Timothy P. Banard, *Contesting Malayness: Malay Identity Across Boundaries* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2004) p.107.

how identity is bestowed from a top-down approach and how identity is manifested through the workings of everyday life of locals and visitors to these two sites.

While there are three mosques within the district of Kampong Glam, by far the most architecturally grand in scale and design is the Sultan Mosque. Its central position offers visitors glimpses of the mosque and the approach to it is nothing short of overwhelming. The Sultan Mosque, a national monument of Singapore, was built in 1928 and designed by Denis Santry, an architect from Swan and McLaren. The architectural practice was also responsible for the Raffles Hotel and Victoria Memorial Hall. The original mosque was a three-tiered roof highly reminiscent of Malay vernacular architecture, and as its name suggests, the Sultan Mosque was built for a member of the Malay royalty, Sultan Hussain Shah of Johor.[16] The new mosque, built in the Islamic Saracenic style in 1824, features iconic architectural images of the dome, a common feature of mosques in the Middle East. The Sultan Mosque thereby transforms and reifies the Muslim identity of Kampong Glam.

Not coincidentally, the Sultan Mosque is located next to the Istana, presently known as the MHC. The Istana was a residential palace for the Malay Sultan and his family. Following the unsalvageable dilapidation of the original wooden structure, the new Istana was constructed with concrete and completed in 1843, after a commission by Sultan Hussain's son, Sultan Ali Iskandar Shah. However, the complication of succession was disputed in 1896 resulted in the acquisition of the property by the British Crown, and this property eventually became state land after Singapore's independence in 1965. The Sultan's descendents continued to stay in the Istana until 1999, when the government announced that it was to be converted to a Malay

[16] 'Sultan Mosque', http://www.islamicarchitecture.org/architecture/sultanmosque.html (accessed 8 July 2008).

Heritage Centre.[17] Unveiled in 2004, the MHC was revealed as a showcase of Malay cultural heritage depicting traditional Malay life through arts and crafts. However, detractors maintain that the MHC represents a loss of history and is a ghost of its past by its oversimplification of the Malay archipelago culture through an over-elaboration of Malay arts and literary culture, and a pandering to the tastes of foreign tourists and students on educational tours.[18]

The Sultan Mosque holds itself representative of the Islamic religion in Singapore. Its grandeur and rich history creates an iconic image that precedes the course of time. However, if the mosque were to be solely examined as an artefact, it would be likened to an object in a museum, and inadequately reflect the atmosphere of the place. Therefore it is proposed that the activities of users in and around the Sultan Mosque allow the propagation of its genuine identity. Activities such as eating, shopping and the congregation of Muslims within the vicinity of the mosque enhance the vitality of the Sultan Mosque as an effective monument, where users inform foreign visitors of the valid identities generated on site.

As previously indicated, there are two distinguished groups of people which utilise the Sultan Mosque. The first group includes the typical Muslim who goes to the mosque to pray, perhaps five times a day or during the Jumu-ah [Friday] prayer, where congregations of Muslims specifically gather to pray in a mosque.[19] In addition, it is proposed that they continually establish their identities not only through communal congregation, but also through the

[17] Zuzanita Zakaria, 'A Worldwide View to Malay Heritage', *The Straits Times*, (29 May 1999) p.63.
[18] 'Malay Heritage Centre Reviews', http://www.hsse.nie.edu.sg/staff/blackburn/MalayHeritageCentrereviews1.pdf, pp.1-12 (accessed 15 June 2008).
[19] 'The Basics of the Muslim's Prayer', http://www.sunna.info/prayer/TheBasicsoftheMuslimsPrayer.php#The%20Jumu^ah%20(Friday)%20Prayer (accessed 10 July 2008).

extended activities of eating, shopping and intermingling carried out before or after their prayers. While their dress and items purchased ground their history and cultural background, thus forming the primary basis of identification, it is not unlikely that their participation in these activities is able to reproduce their definitions of group belonging. The second group of people include curious tourists and school children on educational tours. The former having heard about the Sultan Mosque through tourist websites or through various guidebooks and pamphlets that offer suggestions to sites or places of heritage and culture, and the latter part of a series of the National Education programme, a deliberate attempt by the government to foster national pride and cohesion.[20]

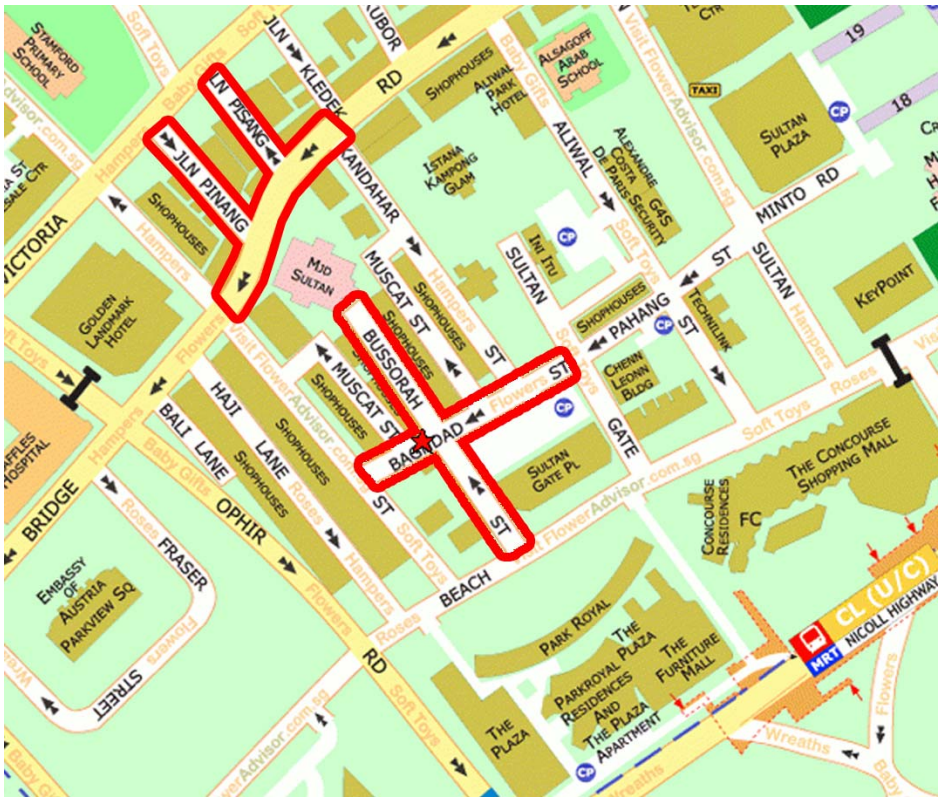

Figure 3: Map that highlights the concentration of Malay Muslim gatherings. Many of the Malay-Muslim eateries are located within the proximity of the Sultan Mosque.

[20] 'What National Education?', http://www.mindef.gov.sg/imindef/mindef_websites/topics/nexus/abt_ne/what_ne.html (accessed 13 Sept 2008)

Walking along the streets of Kampong Glam, one immediately notices the presence of Malay Muslims and their associated activities within the proximity of the Sultan Mosque, along the streets such as North Bridge Road, Jalan Pinang and Pisang and the intersection of Bussorah and Baghdad Street as in Figure 3. At first glance, men dressed in their traditional outfit of the *sarong* and *songkok*, and women in their *baju* start to differentiate the intrinsic atmosphere of Kampong Glam.[21] Visitors to the site would be able to perceive close interaction shared among the Muslim-Malays. This situation is unique to Kampong Glam, where time slows down and the atmosphere in these eateries is reminiscent of domestic communal gatherings of the home. It is in these places where traditional food, dress and methods of eating, such as using bare hands to eat rice and other spicy side dishes served on a banana leaf, serve up as an authenticated experience, a live demonstration where uninhibited behaviour of local Malays is revealed, as opposed to staged performances held in the MHC. To tourists, this could be reminiscent of the bohemian groups gathering in cafes in Europe.[22] It was in these seemingly-public cafes that exclusive groups of the newly-rich literati could congregate and discuss political thought and situations. However what is distinct about these Malay eateries is that visitors are welcome to eat and observe them. Thus the performance of the communal activities of the Malays within the proximity of the Sultan Mosque allows others to immerse themselves within their culture; such is the power of the performative.

Unlike the Sultan Mosque, the former Istana has been less fortunate in the preservation of its original use and is currently known as the Malay Heritage Centre. Part of the objectives of the

[21] A *sarong* is a long and loose wrap skirt worn by men. 'Webster's Online Dictionary', http://www.websters-online-dictionary.org/definition/sarong (accessed 10 Sept 2008).
A *songkok* is a Malay male head-dress. 'Webster's Online Dictionary', http://www.websters-online-dictionary.org/translation/songkok (accessed on 10 July 2008).
Baju is also a Malay term for clothes. 'Webster's Online Dictionary', http://www.websters-online-dictionary.org/translation/Malay/baju (accessed on 10 July 2008).
[22] Elizabeth Wilson, 'The Cafe: The Ultimate Bohemian Space', Iain Borden, Joe Kerr, Alicia Pivaro, Jane Rendell (eds.), *Strangely Familiar: Narratives of Architecture in the City* (London: Routledge, 1996).

MHC was 'to preserve Malay cultural heritage by striving to explore, trace, research, preserve and present the origins and evolution of the community's rich cultural heritage locally, regionally and internationally', as well as '[t]o become the point of reference for the Malay community, especially for the younger generation, to identify themselves in the context of multi-racial Singapore'.[23] While efforts to preserve and showcase the Malay cultural heritage ought to be lauded, the failure of Malay Heritage Foundation to understand and realise that most Malays in fact feel more connected to Geylang Serai is disappointing to say the least. Located at a far distance towards the North-east of Kampong Glam, Geylang Serai is admittedly 'the cultural heart of the Malay community in Singapore' according to the Singapore Tourism Board (STB).[24] Therefore it is controversial that the STB and MHF decided to locate the MHC in Kampong Glam, an area that is physically distanced and unrecognised as an identifiable Malay area. In addition, many visitors familiar with the Malay history of Singapore are appalled by the overemphasis or insubstantial aspects of its past, such as the nation's former glory as a hub for Malay literature and culture and the considerable disregard of the relationship Singapore once shared with Malaysia.[25] This suggests that the MHC is representative of the pedagogy of government boards, whose attempts to craft a national identity specifically for Singaporean-Malays have exposed the danger of official narratives. While it is important for Singapore to maintain harmony among its multicultural groups, the misrepresentation of national history in the MHC could at worse, be detrimental to the

[23] 'Malay Heritage Centre', http://www.malayheritage.org.sg/about_us_objectives.html (accessed 3 June 2008). For an elaboration, see Chapter 2 of this dissertation.
[24] 'Uniquely Singapore: Geylang Serai', http://www.visitsingapore.com/publish/stbportal/en/home/what_to_see/ethnic_quarters/geyland_serai.html (accessed 10 July 2008).
[25] Malaysia's history with Singapore is important as not only was the latter part of the former's formation before 1965, but that much of its history, such as the lineage of the Malay Sultans and historical figures such as Hang Tuah and P. M. Ramlee, were based in Malaysia. 'Identity and Heritage: Kampong Glam and Geylang Serai', http://www.hsse.nie.edu.sg/staff/blackburn/IdentityandHeritageKampongGlamGeylangSerai.html (accessed 28 April 2008).

identity of the Malays. It also highlights the top-down approach towards conservation, represented through the guidelines published by the URA, where attention has been veered towards the maintenance of the shophouses rather than considering the lived histories of its occupants.[26] The inadequate decision-making process can be likened to Bhabha's theory of the pedagogical, where authorities mandate the official narratives of the nation, which in this example does not satisfactorily respond to the history of the site. This situation thus presents the limitations of pedagogical authority and the possible exclusivity it creates as a result of the lack of input from the users.

This chapter discussed how both pedagogical and performative aspects of identity can exist in Kampong Glam through the specific examples of the Sultan Mosque and the MHC. Through this discussion, I suggest that the pedagogical in Kampong Glam can exist in two forms, on the one hand it is necessarily forced, as in the case of the MHC, and on the other hand, it is subtly implied and is reflexive with the performative activities of the Malays near the Sultan Mosque. I believe that the latter allows for greater flexibility and acceptance by its users and thus creates more permeability between the boundaries of official and experienced narratives. The pedagogical also tends to be criticised especially when it is insensitive to the needs of people, particularly so when voices of dissent in Singapore are both suppressed and oppressed, as seen in the MHC through the eviction of its occupants and the misrepresentation of Malay history. Thus while the official narrative is a necessary tool as a starting point for the formation of identities, it should not be established in a dictatorial manner. In addition, the performance of peoples' activities also allows for identities to reiterate and re-establish itself for the benefit of the performers as well as visitors who attempt to shop for and experience for themselves the identities of the observed. This is

[26] URA, *Historic Districts: Conservation Guidelines for Kampong Glam Conservation Area* (URA, 1991). See also URA, *Kampong Glam Historic District* (URA, 1995).

perhaps the lure of authentic heritage sites, where real life performances dictate and formulate identities. These performances ought to be recognisably genuine; they are not devised by planning authorities, nor presented as biased history, as represented by parts of Kampong Glam.

Figure 4: Small stretch of Haji Lane and typical shop fronts and merchandise sold in Haji Lane

This chapter shifts the analysis from shopping spaces to physical landmarks. It focuses on identity within the public sphere and femininity through the act of shopping in Kampong Glam. This section is features two distinct shopping streets namely Arab Street and, Haji Lane and Bali Lane. They are essential to the critical discussion of identity. This investigation examines two groups of people, namely, shoppers along Arab Street and local youths in Haji Lane and Bali Lane. Their various systems of dress, movement, modes of consumption, frequented places and adopted attitudes within Kampong Glam will be discussed.

The theory of the public sphere was initiated by Jürgen Habermas, a German philosopher whose idea has gained much recognition in social politics. I will attempt to ground his theory vis-a-vis the two distinctive shopping sites and review its contribution to the formulation of identity though the process of shopping. This chapter will also uncover feminine identities of

Kampong Glam that may be concealed because of overt emphasis on natural or invented identities created by various governmental bodies.

Shopping is a recreational pastime carried out during one's leisure time, and is involves the act of self-indulgence, the purveyance and to a certain extent, the purchase of goods and services. The experience of the shopper also involves walking along shopping spaces like streets lined with shops, encountering shop front signage, and the informal interaction with shopkeepers in places like Arab Street. However, this list is non-exhaustive but more importantly, shopping involves interaction among strangers. Despite their unfamiliarity, they can still acknowledge one another through the appearance of dress. Dress might amplify their beliefs and reflect one's self identity. This implies that dress is not merely covering over the body, but acts as a statement of identity, as an individual or part of a social group. It is proposed that identity is actively procured and continually re-established in the context of Kampong Glam. This definition of shopping is reminiscent of Rem Koolhaas' observation that shopping in Asian cities is different from the West. Shopping – 'in the Asian context not a simple consumerist frenzy but an authentic essence of urban life, its equipment Asia's equivalent of the agora'.[27] He states that shopping is an urban activity that is absolutely essential as a way of public urban life. While Koolhaas does not elaborate on his observation, this chapter also seeks to understand how this may be validated in Kampong Glam.

While shopping is still commonly held within shopping centres today, the shopping landscape in Singapore has slowly deviated from the shopping centre prototype over the past few years. New locations and types of shops that deviate from the logics of mass production and

[27] Rem Koolhaas, 'Singapore Songlines : Portrait of a Potemkin Metropolis… or Thirty Years of Tabula Rasa', pp. 1009 – 87, in Chuihua Judy Chung, Jeffrey Inaba, Rem Koolhaas, Sze Tsung Leong (eds.), *Harvard Design School Guide to Shopping,* (Taschen 2002) p.1051.

capitalism have emerged in the most unconventional places, like people's homes, clubs, and museums. These include temporary shopping locations which are more transient than their shopping centre counterparts and have been popularised recently. They include places like the Red Dot Museum, Zouk and St. James Powerhouse, and the traditional outdoor flea markets at Sungei Road. The former typify the modern flea market, with entrepreneurial stall-holders promoting their self-labelled handmade merchandise and occasionally, handcrafted products from overseas and have been popularized in the past few years. These may be open only monthly to once in three months and are typically held during weekends. This new form of shopping has also been introduced in permanent fixtures in offbeat locations such as Haji Lane in Kampong Glam, or Erskine Road at Ann Siang Hill. Both are located in former shophouse residential districts, each with their unique historical background. These new shopping places tend to be frequented by younger groups of people who pursue shopping experiences that deviate from the norm of capitalism and mass consumption. Although Kampong Glam has recently been injected with these new forms of shopping, particularly along Haji Lane and Bali Lane, traditional forms of shopping still remain in places like Arab Street where shops continue to sell imported cloth, clothes and traditional weaved baskets.

Although this form of alternative shopping has gained popularity, its presence still dwarfs the long-established shopping centre. Today's shopping culture is represented by an international brand name on a piece of clothing or shopping bag, and affordability precedes the quality of goods. This adheres to the Western ideology of consumerism. Formal sales assistants behave like surveillance units with shoppers being treated as homogenous economic entities. Additionally, shopping centres and retailers capitalise on crafting specific identities of consumers according to their age group, social hierarchy, spending power and

fashion choices.[28] This oversimplification of the identity of consumers result in shoppers themselves eventually conforming to the identity projected by the retailers. It is anticipated that such generalisations are not as prevalent in this new shopping culture, where the identity of users are more genuine and reflexive. Shoppers are able to interact with shopkeepers and fellow shoppers to form new spaces within the shopping site. Furthermore, the recent resurgence of informal settings in shops allows closer interactions between buyer and seller emphasizes their difference from shopping centres of today.

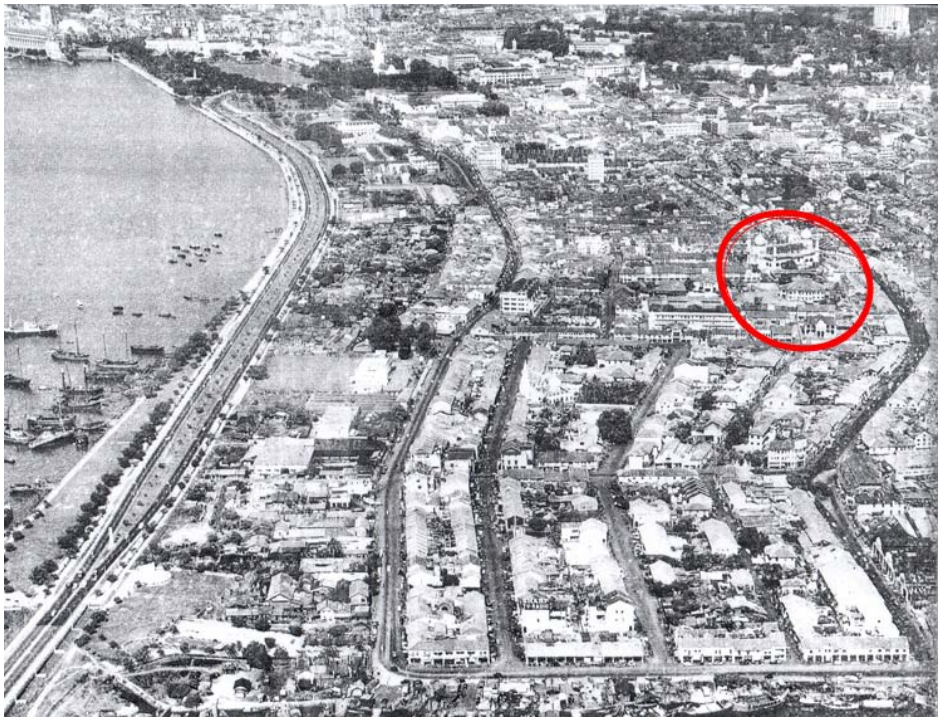

Figure 5: Aerial View of Kampong Glam, with the Sultan Mosque and Istana (circled)
[Undated. Probably taken during the early 1900s.]

Arab Street remains one of the few places in Kampong Glam where the original trades of the merchandise of cloth and woven baskets continue. These shops were set up during the colonial era, during the entrepôt trade where the proximity of the harbour and the presence

[28] See Sean Nixon, 'Have You Got the Look: Masculinities and Shopping Spectacle', in Rob Shields (ed.), *Lifestyle Shopping: The Subject of Consumption*, (London: Routledge, 1992) pp.149-69. This chapter analyses how Topman and Davies, two international-brands create images for consumer purchase.

of the Sultan and Arab merchants acted as incentives for Muslim merchants to set up shop. Despite extensive urban revitalisation over the past decade, Arab Street has remained relatively unchanged, save for the few new food businesses that have recently entered the market. Shopkeepers encounter a balance of local shoppers and tourists, many of whom desire to experience the 'sights, sounds and smells' of an authentic heritage experience. The locals who visit tend to be regulars and are mostly Muslim-Malay women, purchasing fabrics for their *baju kurung.*[29]

Haji Lane and Bali Lane situated at the fringes of Kampong Glam, are seemingly detached from the rest of the area. The presence of new types of shops that over the past few years further emphasises the detachment of the two streets from the rest of its locality. Additionally, a new group of shoppers who deviate from the Malay / Muslim stereotype of Kampong Glam intensifies its distinction from the rest of Kampong Glam. These new shops, while pandering to the tastes and fashion of youths, are atypical of the international brand names commonly seen in most Singapore shopping centres. The shops here subscribe to the independent movement that defies capitalist schemes of mass production. Although items promoted may costlier, the exclusivity of the number of pieces sold and the occasional handmade feature of the products give these shops an edge over the typical brand-name store. Moreover, the *sheesha*[30] cafes with an informal outdoor seating arrangement add to the relaxed atmosphere that is distinctive from the formal humdrum of shopping centres. This further illustrates Koolhaas' statement of the uniqueness of Asian shopping; epitomised by the youths within Haji Lane, where shopping spaces are turned to public spaces where people gather.

[29] A traditional Malay female costume consists of a long tunic and an ankle-length skirt. 'Baju Kurung: The Traditional Malay Female Costume', http://www.pahang-delights.com/baju-kurung.html (accessed 26 July 2008). In addition, this statement is based on observations of the writer and interviews with shopkeepers while on site visits.

[30] Sheesha, also known as *hookah*, is a process where 'water-cooled, flavoured tobacco' is smoked through a filter apparatus. 'Hookah', http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/h2g2/A987825 (accessed 20 July 2008).

The Public Sphere

The idea of the public sphere was established in the Western context of the agora, a Roman marketplace that supported a proliferation of opinions of various people, through which the concept of democracy and free speech developed. Habermas proposed that the public sphere is 'a discursive space in which individuals and groups congregate to discuss matters of mutual interest and, where possible, to reach a common judgment',[31] whereby the critical opinion of the public could challenge or verify and consequently aid the formulation of policies or laws. This democratic connection between the state and its people shifts political power 'from a repressive mode of domination to a hegemonic one'.[32] Initially placed during the emergence of a new civic society in the 18th century with the phenomenal rise of the bourgeois society in literary circles, the agora took the form of coffeehouses and salons in Britain and France. There, groups of people could freely discuss political issues. Furthermore, opinions were disseminated through newspapers.

Habermas' original theory is nonetheless without its critics and he later acknowledged that it had to be refined to remain relevant. Gerard Hauser also observed that public spheres ought to have been formed around the dialogue of subject matter, rather than the identity of peoples engaging in the discourse.[33] This perspective was based on the observation that the bourgeois tended to construct exclusionary cliques of membership rather than the inclusive public which was originally intended. This development highlighted the need for more permeable boundaries among different groups of people.

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[31] Gerard Hauser, 'Vernacular Dialogue and the Rhetoricality of Public Opinion', *Communication Monographs,* n.65 v.2 (June 1998) pp.83-107.
[32] Hauser, 'Vernacular Dialogue and the Rhetoricality of Public Opinion' (June 1998) p.85.
[33] Hauser, 'Vernacular Dialogue and the Rhetoricality of Public Opinion' (June 1998) p.93.

Due to the difficulty in grounding Habermas' work to a specific site, David Harvey's analysis of the public sphere and public bohemian space in relation to Baron Georges-Eugène Haussmann's urban planning policy of Paris during the mid 19th century is critical.[34] In 'The Political Economy of Public Space', Harvey demonstrated that public space, contrary to Habermas' philosophy, is a space of exclusion, where the association of self to a specific space carries a weight of political association and meaning.[35] Accordingly, Habermas' public sphere should not be considered as an inclusive whole, but composed of exclusionary memberships, of which people of similar backgrounds and social standings are enlisted through the places they encounter. Public spaces may not be homogenous entities that act as sites of exchange, but are heterogeneous micro-sites that are actively defined by their user groups.

Additionally, Harvey's study resembles Jane Rendell's examination of urban users such as the Georgian Rambler and Cyprian. She developed a new method of understanding the city of London in the 17th century.[36] While Harvey's work resonates with the political dimension of class systems, Rendell focuses on gender relations and the movement of the users within the city. Both examinations inevitably propose new ways of analysing the city and the resultant identification with particular spaces through the processes of urban reconstruction or the emancipation of women in the city.

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[34] Marshall Soules, 'Jürgen Habermas and the Public Sphere', http://records.viu.ca/~soules/media301/habermas.htm accessed (17July 2008).

[35] David Harvey, 'The Political Economy of Public Space', http://davidharvey.org/media/public.pdf (accessed 20 June 2008) p.1.

[36] Jane Rendell, '"Bazaar Beauties" or "Pleasure Is Our Pursuit": A Spatial Story of Exchange', in Iain Borden, Joe Kerr, Jane Rendell, Alicia Pivaro (eds.) *The Unknown City*: Contesting Architecture and Social Space, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2001) pp.104-19. See also, Jane Rendell, 'Ramblers and Cyprians: Mobility, Visuality and the Gendering of Architectural Space', in Louise Durning, Richard Wrigley (eds.) *Gender and Architecture* (West Sussex, England: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2000) pp.135-53.

Although Singaporeans are deprived of free speech, the nation-state arguably could not have attained present day standards of living if it adopted Western political policies.[37] It is through the processes of rapid modernisation and governance that most of our public speech acts have been comparatively muted and resultantly, induced a climate of fear and suppression, where people are afraid to voice their comments because of the risk of fines or jail terms.[38] It is proposed that other forms of public speech acts may be made through the modes of dress, movements and their attitudes during the performative act of shopping in the specific sites of Arab Street, Haji Lane and its sister Bali Lane.

Shopping at Arab Street, Haji Lane and Bali Lane bear much similarity in the sense of exclusion created. While many shopkeepers at Arab Street are categorically Muslim-Indian, Arab or Malay, their traditional ensemble of the *sarong* and Muslim skullcap amplifies the distinctiveness of the place. Furthermore, local women who adorn the *baju kurung* typify female shoppers along Arab Street and those who look otherwise may be prone to inflated prices by shrewd shopkeepers. These factors create the impression of being in a foreign place if one does not look or dress the part, which applies to both local shoppers and foreign tourists. Inevitably, they become shoppers of another kind; their primary purpose is to shop for culture, while secondarily, they shop for objects associated with the culture.

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[37] See Clause 14: Freedom of speech, assembly and association, '*Constitution of the Republic of Singapore: Part IV, Fundamental Liberties*', http://statutes.agc.gov.sg/non_version/cgi-bin/cgi_getdata.pl?actno=1999-REVED-CONST&doctitle=CONSTITUTION+OF+THE+REPUBLIC+OF+SINGAPORE%0A&date=latest&method=part&segid=931158659-000271 (accessed on 13 Sept 2008). Despite the right to free speech as stated in Clause 14(1), it carries with it restrictions imposed by law, with 'the interest of the security of Singapore' as expressed in Clause 14(2). See also Section 2 Respect for Civil Liberties, Including: Freedom of Speech and Press, '*Singapore*', http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2003/27788.htm (accessed 13 Sept 2008). Many foreign newspapers have also highlighted the Republic's notorious suppression of free speech acts.

[38] See case of Chee Soon Juan, a member of the opposition who was jailed and fined in separate occasions for speaking out on sensitive issues. Section 2 Respect for Civil Liberties, Including: Freedom of Speech and Press, '*Singapore*', http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2003/27788.htm (accessed 13 Sept 2008).

Similarly, Haji Lane and Bali Lane exude the presence and vibe of a different subculture and projects itself as a hidden fashionable playground for youths who seek shelter from societal conformity and the chaos of overcrowded shopping centres in Singapore. Both streets turn inward on themselves; even though Bali Lane is situated along a main road, it is distanced from the heavy vehicular traffic along Ophir Road by a broad pedestrian walkway, a narrow one-way road fronting the shophouses, and the sheltered five-foot walkway further buffers public scrutiny. Haji Lane is located parallel to Bali Lane and the shophouses are situated back to back with both Bali Lane and Arab Street (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Layout of streets of Arab Street, Haji Lane and Bali Lane and the adjacent shophouses. Drawing by writer based on URA, *Historic Districts: Conservation Guidelines for Kampong Glam Conservation Area* (URA, 1991).

A small narrow lane acts as an imaginary gateway along the length of multiple rows of shophouses, separating the area from the busy Arab Street. This composition of the physical boundary of Haji and Bali Lane culminates in a sheltered 'public' space that the youths relate to. Spatial factors aside, eclecticism is key to describe the two lanes. The convergence of traditional shophouses and modern interiors create an unusual synergy that is unique in Singapore. It combines the typical Singaporean pastime of shopping yet devoid of the mad

rush for the satisfaction of materialism. The youths in their undisturbed state of relaxation, epitomise the conflict against the modus operandi of the State, of unbridled efficiency and productivity. Curious tourists to Haji Lane are spectators, much like invited guests in an aboriginal village; visitation is welcomed but assimilation is near impossible. The sense of alienation is even more pronounced with the presence of a curious *makcik* who has inadvertently wandered into the private playground of the youth. Thus the chill-out character of Haji Lane and its sister Bali Lane create a public space that is both public because anyone has physical access to it, but it behaves also as a private sphere whereby a select few are entitled to.

The presence of these offbeat shops that merchandise non-commercial clothes and other lifestyle products is distinctively atypical within the general context of Kampong Glam. The historical Muslim dominance of the area has been adjusted to fit the influx of new groups of people and trades. In contrast to religious codes of conduct, men and women dressed in secular fashions are free to interact with one another. However, the presence of these new shops and people can be arguably accepted; the two streets are not clearly connected to the rest of Kampong Glam and the contemporary shop fronts are concealed from sight.

Analogous to the *makcik* at Arab Street, the youth at Haji Lane may dress in the current fashion trend such as skinny jeans and a tight t-shirt top with a coordinated cardigan and overload on accessories such as leather wristbands, thick-framed glasses and fedora hats. While they each strive to be unique, the youths inevitable and ironically end up looking alike, signifying current fashion trends. However, their overwhelming presence institutes a dress code that is unavoidably established with Haji Lane. While addressing the issue of dress, I

shift focus to the additional layers of identity that can be discussed within the feminine realm in Kampong Glam.

Shopping and Femininity

Femininity, within the realm of shopping is often conceived relative to the masculine gaze, and women are treated as objects of observation from the opposite sex.[39] It is also commonly associated with shopping, spanning from the 1850s with the Parisian arcades to the department stores in North America. This section aims to avoid the stereotype of the spectacle and gaze by applying the notions of femininity in relation to dress codes and atmospheres created through shopping in Kampong Glam.

This chapter focuses on the feminine through the gendering of spaces through use and function.[40] According to Rendell, 'specific places may be "sexed" according to the biological sex of the people who occupy them, or gendered according to the "gender" associated with the different kinds of activities which occur in them'.[41] Therefore through the context of shopping and the various leisurely activities in Kampong Glam, we shall understand how these activities uncover the complex identities on site. Additionally, femininity is typically associated with ideas of private spaces such as the home, as well as notions of pleasure and indeterminacy, applicable to the context of Kampong Glam.[42] Another aspect of femininity is the adornment of objects by the people who consume them. This concept is revealed by Pasi Falk, who pointed out that the most important aspect of shopping is to express your own identity while

[39] Jane Rendell, '"Bazaar Beauties" or "Pleasure Is Our Pursuit": A Spatial Story of Exchange', in Iain Borden, Joe Kerr, Jane Rendell, Alicia Pivaro (eds.) *The Unknown City: Contesting Architecture and Social Space*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2001)p.109.
[40] Jane Rendell, 'Introduction: "Gender, Space"', in Jane Rendell, Barbara Penner and Iain Borden (eds.) *Gender Space Architecture: An Interdisciplinary Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2000) p.101.
[41] Rendell, 'Introduction: "Gender, Space"', p. 101.
[42] Rendell, Penner and Borden (eds.), *Gender Space Architecture* (Routledge, 2000).

encountering other shoppers.[43] The issue of dress is also further emphasized by Lauren Langman who suggests the Marxist idea of the 'commodified self-presentations', where 'goods become integral aspects of self-expression' and that fashion, or dress-codes have become signifiers of self-identity which is validated by other shoppers.[44] The notion of identity through the adornment of objects is also reiterated via the process of wearing traditional garments such as the *baju kurung* among Malay-Muslim women, or the eclectic street wear of the youth along Haji and Bali Lane. While their attire may be accepted out of the context of Kampong Glam, their identity within their familiar shopping places in Kampong Glam is especially heightened in the course of the purchase of clothes, accessories during their shopping visits.

Additionally, dress-codes in Kampong Glam further compound femininity and of shopping on site through an extended study on the *baju kurung*. Typically accompanied with the *tudung* (headscarf), this traditional Malay dress is recognised as compliance to Allah's law, or s*haria* law, and is representative of a woman's modesty.[45] Ironically, within the context of Singapore, although modesty is maintained through extensive coverage afforded by the garments, it is juxtaposed with brightly patterned textiles and jewellery adornment typically worn by Malay ladies. This illustrates the leisurely pursuits of shopping where women dress up to be seen, but ultimately weakens the patriarchal overtones of Islam on site. Thus liberal and modern dress codes serve to complicate and intensify the varied identities of Kampong Glam.

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[43] Pasi Falk, Colin Campbell (eds.) *The Shopping Experience* (London: Sage Publications, 1997) p.39.
[44]Lauren Langman, 'Neon Cages: Shopping for Subjectivity', in Rob Shields (ed.), *Lifestyle Shopping: The Subject of Consumption*, (London: Routledge, 1992) p.61.
[45] Greg Fealy and Virginia Hooker (eds.), *Voices of Islam in Southeast Asia : A Contemporary Sourcebook* (Singapore, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2006), pp.327-8. The *sharia* law is a code of law based on the Koran, a book of sacred literature of the Muslims.

On the subject of the *tudung* or the veil, Zeynep Celik, an architectural historian has uncovered how the West differentiates Eastern cultures through inferior analogies.[46] Orientalism was fashioned in the 19th century, through which the image of the Muslim woman was developed as an 'Other' and based on highly sexualised clichés through portrayals in their dress.[47] In Singapore, the *tudung* has been glorified as an object that imparts 'strength and motivat[ion]' for women to be 'progressive'.[48] Women who have chosen to adorn the *tudung* make a lifetime commitment of wearing it in public and it acts as a conscious reminder of her religious association. Ironically, it symbolises the patriarchal nature of Islam, bearing with it codes and practices that ought to be abided to be considered devout and moral. This difference in the disparity in the attitudes towards the veil has led to much debate. Fortunately in the context of Singapore, the *tudung* and other forms of religious dress have been tolerated.

Furthermore, the identity of Kampong Glam has been feminised through the introduction of new shops. Kampong Glam at the turn of the century[49] has since evolved from its original cohesive patriarchal identity as a pit stop for Haj travellers and visits 'by Islamic scholars from [India] and the Middle East'.[50] These shops used to retail Muslim religious items, such as the *Koran*, prayer mats and headgear.[51] These merchandise were highly specific and purchased based on necessity, unlike most of the products sold on site today. Due to the changing

[46] Zeynep Celik, 'Speaking Back to Orientalist Discourse at the World's Columbian Exposition', in Holly Edwards (ed.), *Noble Dreams, Wicked Pleasures: Orientalism in America, 1870-1930* (Oxfordshire, UK: Princeton University Press and Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2000) pp.77-98.
[47] Celik, 'Speaking Back to Orientalist Discourse at the World's Columbian Exposition', p. 81.
[48] Salinah Aliman, *Tudung: Beyond Face Value* (Singapore: Bridges Books, 2002) p.43.
[49] Lee Sze Yong, 'Chill-Out-Street: Kampong Glam has come alive with new shops and cafes to rival Holland Village in the hip quotient', *The Straits Times*, (17 June 2007, Sunday).
[50] John Funston, 'Singapore', in Greg Fealy and Virginia Hooker (eds.), *Voices of Islam in Southeast Asia : A Contemporary Sourcebook* (Singapore, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2006), pp.71-6.
[51] The Koran is the sacred book of Muslims. 'Koran', http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08692a.htm (accessed on 1 Aug 2008).

landscape of shopping, shops that once affirmed the religiosity of the site and the patriarchal history of Kampong Glam, now promote a different agenda of shopping, which point towards leisurely pursuits, and consequently add a another layer of feminine identity to the historical masculinity overtones of the place.

While Kampong Glam may be commonly associated with identities of race and religion, the act of shopping allows one to associate with an identity of choice. Shopping is a kind of lifestyle that 'differs from traditional status orders, as well as structural divisions [that include] class, family, gender and ethnicity'.[52] Everyone has the choice to associate with different groups of people, over different social settings and in one's lifetime. It permits people to shop for identities and showcase that identity through the adornment of clothes associated with the social group. These different masks of identity can be exemplified through the identity of a hypothetical Malay youth at Kampong Glam.[53] While he may accompany his parents to the mosque on Fridays and adopt a traditional and modest dress-code, the situation is altered when he relaxes with his friends at a *sheesha* cafe or shop along Haji and Bali Lane. His wardrobe choices are distinctly different, depending on the context of the social situation, therefore correlating with the ideas of temporal and multi-faceted identities one can adorn in the studies of femininity.

The leisurely pursuits of shopping

The feminine is also revealed through an analysis of the shopping environment in Kampong Glam. In contrast to the frenzy experienced in shopping centres, Kampong Glam is laid-back by many standards. There is a general sense of motionless time through the idyllic settings of

[52] Shields, 'Spaces for the Subject of Consumption', p.10.
[53] Shields, 'Spaces for the Subject of Consumption', p.16.

people strolling, families gathering around for meals at the many al-fresco cafes, teenagers seated on carpets at a *sheesha* gatherings, young shopkeepers along Haji Lane seated on benches outside their stores, often mistaken for shoppers themselves. This leisurely pursuit is akin to a form of flânerie, or the 'loitering [and] aimless strolling'.[54] In addition, the low shophouses and narrow streets add on to the charm and intrigue of the feminine perspective and reminiscent of the domestic that make up Kampong Glam. This form of leisurely pursuit that defies time and ritual challenges the religious overtones within the site. Once a Muslim hub for Southeast Asia, associated with the trades of book-making, merchandising of religious goods and related Haj services, Kampong Glam has now deviated from the culture of rational spending and strict religious codes, to that of recreational shopping, slow dining and merry-making. While the influx of new modes of shopping confronts the patriarchal identity of Kampong Glam, it inserts additional layers of identity associated with the site. These additional identifications undermine the pedagogical concept of the permanence of identity, instilling instead the postmodernist definitions of identification, as postulated by Richard Jenkins.[55]

In conclusion, the examination of Kampong Glam within the public sphere and the feminine scope allows for new layers of identity to be added on to preconceived and commonly held identities of Kampong Glam. These new identities should not be used to debunk the well-established identities created by the authorities, but should be understood as a part of the process of identification, a constant renewal and understanding that enhances the complexity of a place.

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[54]Shields, 'Spaces for the Subject of Consumption', p.7. See also, Jane Rendell, '"Bazaar Beauties" or "Pleasure Is Our Pursuit": A Spatial Story of Exchange', pp.104-19.

[55] Richard Jenkins 'Understanding Identification', in Richard Jenkins, *Social Identity* (London : Routledge, 2004) pp.15-26.

While Rendell characterises the city of London through the movements of the Ramblers and Cyprians, I believe that it is through the deliberated and constrained movements of the youth and the local Muslims within their sphere of familiarity and exclusion zones that help define the complex identities in Kampong Glam. It is also through the performativity of dress in public spaces that reinforces the identity of groups of people and their associated retreats. Perhaps as part of a solution to remedy Singapore's search for its identity, the planning bodies ought to recognise the notion of spaces of difference, as inspired by Henri Lefebvre where,

> These are the social constructions that differential space preserves and emphasizes, ensuring that the right to the city is not the right to buildings or even public space but rather the right to be different, the right not to be classified forcibly into categories determined by homogenizing powers. [56]

[56] Iain Borden, Jane Rendell, Joe Kerr and Alicia Pivaro, 'Things, Flows, Filters, Tactics', Iain Borden, Jane Rendell, Joe Kerr and Alicia Pivaro (eds), *The Unknown City: Contesting Architecture and Social Space* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, The MIT Press) p.11.

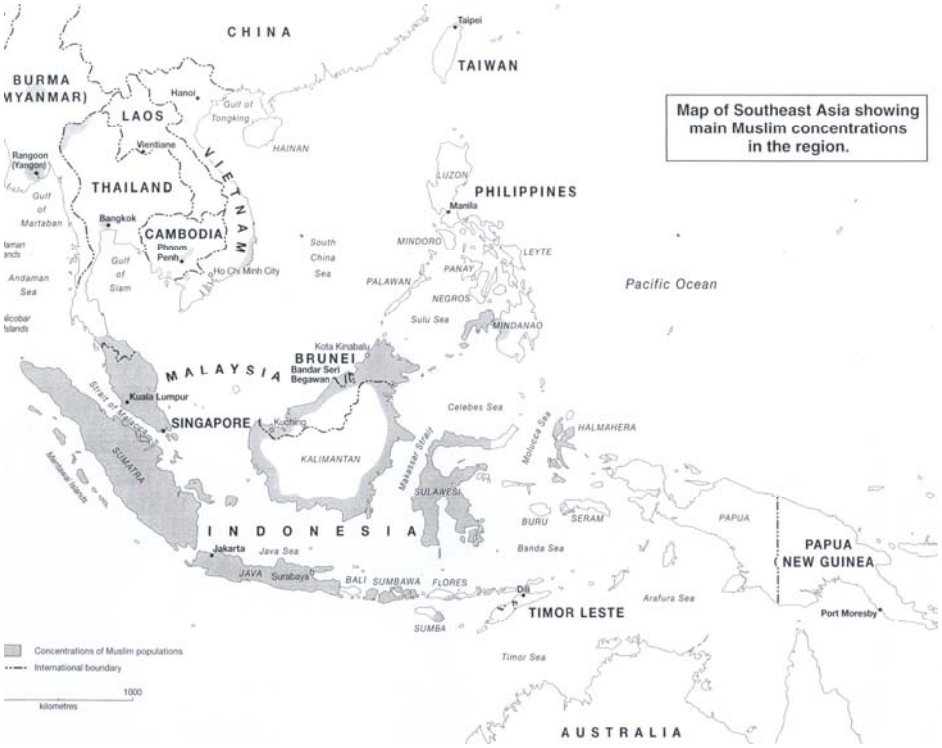

Figure 7: Map of the Malay Archipelago. The shaded areas represent the concentrations of Muslim populations.

This chapter draws the contestation and the delicacy of identity to a close within this dissertation, by highlighting the controversial conservation approach the URA has adopted within Kampong Glam. As historical records show, Kampong Glam was a truly cosmopolitan ground for Muslims from various parts of Asia.[57] There were a diverse group of people from the Malay Archipelago islands such as Java, Sumatra, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, the Malay Peninsula[58] and from as far-flung countries such as India and the Middle-East. Muslims from the Malay Archipelago while sharing the same faith, maintained distinction among themselves through forms of dress, language through dialects and accents, differentiations in customs as well as the trades they were involved in. However, the British soon located these people into a collective 'Malay' identity of race for census purposes and inter-marriages between the sub-

[57] Jane Perkins, *Kampong Glam: Spirit of a Community* (Singapore: NUS Press, 1985) p.13.
[58] Khoo Kay Kim, Elinah Abdullah and Wan Meng Hao (eds.), *Malays / Muslims in Singapore: Selected Readings in History 1819-1965,* (Pennsylvania: Coronet Books Inc, 2006) p.xviii.

cultural groups soon saw the erosion of the delicate distinctions among the Archipelago Malays.[59]

Contrary to popular belief, the term 'Malay' still remains debatable today. Before the advent of colonial census reports in the late 1880s,[60] Malays categorised themselves according to their locality and ethnic descent; those considered native within the Malay Archipelago, such as Singapura, Malaya and the Indonesian Islands were typified as Malays, while non-native people such as the Chinese, Indians and Arabs were typically excluded from their community. However, definitions of 'Malay' differed in the various states of Malaya, among different people groups and even among the different colonialists, thus the term is remains a fuzzy one.[61]

Although the Malay Heritage Centre (MHC) has been acknowledged as a site of contention in the first chapter, another crucial site of debate is situated at Victoria Street, where the Muslim and Malay cemeteries and the Madrasah Aljunied Al-Islamiah are located (Figure 8). Like a forgotten fragment of history and space, the only sign of life at the cemeteries are the vehicles parked along Jalan Kubor, otherwise known as Cemetery Street in Malay, the name of the street the only possible indication of their importance. Unknown to many non-Malays, there are distinctions between the two cemeteries bounded by Rochor Canal Road and Victoria Street. The first, the Old Malay Cemetery is situated towards the rear of the iconic Malabar Mosque,[62] where the respected tombs of the Malay royal family still lie. The second is a more

[59] Timothy P. Barnard, *Contesting Malayness: Malay Identity Across Boundaries*, (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2004) p.13.
[60] See Barnard, *Contesting Malayness*, p.16.
[61] Khoo Kay Kim, Elinah Abdullah and Wan Meng Hao (eds.), *Malays / Muslims in Singapore: Selected Readings in History 1819-1965,* (2006) p. xvii.
[62] Brenda Yeoh and Shirlena Huang, 'The Conservation-Redevelopment Dilemma in Singapore: The case of the Kampong Glam Historic District', in *Cities*, v.13 n.6, (1996), p.420.

recent Muslim cemetery, which houses the remains of other Muslims, of which include the prominent Syed Omar bin Ali Aljunied, an Arab leader and philantrophist, and his family members.[63] While the cemeteries and *madrasah* are physically demarcated from the rest of Kampong Glam by the busy Victoria Street, further separation from the rest of the Muslim district is exacerbated by conservation boundaries drawn up by the URA.

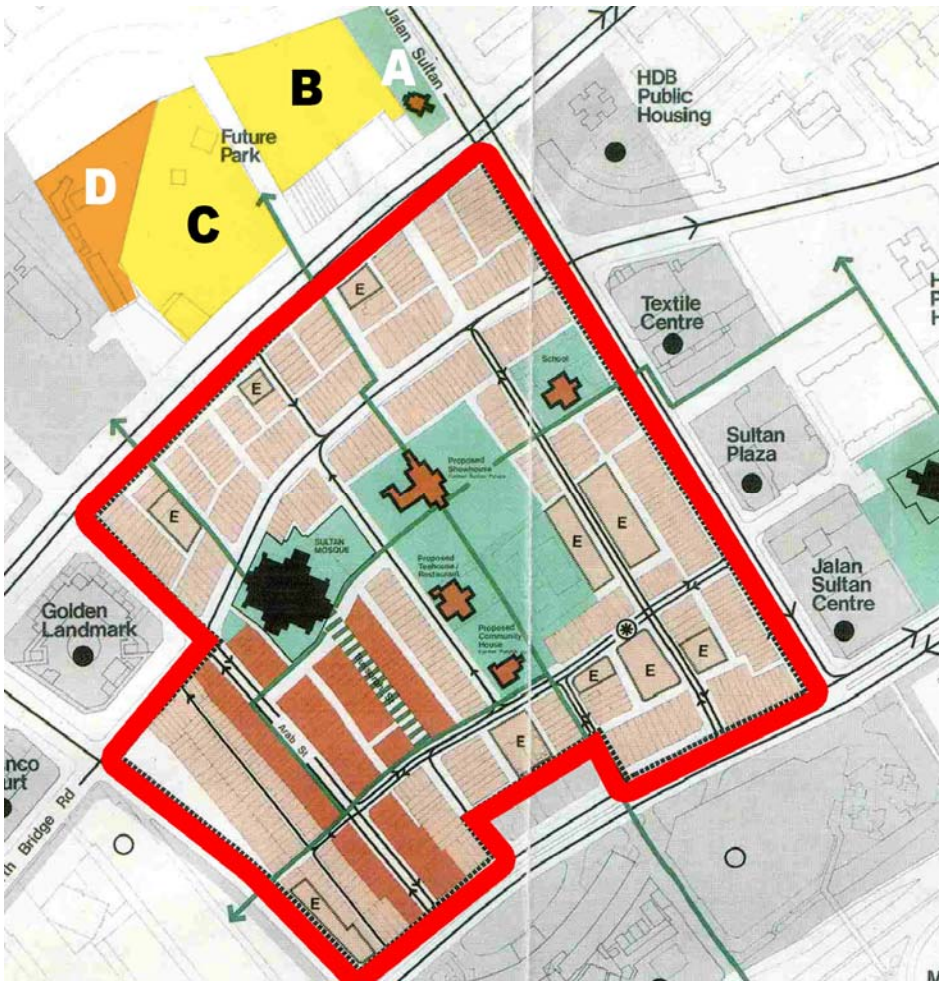

Figure 8: Map of the conservation boundaries of Kampong Glam. (Highlighted in red). It also shows the location of (A) the Malabar Mosque, (B) Malay Cemetery, (C) Muslim cemetery and (D) the Aljunied School. B,C,D have been slated to become an urban park, as of the URA Guidelines of 1991. It has been re-planned to fit residential blocks as of the URA Masterplan 2003.

[63] Yeoh and Huang, 'The Conservation-Redevelopment Dilemma in Singapore: The case of the Kampong Glam Historic District', pp.411-22.

Conveniently sidelined out of the neatly defined conservation 'box', they have been designated as a future park space, with justification from the URA that the location is situated beyond the heritage vicinity of the Sultan Mosque. However, these spaces are in reality, inherently important to the history and heritage of the Muslims and Malays of Singapore. While cemeteries are often looked upon as space-wasters in land scarce Singapore, and exhumation is the key operative in today's context, we must look again to the history of these places to understand the importance of their much-needed conservation.

Dating from 1819, the Malay Cemetery is the oldest one in record in Singapore. Dubbed the 'tombs of the Malayan Princes', it was the official burial ground for the Malay royalty in Kampong Glam.[64] However, while Islam explicitly prohibits Muslim followers to present offerings to the dead, animistic Malay traditions of paying homage to the dead still exist within the cemetery. This provides verification of the importance of the concept of *kerajaan* to the Malays. *Kerajaan* is part of a cultural concept of the 'three pillars of "Malayness"', which encompasses the importance of 'language, ruler and religion',[65] and a necessary step towards building a strong union among the Malays.[66]

The *kerajaan* once manifested itself physically through the Istana, and was heightened with the presence of the Sultan's descendents. However, after its renovation to the MHC, as discussed in Chapter 1, the former Istana has been transformed to an inaccurate representation of Malay culture. Thus the last remaining seat of the historical *kerajaan* may be found at the Malay Cemetery, where the royal tombs remain distinctive with the presence

[64] 'Kampong Glam Walkabout', http://myonlinetour.com/poi/glamwalk/guide.pdf (accessed on 15 August 2008) pp.1-2.
[65] Barnard, *Contesting Malayness,* p.137.
[66] Sarina Bte Anwar, 'Nostalgia as "Reference"', *NUS History Society E-Journal,* http://www.fas.nus.edu.sg/hist/doc/HissocJournal/Sarina%20Bte%20Anwar%20-%20Nostalgia.pdf (accessed 20 August 2008), p.3.

of bright yellow cloth (a symbol of Malay royalty) wrapped around the headstones today. While the State may overlook the importance of this cemetery to the Malays, it is inconceivable that this once consecrated site would be considered adept for conversion to a park. By removing the presence of the cemeteries, especially for something as economically unviable as a park, it risks disrespect and indifference towards the Malay minority in Singapore.

Additionally, through her case study of the conservation of Kampong Glam, Brenda Yeoh, a local geographer has also pointed out that another contentious site adjacent to the Malay cemetery.[67] The Madrasah Aljunied Al-Islamiah and the Muslim Cemetery stand as testament of Syed Omar. The *madrasah* stands on what is known as *wakaf* land, an Islamic concept where property is forbidden to be privately owned and collectively shared among Muslims. The adjacent cemetery houses the remains of Syed Omar and his family, of which the former was consecrated as a 'prince' by the Malays. Furthermore, the tombs are still 'widely perceived within the Malay community as a *keramat* (holy shrine)', which stresses the historical importance of the site.[68] Despite the fact that the cemeteries and *madrasah* still stand today, it is evident that their existence lies within the hands of the planning authorities, and it serves as a timely reminder of the threat of historical identity markers which groups of people, in this instance, the Malays and Muslims depend on. Kampong Glam has already undergone many changes to its function – originally an important trading post and Islamic centre in South-east Asia; it has been transformed to a place of consumption and leisure. All that is left of the historical religious core is left within the vicinity of the Sultan Mosque as elaborated in Chapter 1. The increased threat to these important historical sites further emphasises their presence as a minority in Singapore. It should also be recognised by state

[67] Yeoh and Huang, 'The Conservation-Redevelopment Dilemma in Singapore', pp.420-1.
[68] Yeoh and Huang, 'The Conservation-Redevelopment Dilemma in Singapore', p.420.

agencies that it is not enough just to embrace the conservation of the architectural value of old buildings, but also to respect the history of ethnic groups is crucial in the formulation of identity, as the past is often regarded as the basis of one's identity, which Jenkins has defined as primary identity.

Ironically, the Committee of Heritage Report regards built heritage as particularly important as these physical objects would be able to provide visual cues and ground memories of the past that would otherwise remain as 'abstract notions'.[69] Additionally, 'heritage' is defined in the State's terms to encompass nation building heritage, heritage of economic success, multi-cultural heritage, heritage of the man made environment and that of the natural environment.[70] Yet at the same time, the report also outlined 'how the aim of heritage conservation should be to create 'an ambience of enchantment', and a 'cultural environment which will stimulate and sustain intensive creative efforts in business, management and leisure'.[71] This glaringly highlights the equivocate perspective the State has adopted towards the preservation of heritage. It has maintained that heritage should be sustained by tourist revenues and economic return, instead responding to answer the call of the identities of its people.

Kampong Glam for Sale!

This section also serves as a critique to the introduction of 'hyper-traditional' and economic values placed on ethnic constructs that is present in Singapore. It is not out of the ordinary that Kampong Glam has distinctively become one of the many that have fallen to such

[69] The Committee on Heritage Report, Committee on Heritage, Singapore, 1998, p.46, cited in Brenda Yeoh and Shirlena Huang, 'The Conservation-Redevelopment Dilemma in Singapore', (1996), p.413.
[70] The Committee on Heritage Report, Committee on Heritage, Singapore, 1998, p.46, cited in Yeoh and Huang, 'The Conservation-Redevelopment Dilemma in Singapore', p.413.
[71] Imran bin Tajudeen, 'State Constructs of Ethnicity in the Reinvention of Malay-Indonesian Heritage in Singapore', in *Folio 08* (May 2008) p.173.

imagined state narratives. Imran bin Tajudeen has argued for and uncovered how the history and ethnicity of Kampong Glam have been subjugated to 'flattened' simplistic historical descriptions, also painting broad strokes of reinvented ethnic storylines to other Malay townships such as Geylang Serai.[72] He states that 'hyper-traditional environments' have been created 'over the last several decades' by the Singapore government. These hyper-traditional environments would include specific sites such as the MHC, Bussorah Mall and the Malay Village in Geylang Serai. Though Tajudeen does not provide a definition of the hyper-traditional, a reading of his article would inform readers that it involves a recreation and launch of foreign identities that are imaged by state agencies. For further elaboration, we shall look to his case analysis of Bussorah Mall. Since 1992, Bussorah Mall comprises of an outdoor pedestrianised street with 'beautifully restored' shophouses flanking both sides.[73] It is often marketed as a shopping street that boasts the stunning vista of the Sultan Mosque, and is lined with palm trees and street lamps that are reminiscent of Middle Eastern cultures.[74] It is here that foreign images are overtly introduced to present an impression of the 'exotic East'.[75] This creates a confusing misconception of Middle-Eastern influence and in turn results in the concealment of the Malay Muslim ethnicity. It should be stressed that the presence of the Arabs were a minority in the cosmopolitan social make-up of Kampong Glam and the strategies engaged by the State and STB to revitalise the area are thus peculiar. Furthermore, if we recall Ismail's examination of Bussorah Mall during the Ramadan festival in Chapter 1, that the street bazaar that was originally sited along Bussorah Street was then shifted to Kandahar Street after the urban renewal. This new position further alienates the

[72]Tajudeen, 'State Constructs of Ethnicity in Singapore', pp.164-78.
[73] URA, 'Celebrating the City: Kampong Glam', http://www.ura.gov.sg/publications/#PLANNING (accessed 5 May 2008).
[74] 'Around your place', The Straits Times, Singapore. (13 Aug 1993) p. 33.
[75] Tajudeen, 'State Constructs of Ethnicity in Singapore', p.167.

Malay Muslims from the vicinity of the Sultan Mosque but also reiterates the power of the State to dilute and propagate identities based on their agenda.

It is not surprisingly then, if one realises that many of the streets in Kampong Glam were named after Arabian cities. The main arteries of Kampong Glam, were labelled with names such as Bussorah, Baghdad, Kandahar and Muscat. These were 'officially conferred on the area around 1910' and probably inspired the STB to further promote and highlight the Arabian influence on Kampong Glam. However, these streets were locally recognised according to the associated trades and influences that belonged to each specific street. For example, Arab Street was originally named after the Javanese, Bussorah Street after the Haj services and boarding houses that used to serve the Muslim community, and Baghdad Street, along with Sultan Gate as the 'copper compound'.[76]

In addition, it is unfortunate that the objectives of the STB to reinvent Singapore's heritage in 1984 is in turn, supported by the Kampong Gelam Business Association (KGBa). Formed in 2004, three years after the introduction of Middle-Eastern themed restaurants in Kampong Glam, it stresses its allegiance to 'government agencies, media and other relevant parties' to construct a 'distinctive character' vibrant enough to act as a 'must see' for tourists and locals.[77] While it has been demonstrated that the economic intentions of government agencies has resulted in a mild 'disney-fication' of Kampong Glam, further support of businesses to facilitate planning agendas could possibly further weaken the historical background and thus the relevance of Kampong Glam in Singapore's history. This has been revealed through the recent proliferation of Middle Eastern cafes and restaurants that are scattered along the main thoroughfares of Bussorah Street, Baghdad Street, Arab Street and Haji Lane. Tajudeen argues

[76] Tajudeen, 'State Constructs of Ethnicity in Singapore', p.171.
[77] 'About KGBa', http://www.kgba.org.sg/about.htm (accessed 10 Sept 2008).

that these cafes not only threaten the existence of original food establishments that promote traditional South Indian, West Sumatran and Javanese cuisines with novel Middle Eastern themed eateries. It is ventured that these new shops not only serve to misinform visitors of the dominance of Arabs in the area, but also exoticise and recreate an 'Oriental mystique' which is belittling to Muslims and Malays in Kampong Glam.

While Kampong Glam has been promoted 'based on images of exotic Arabia and Malay regal splendour', other architecturally important buildings have been torn down in the name of economic motivations.[78] Within the MHC compound, structures such as the Pondok Jawa and Pondok Melaka that acted as community compounds for migrants were demolished due to termite infestation and vehicular parking space respectively. These demolitions were carried out despite the ethnic dominance of the Javanese Malays in Singapore.

These spatial reconstructions within Kampong Glam thereby indicate the contested space of the Malays and Muslims in Singapore. Harsh economic policies and inattentive planning guidelines have already been proven to be detrimental to important spaces in Kampong Glam. However, these pessimistic sentiments may be only relevant to sentimental academics and previous residents of Kampong Glam. But it otherwise indicates that pedagogical procedures have been inadequately assisted by performative activities of its people. It still remains an uncomfortable situation to be in, through repeated experiences State imagined reconstructions, seen through the MHC, and the Malay Village in Geylang Serai, the latter built to resemble the Malay kampong of the past and to showcase Malay arts and crafts. It has unfortunately been reduced to a clichéd tourist attraction. The failure of these two places may be seen as the Malay and Muslim communities' resistance towards the government's agenda

[78] Tajudeen, 'State Constructs of Ethnicity in Singapore', p.171.

to create a coherent Malay identity. Thus the contested space and identities of the Malay Muslims in Kampong Glam can only be understood clearly by referencing historical milestones and understanding the details, rather than introduce fabricated new identities that are irrelevant to the history of Kampong Glam. Therefore it is proposed that in this instance, the power of the performative of the locals is necessary to set the agenda for the future of Kampong Glam.

Identity is a multi-faceted object, seemingly concrete on one hand, yet on the other hand resembling a nebula, constantly changing in appearance and form. Therefore, identity is more likely often contested. It is hard to define within fixed and impermeable boundaries since it alters and adjusts with time, socio-political changes and fashions.

In the first chapter, identity is perceived to be adopted from two different standpoints, that is, identity that is fixed and permanent, having been mandated through government census in terms of race, and the other performed through active participation of individuals. Through the Malay Heritage Centre, I have also illustrated that mandated identity through official narratives does have its inherent dangers, that is, by attempting to invent new identities and a conscious disrespect of actual historical narratives, identity can be seen as necessarily false and therefore rejected.

Likewise, through the example of the Sultan Mosque in the first chapter and the appropriation of public shopping spaces in Arab Street and Haji Lane in the second, identities that are vigorously formed by users have the ability to shape and transform meanings onto site, which may then allow for cultural identities to be actively procured by visitors, such as tourists and locals to Kampong Glam. The second chapter also saw a breakaway from analysing the physical landscape of the built environment, to an understanding of identity construction through the socio-historical and urban transformation of Kampong Glam. In addition, the formation of identity is also studied within the feminine performative realm of shopping, where it is assumed that shoppers are able to reconstruct their identity through the act of shopping. The third chapter turned its attention back towards the spaces deemed important by Malays and Muslims, contested through state-developed tourist policies and economic procedures seen particularly through the cemeteries, Aljunied School, as well as the

introduction of exoticised Middle Eastern shops and eateries within Kampong Glam. While physical landmarks have been defined as important to establish strong perceptions of identity, the conservation boundaries drawn up by planning authorities seems to suggest otherwise.

Thus I hope to have informed readers of new ways of interpreting identity, even though the study has been constrained within the site of Kampong Glam. Identity is also becoming a more pressing issue within the scope of Singapore, where the mass influx of foreigners have threatened to replace local Singaporeans. Thus this study hopes to highlight the many ways through which our complex and dynamic identities may evolve, particularly those of the Muslim Malay community. Identities are thus not given but contested through performative sites and activities, and are negotiated against that which have been mandated.

Additionally, I acknowledge that there are several other ways of understanding identity which I have not been able to cover due to the scope of this dissertation. While this paper has largely focused on physical spaces and the activities within, other methodologies could include in-depth analysis of the architectural features of landmarks and sociological surveys that reveal the demographic mix of Kampong Glam.

This paper has also cast a wide net over the field of architecture. Even though some critics may disagree, architecture does not necessarily exclude all else that does not fall into the category of high design and 'building' per se. I would see it appropriate that architecture also includes spaces through which are experienced on an everyday basis, that inform its participants of their sense of identity. Furthermore, the study of identity should not be subject to the tight scope of social sciences. As reiterated in my chapter arguments, architecture and

the built environment, more significantly, that which is not built by master architects, calls for the formulation of many social issues, of which, identity is only a small part of.

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