sundanese architecture

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Sundanese Architecture
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Seseratan ieu tiasa medal ku jalaran aya dukungan ti anu dipikadeudeuh : Uthe, Nana, sareng Cil

About the Author

Purnama Salura is one distinguished lecturer of architecture at Parahyangan Catholic University, Bandung, West Java, Indonesia. As both mentor and lecturer, he has a great concern for the development in architectural studies, especially architectural theory and philosophy.

He is a figure who is meticulous in details and his passion has been well spoken in sharing knowledge through learning and teaching. His work including many architectural projects and two published books on architecture subjects: "Ber-arsitektur: Membuat, Menggunakan, Mengalami, dan Memahami Arsitektur"(2001) and "Arsitektur Dalam Bingkai Kebudyaan" (2003, co-written with Dr. Kusnaka Adimihardja).

This book is another of his brilliant work.

Notes

The substance of this work is taken from a dissertation, the fieldwork for which was accomplished from 2000 to 2002. In the beginning the work included nine case studies, and when winnowed has resulted in three representing locations that provide specific characteristics.

The names of the villages in the book are not their actual names, nor are the names of informants, photographs of the activities, or current conditions; the format of the results of the questionnaire has also been abbreviated. At the same time, care has been taken to assure the accuracy of the materials.

The study has involved many people. While I cannot list each one of them by name, I would like to extend my deepest appreciation to each of these individuals for the roles they played in this work.

Forward

This book is an effort to position the architecture of the Sundanese people as unique within the Indonesian and global contexts. While the focus remains on Sundanese architecture, I hope that the materials will be helpful in the study and in the mapping of vernacular architecture for the whole archipelago of Indonesia. Many other areas in Indonesia possess the kinds of architectural character that are illustrated in the case studies put forward here and share as well the extremely rare written references and/or empirical data. It is because of this limitation, the form and meaning of Indonesian vernacular architecture has not yet been documented.

I have another hope for this book, that it will make a contribution in the development of theory and empiricism for the strategic survival of Sundanese architecture as it faces global change: first, understanding the processes of transformation that have occurred in the past canon of Sundanese architecture; second, an understanding of the dynamic relationship between the concepts of form and meaning in the context of change; and thirdly, understanding the existing and newer meaning of the architecture that is relevant to the creation of references in the process of creating local architecture today and in the future.

Prompted by sincere and modest intentions, I hope this book is able to offer three inputs to energize the Sundanese people: first, so the people are able to preserve the aspects of their cultural values in facing global change, including keeping the harmony in their housing development process; second, for the planners and the authorities in the efforts to develop the potentials of kampong settlement (both new and traditional); and thirdly, for the planning of new settlements and the identification of architectural elements to strengthen local identity.

As a final word, I hope that this book can be used as a starting point for further examination and elaboration of similar architectural phenomena in different contexts of people and locations. I hope the book can add to diverse studies that are urgently needed in the development of the knowledge of vernacular architecture in Indonesia.

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I.
Stream, Form, and Meaning in Architecture

PUSAT DOKUMENTASI INFORMASI ILMIAH · UNIVERSITAS KATOLIK PARAHYANGAN

1.
The Importance on Understanding Local Architecture

Change occurs continually in the life of mankind no matter where they live, the process is natural. Accelerated change in many quarters due to the intense progress in technology and information pushes societal transformation from an industrial society to an information and knowledge society. This process does not occur in one country only but is spread throughout the entire world. This is the phenomenon we call globalization; all the things that occur in one place can significantly affect dozens of others in distant places. In fact, the world becomes one large village as space and time are compressed dramatically by electronic communication media.

The technological revolution is both interwoven and sophisticated due to the effects of global information, economies, and financial systems. When time and space have contracted, 'specific superiority' becomes an important factor in strategic alliances for the anticipation of capital movements (financial systems) that are more liberal and faster paced. All of this occurs and flows in conditions that are nearly borderless and inexorable. This wave of pressure on every country and the community, include the dynamics of culture.

The concept of the 'global paradox' put forward by John Naisbitt points out that the stronger the pressure from outside, the stronger local involvement becomes. He predicts that the force and attention at this time will move toward and become focused on local identities. Globalization is taken as a natural challenge that can be threatening, but at the same time implies opportunity for the development of local cultural traditions.

Architecture—as one form of culture—does not escape the pressure of change. Modern Architecture which is mostly based on industrial efficiency and effectiveness has for a long time questioned the ability of itself to respond to the changes of time. Postmodern Architecture arrived on the scene to respond to the rapid change of the world. Postmodern Architecture cannot be said to have contradicted or nihilized all the aspects of Modern Architecture, but developed in forming two new streams of thought: (re)constructive and deconstructive. This development swims well with scientific thought inspired by philosophy. Postmodern Architecture changed the old view from univalence to multivalence, with local characteristics development, and it was taken as a respectable design base.

Indonesian archipelago would open itself to the influence of other cultures though the processes of

acculturation and adaptation for a relatively lengthy period. In the process, globalization makes pressures for change in short periods of time. This unstoppable wave has already affected the economies, politics, and cultures in Indonesia.

At this moment, information from outside the country flows freely in along with the threat of economic domination by the use of outside technology, and awaits the time for formal application of the free market. Officials in political and economic spheres are now forced to confront these pressures with regulations and 'competitive advantage' so that we are not left out of global systems. This same task awaits in the cultural fields as well.

The reaction to globalization within the sphere of architecture is exhibited by the recent attraction to local characteristics which was formally excluded from modern architecture discourse. Practitioners and theorists have begun to consider the local design elements that are unique, specific, and capable of adding colorful diversity. Postmodern Architecture as the response to global culture has become an important part in architecture discourse. With rising support to local knowledge and historical aspects that have stood the tests of time, it is hoped that local identity will not be easily swept away by the waves of globalization; in fact, local knowledge will make possible a region actively involved in the global culture. The architectural repository of local knowledge that adds colors to architectural forms is important to be examined and studied further.

Architecture presupposes that forms are generally created for certain purposes. Each form—especially in Indonesia—usually has a cognitive system behind it that asserts a relationship between the people and their environment. The architectural arrangement and form that are still strongly affected by traditions are the expressions of meanings, values, and beliefs for a particular community at a particular time. In other words, the central theme in local architectural discourse highlights the concept of form and meaning as well as the influence between the two.

History shows that strong external forces always influence the relationship between form and meaning in architecture, including the dynamic factors of culture, social systems, economics, technology, and other factors that are relatively constant such as climate, geographical lay, and geological conditions. The dynamics of change in the form and meaning of local architecture are need to be examined further in facing the changes that are occurring now and will happen in the future.

In the study of local architecture, a deep understanding of a local community's culture is important

because architectural work does not stand apart from the cultural context in which it exists. If the culture of the community is changed, its architecture will change too. History shows that culture and architecture always expose themselves to external influences. Culture and architecture are not static, but always undergo change in parallel with the conditions of life.

Starting from this, a premise can be inferred about the architecture of the Sundanese is that is its architecture always undergoes change alongside the development of conditions of life; while its thesis is that the relationship between the concepts of architectural form and meaning is not static but dynamic.

So far, it can be said that the architectural forms of the Sundanese which are unadulterated and eternal do not exist. The concept of Sundanese architectural form is always adaptive to the changes in the culture and in the life of its community. 'Sundanese Purism' or the belief that the Sundanese culture and architecture is 'authentic' and its originality must be preserved, is a fallacy that needs to be questioned for its relevance.

There are three key questions that are vital to this book; *first*, how can we understand the relationship between the concepts of form and meaning in Sundanese architecture? *Second*, what are the concepts that significantly affect the form and meaning of Sundanese architecture? *Third*, what are the patterns of change that occur on the concepts of form and meaning in Sundanese architecture?

A theoretical construct for the concepts of form and meaning in Sundanese architecture does not yet exist specifically; therefore, the technique used to understand the relationship between them will utilize a new methodology, a specific analysis to read the relationship. The chosen philosophical approaches in the form and meaning comes from Structuralism; the typology approach used by Quatremère De-Quincy and Aldo Rossi that is complemented by Christopher Alexander's 'Pattern Language' approach for the aspect of form; and the Ferdinand de Saussure' and Claude Lévi-Strauss' structuralism for the aspect of meaning. To align these with the situation and empirical conditions, approach on form will be elaborated by the concept of '*patempatan*', so that it can be read through the complex of container and the complex of place. The concept of meaning will be elaborated by the results of studies in the anthropology and cultural arts regarding the relationships between the Sundanese and their daily life, so that the meaning can be perceived through the complex of activity and the complex of concept.

Briefly, I will try to unravel the philosophy and theory that are relevant with the architecture study in

this book, so that the approaches used to understand the form and meaning in Sundanese architecture can be revealed more clearly.

2.
Understanding the Beliefs Influencing Architecture

Until today, the majority of people agree that philosophy represents the root of all scientific disciplines and at the same time drives the development of science, although there are still a few who think that science and philosophy develop in parallel, influencing each other. As one of the branches of science, architecture is indeed difficult to be separated from the development of philosophy, because the development of architecture both in practice and theory is continually influenced by the development of philosophical thought.

From long ago, western architectural form has been believed to be built based on the particular philosophical stream which was dominant at a particular time, the same as the enhanced forms that are created by the philosophical spirits of postmodernism and deconstruction. Architectural form and trends in philosophy are strongly related; implying that the study of form and meaning in architecture can be deepened if it were done along side consideration of philosophical thought.

In its development, western philosophy gave birth to two major streams which remain influential today. On the one hand there is Plato—the student of Socrates—who gave birth to the thought that stressed the idea of truth on ideas and thought (eidos, idealism); on the other hand there is Aristotle—the student of Plato—who, on the opposite side, stressed the idea of truth on the experience of the senses (materialism). In the scholastic era in the middle age, neither of the streams reverberated because they were dominated by divinity dogmatism.

Entering the modern era, at the beginning of the Enlightenment, there was a confrontation with the 'natural thinking' of the middle ages; both idealism and materialism developed with their own characters and trends. The stream that promulgated truth through the rational was developed by René Descartes with the dictum *Cogito Ergo Sum* ('I think, therefore I am') and was classified as Rationalism; where the other stream stressed truth through the experience of the senses was developed by John Locke was classified as Empiricism. Although through history the names for each of these streams seem undergone changes, substantially, Idealism is the root of Rationalism and Materialism is the base of Empiricism.