

ARCHITECTURE AS A CULTURAL IDENTITY IN THE CONTINUATION OF TRADITION WITHIN MODERNIZATION

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Abstract: The ancient and indigenous cultures that exist in the various regions of Indonesia are regarded as part of the national culture. In developing culture, Indonesia should aim at advancing civilization, culture and unity without rejecting new elements from foreign cultures that may improve or enrich the national culture and the same time raise human and Indonesian values. Architecture plays an important part in the Indonesian cultural identity. It is vital that it should be included in any plans for cultural development.

Key words: architecture, culture, tradition, modernity

INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia the most obvious influence of modernity in promoting and directing social change was colonial power especially that of the Dutch. After the collapse of the colonial rule, the people of Indonesia tended to be not far behind Western countries in accepting this model by imitating many institutions, values and new elements of modernization.. In this context, tradition disrupts social change into new institutions. The most obvious characteristic of development pressure in the rapidly growing urban center is that the costs of land have increased rapidly. It is said that as societies modernize, the existence of tradition gradually declines. Ideally modernity, on the one hand, and tradition, on the other, need to be re-examined, and should continually develop and be blended with one another in more human cultural settings.

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One of the most tragic consequences of urban growth is that the conservation of cultural heritage is ignored. Historic buildings in most big cities in Indonesia are located in the urban center where land is economically valuable. Changing the function of this area is a common solution in developing countries, where historic building is difficult for government to cope with in providing the physical and social infrastructure for a fast growing population in the urban areas. In this chaotic condition Ripley draws this in-depth perspective as follows:

If we cannot preserve our total environment, we are, of course at risk ourselves. In the same way, if we cannot preserve the capacity of mankind to maintain cultural traditions and discipline of the spirit that result from such appreciation of civilization then we are surely lost intellectually as we are physically (1984: 16).

THE SYMBOLISM OF TRADITION

The contradiction of two ideas, modernization on one hand and cultural heritage preservation on the other hand, becomes an important problem. In this context, contemporary attitudes seek to reinforce the old symbolism of tradition. These ideas are usually supported by politicians on the basis of minimizing the site area and maximizing the number of people. They prefer to destroy old buildings and build new ones, most commonly multi-storey buildings to simplify the problem. The other group, mostly scientists and older people, tend to keep the residues of the cultural heritage preserved. The other example of the clash between conservation ideas and modernization is the fact that the density of traffic goes up in the historic urban areas. Road widening is needed but requires the knocking down of the façade of the old buildings so that they can be moved back.

From another perspective, the Indonesian government, for example, promotes the tourist industry as a major income producer. For Western tourists, the most attractive aspect of Indonesia is its rich and unique values of cultural diversity, which affected our cultural traditions in this way. For instance, Bali is highly popular, as Western people can experience a traditional mode of life. At present, tradition and religion are practiced in both rural and urban areas and the visiting tourists help to support the continuing existence of our customs and rituals.

In this sense Laleh Bachtiar gives his wise views as follows: "Tradition thus understood is the 'presiding idea' of a normal society and the animating principle of the whole life of people" (cited in Aderland and Bakhtiar 1973:XI). Tradition, thus, still plays an important role in the context of integrating cultural expression, like put forward by Eisenstadt below:

In the process of handing down, there are many outside aspects that influence and become absorbed in the transformation. The element of the traditional setting that are expressed in various historical societies were emphasized in common practice by scholars as being factors of significance for the understanding of the process of accommodating change in society (1996:119).

Tradition may be influenced, modified and changed by society. There are two crucial factors in comparing between traditional and modern society. On the one hand a traditional society is often described as a static one with little differentiation and specialization, together with low levels of urbanization and less educated and a modern society on the other hand has been viewed as one with a very high level of differentiation, urbanization, educated and exposed to mass media communication (Eisenstadt 1996:261). Traditional societies are usually described as ordered, stable and regulated by social life and cultural expression. Modern society is often considered culturally dynamic and oriented to change and innovation, and therefore fundamentally unstable, and this is commonly expressed in the middle and upper urban societies.

MODERNIZATION AND INDUSTRIALIZATION

Together with development of science and technology, the industrial Revolution was pioneered by England in the mid-18th century and followed in the rest of Europe and in America during the 19th century (Gross 1992:37). After World War II the overall traditional social framework was replaced by a modern cultural framework. Although initially substantial pockets of tradition survived, the impact of the industrial Revolution influenced society in accommodating and assimilating new cultural elements and caused the West to enter more rapidly what might be called the epoch of "modernity" (Gross 1992:39).

The word 'modern' as Habermas explains is derived from the Latin *modernus* which, in the late 5th century of Roman Christian times, was used to distinguish the present from the past (Habermas 1981:3). Modernity comes from the word *modern* defined in the Oxford English Dictionary (1995, 750) as: "Of the present and recent time". In this respect, in fact it can refer to many different contexts. The term relates to the difference between recent 'times' as compared with the past, expressing the change from an 'old' to a 'new' representation. By this definition it is not self evident that modern indicates 'better' although this is almost always an unspoken assumption.

The ideological basis of modernity has formulated its own 'new world' and is based on 'rationality', 'individualism', 'materialism' and 'developmentalism'. Modernity has transferred the norms of rational ways of life (Lash and Friedman 1992). Some say that development of modernity in the West is derived from the same historical process that gave us the Enlightenment and industrial periods. Originally, the 'Enlightenment' was the title of a painting by a German artist, Deniel Chedowski of 18th century. The picture depicts the early morning sunlight on the village with a building like a manor house, surrounded by people on their way towards the building. In the painting of Enlightenment, the light of the sun refers to contemporary reform movements:



We have ever been convinced that it is, above all, light which will ultimately bring congenial warmth. It was in the eighteenth century that the idea of light acquired new status. Light is now invoked over and over again when reason, liberty or happiness are mentioned. It is a light that is reflected in the ideas that characterises that century (Im Hof 1994:4).

In Britain, the English employed the term Enlightenment to emphasize that the 18th century society was Enlightenment beyond the hopes and imaginations of former times (Im Hof 1994:4). In France, at the same time, Enlightenment denoted the beginning of freedom from fetters and absolutism, and these ideologies lead to the French Revolution: "... *les seules 'lumieres' de la raison naturelle sont capable de conduire les hommes a la perfection de la science et de la sagesse humaine*" (Im Hof 1994:3). *Lumiere* was the French word for 'light' and represented understanding and knowledge (Im Hof 1994:4). In the 1780s, the German term '*Aufklarung*' was applied to that historical era: *das Zeitalter der Aufklarung* – the Age

of Enlightenment, which is conveyed as “The idea of light in number of parallel combinations” (Im Hof 1994:5).

The basic ideology of Enlightenment, a program of action was meant to train not only new men but better men. According to Im Hof, it was “... to liberate human beings from their chains by de-socialization of knowledge and instead reliance on scientific knowledge”, where every individual had “...a freedom was his own conscience and had to observe ethical principles” (1994:213). For this function of a goal, it absorbed the idea of the doctrine of 4 cardinal virtues, derived from Greek and Roman ethical system,²: justitia, prudential, temperate and fortitude-justice wisdom, moderation and courage. Derived from the Enlightenment, classical knowledge was seen in terms of its practical application in the way of methodical thinking. But by the late 18th century, this opinion had become widespread.

The point that contributed to the situation of disruptive social change was the emergence of modern capitalism (Gross 1992:28). The influence of the Industrial Revolution continually helped create society, whereas the standardization of products by mechanization killed the handcrafts that were the expression of tradition. To some extent, modernization as industrialization reverses the preservationist tradition. This is no absolute truth; the educational effects of modernization and industrialization in science and technology make everyday life easier and more comfortable, but both depend on how we maintain the force of modernity without destroying tradition. This rapid social change, ideally keeps modernity and tradition continually interpenetrating from one another.

In the later part of the 20th century, the invention of new technology, especially in communications, has created the possibility of contact between cultures around the world and created heterogeneous cultural formations. One benefit of this global exposure is that it is easier to become acquainted with and perhaps understand other cultures. Against this optimism it could be suggested that the function of media has turned into a means by which one culture imposes itself on another. The impact on Third World countries where various aspects of tradition have blended has changed with the

² “During the period of Enlightenment ‘philosophizing’ still meant, as it had done in an ancient Greece, the pursuit of wisdom, or simply knowledge, an interest in scientific investigation” (Im Hof 1994).

development of modern society. Under all circumstances, direct exposure to global culture result in a decline of the original culture of the place and its identity.

In Southeast Asia, especially Indonesia, the Western influence has created new patterns of behavior, but this process of adaptation was based on local historical and cultural patterns. Although their methods and organization may not be understood or approved in the West, their neo-traditionalist approach to government constituted a statement that Southeast Asians have rediscovered and reasserted within an indigenous identity. McCloud claims that:

The tenacity of traditional behavior within the domestic context is visible in the structures and functioning of government as well as in policy prescription [and] ...the emergence of the indigenous identity may offer grater assurance of success in the development and functioning of political institutions and social structure (McCloud 1996: 261).

In Indonesia, the same manner of adaptation has taken place to develop economic conditions mainly through industrialization. Science and technology have been imported from developed countries, whose values have added their characteristics to the local culture. This may mean that other external values cannot change the host environment's influence on the local culture that is already established.

In many Third World countries, the development and direction toward modernization after World War II has been broadly studied by social scientists. The characteristics of social change in development are fundamental to the roots of modern social science. The difference between traditional and modern society can be viewed in terms of structural features by the implication that both tradition and modernity are seen as powers that encourage the growth of economic and social forces. Most of society in rural areas lived in local agrarian communities under the legitimatization of traditional ideology. On this point Beck draws an important distinction as follows:

The 'great tradition' were [was] associated with the rationalization of region, a process depending on existence of scriptural texts. Rationalization was not necessarily opposed to tradition; on the contrary, although there is little evidence of specific traditional forms well beyond anything found in purely oral culture (cited in Giddens 1994: 92).

After World War II, many Asian countries gained their independence from one or other colonizing nations. After gaining independence from the Dutch and Japanese during the war in 1945, Indonesia became a new modern culture controlled by Indonesians, which was designed to encompass the various cultures from different ethnic perspectives or ethnics. The 1945 Constitution postulated that the government should develop a national culture as an expression of the traditions of the different peoples in Indonesia. Recently, the development of Indonesian culture has given rise to dilemmas, as Virginia Matheson Hooker (1995) writes in *Culture and Society in New Order Indonesia*.

EMBODYING TRADITIONS IN MODERN SYMBOLS

Many traditions in Indonesia have survived into the present only because of outside help provided by the government. The state then proceeds to encode these now static traditions in several ways by embodying them in signs and symbols such as flags and national monuments, which help to evoke certain sentiments associated with the newly politicized traditions; by incorporating them into state-sponsored rituals, liturgies and national commemorations; or by translating them into official political discourses, slogans and grand narratives about the triumphant history of the state or its unique place in time (Hooker 1995).³ Architecture can express local sensibilities by rooting architectural expression in a local and regional context, because if architects use past legacies combined with new ideas they could express a continuation of the past and present.

In Indonesia, the majority of the urban middle-class in most big cities in Indonesia lives in today's western world in a modern and dynamic society. The Indonesian elite had long been inclined to adapt or adopt modern styles of buildings. On the other hand, the general opinion seems to be that old ways are 'unfashionable'. It is often considered embarrassing to be seen in the binary perspective, because a contradiction exists between tradition and modernity, so in that confrontation between them modern life is characterized as a permanent struggle.

³ For example, the modern state function by assembling under the jurisdiction and regional traditions. It tries to politicize or nationalize these by shaping to place the state at centre of these diffuse localities (Gross 1992:109).

THE CHANGING ATTITUDE OF MODERN SOCIETY

The development of industrialization and education in the big cities in Indonesia has caused migration that changed at a rapid pace. High levels of migration from small towns and villages towards big cities have resulted in new patterns of settlement among the people who previously lived in the villages, where the settlements were built according to tradition. In the cities the price of land is very high and therefore the design of houses is mainly based on function and economy which tend to ignore the cultural and climate conditions. Such global changes in society have resulted in an immense increase in the dynamic of change and have influenced the political focus towards the built environment, in conditions of inadequate resource bases, low per-capita income and high rates of population growth.

As a result of the gradual process of deterioration and urban decay, they have destroyed the historic and traditional cultural structure in the change to modern values by importing the Western model as an expression of progress. Weber regarded that "Worldwide expansion of Western technology, economical development and the worldwide triumph of science... had originated in the West" (cited in Lowenthal 1984:4). From Lowenthal's point of view the destruction of the historic and traditional cultural structure was not merely due to the dynamism of the West but the result of accelerated industrialization and other development (1984:8).

It has been said that vernacular buildings do not survive mainly because it is impossible to accommodate the rapidly changing structure of family life (Guvenc 1990:291). According to this argument any group of people will gradually be transformed in their society by the adoption of new patterns of life. The architects' role cannot prevent them from this change. Kluckkhohn and Stodtbeck (1961) provide an in-depth perspective of these two opposing cultural views by identifying the link between so called 'modern society' and 'traditional society'. The vernacular tradition represents an overall integrity of rural or more specifically agrarian culture. The relationship between 'traditional society' and the environments is an inter-dependent one in which people see themselves as a part of their environment and their purpose is to survive with nature rather than controlling it. Vernacular buildings were built in respect of nature (Kluckkhohn and Stodtbeck 1961, cited in Guvens 1990:293). In contrast, modern society can be viewed as an urban culture which controls nature and see nature as a resource to be exploited, so that

“...civilization (is seen as) the ultimate of mastery man over nature” (Kluckhohn and Stodtbeck 1961, cited in Guvens 1990:293).

Cities in Indonesia, particularly large ones, have become conscious of imitating Westernization. Rich people who want to increase their social status build themselves modern houses which symbolizes Westernization, mainly in the façade and front garden of the building. A new wave of culture is emerging in which architects have no part in designing the building. Rather, the client uses architects as draftsmen and pays them for their work in exactly the same way as he would with a mason. He retains control of the decision-making and designing, which corresponds to his life style.

Nowadays a large proportion of building materials are made in factories in the form of ready made component. The builders who work with prefabricated components of buildings do not have responsibility for the appearance of the building because they do not create or design any part of it. The erection of a building is being changed into a process of assembling ready made parts, are delivered and made ready for positioning on the site in a relatively short period. Therefore, it is quicker and easier to handle with modern equipment. It was different with from builders of vernacular houses, they were responsible directly for the appearance because they have created and designed all of their components. So, it can be concluded that vernacular architecture is the creation of local people as architects, craftsmen and builders from generation to generation. The movement of architecture from handicraft to prefabrication causes the loss of part of the culture.

Particularly in the last two decades, before the economic crisis in Far-Eastern countries, the economic development of Indonesia has been very fast and has caused the rapid growth of big cities. These conditions have brought fundamental changes in many aspects, not only to the changes with the time spectrum of its development, but also the cities spatially and architecturally begin to reflect the contribution to the development of the society.

Recently, with regard to the development of cities in Indonesia, it has been noted that consumer culture has been a powerful influence, and the urban environment has suffered as a result. The visual attributes of popular modern western models, such as commercial business areas has become

city centers, with multi-storey buildings supported by modern technology and modern houses became the inspiration of imported cultures.

There are many positive impacts of the prefabrication of building components, for example the production is more accurate and the process is quicker. The appearance of architecture will move from local to international, especially in cities where the economy is more developed. The globalization era will open communication and information channels, causing architectural influences to travel from country to country more easily.

Indonesian architecture cannot absorb all this science and technology without losing its identity. If this is to be avoided, steps must be taken to record old buildings and vernacular architecture in every region which has historic value and cultural sense. This is the reason why the relationship between conservation and development in Third World countries is usually unbalanced and the rate of development is very high, with little attention given to conservation. By conservation the spirit of the place can become the identity of the region.

CONCLUSION

Refunctioning a sense of the past in the present must not merely represent something old or ancient but carry a certain amount of spiritual and moral prestige. To realize such continuity, something different from the simple preservation of the past in the present must be undertaken. Tradition, it might be said, is an orientation to the past which has heavily influenced and constructed the present. Yet clearly, in a certain sense, tradition is also about the future. Lash explains that: "A repetition in a method is a practice that needs to be examined, and reaches out to return the future to the past and also to reconstruct the future" (cited in Giddens 1994:62). This means that traditions can also survive into the present, not because of the belief that some aspects of past behavior and ritual are worth preserving, but due to the calculated support strategies coming from outside agencies, such as the state or market-place. In other words, this process represents a re-functioning of tradition. In this sense, society endorses and promotes certain elements of folklore and customs since they can be useful in the pursuit of political and economic goals.

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