

# THE INTEGRATION OF VERNACULAR VALUES INTO THE EDUCATIONAL FRAMEWORK OF CONTEMPORARY DESIGN

**Krisprantono**

Lecturer and Seseacher at School of Architecture, Soegijapranata Catholic University, Semarang

## ABSTRACT

The knowledge that informed early higher education in Indonesia was formulated during the turn of the century, while the Dutch colonialists still controlled Indonesia. The beginning of architectural education was much influenced by a Euro-centric orientation and only partially marked by pre-colonial intellectual traditions. Of course it is true that the way of thinking of early Indonesian scholars has been greatly influenced by western development but in the late 20th century, now is the time to achieve a more balanced perspective of our cultural heritage. Though the academic tradition of architectural education originated from Europe and became established mainly through colonisation, which in turn has led to the present system of schooling.

**Keywords:** vernacular, architecture, education.

## ABSTRAK

*Ilmu pengetahuan yang berkembang pada masa pertama kali pendidikan tinggi di Indonesia terbentuk pada permulaan awal ke-20, dimana pada masa itu Indonesia masih di bawah penjajahan Belanda. Pada masa awalnya pendidikan arsitektur di Indonesia berorientasi pada sistem pendidikan arsitektur di Eropa karena para pendidik pada masa itu mempunyai latar belakang tradisi Eropa. Tentu saja bahwa cara berfikir para arsitek generasi pertama Indonesia sangat dipengaruhi perkembangan arsitektur Barat, tetapi pada akhir abad ke-20 sudah saatnya untuk mencari sesuatu perspektif yang seimbang dengan peninggalan budaya kita. Walaupun tradisi pendidikan arsitektur berasal dari Eropa dan berkembang ke Indonesia lewat penjajahan Belanda tetapi harus kita sesuaikan dengan perkembangan masa kini.*

**Kata kunci:** vernakular, arsitektur, pendidikan.

## INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, architecture and planning have served as symbols of the state. By viewing architecture and city planning in the light of historical evolution, we can see that political and economic change influences cultural development. Particularly in developing countries where the pressure of modern industry and high technology has destroyed the traditional equilibrium, introducing cultural identity through architecture is in vogue.

Beliefs and religions held that humans needed nature and so respected it. All of these meanings have today been replaced by the view of nature as a commodity to be exploited. Modernization, which brought in foreign values has changed society's point of view towards a more universal culture. Regional culture has been transformed into a worldwide influence through fast information exchange. The develop-

ment of technology and education have changed the mechanisms that express the culture of society, as well as altering architecture as a means of cultural expression. Therefore we argue that the process of modernisation and globalization means leaving tradition behind along with a parallel effect that has brought major and radical changes in the built environment.

The influence of colonial power on architectural development did not end with the end of colonialism, but rather colonial cultural transmission through architecture and planning carried on into the subsequent political stages of the post - independence era. Cultural transformation, as imposed by the Dutch and other western European and American cultures, resulted in the adaptation of metropolitan architecture and urbanism to the new mixed cultural environment, new socio - economic conditions and industrial development. We demonstrated how colonial architecture is just

part of the heritage along with externally imposed political notions of the new nationalism created radical cultural transformations.

### DEFINITION OF ARCHITECTURE

Various definitions of the derivation of the 'architecture' issue from Western sources are quoted to give the activity description as shown below:

- "The very root of the word architecture - 'archi', the first or principal and 'techne', **art or craft** connotes its early and central place among man's **civilizing activities**" (Macmillan Encyclopedia of Architects, Adolf K Placzek, 1982).
- "The art and science of designing and superintending the erection of building and similar structure and the other definition **a style of building**" (Collins Dictionary, Patric Hank, 1986).
- "Architecture comprehends the design, construction and decoration of all buildings with the requirements of convenience, strength and beauty. It is therefore both a **science and fine art**" (Dictionary of Architecture, Architectural Publication Society 1853 - 1883).

In a broader sense Ching explains that architecture is generally conceived - designed - and realized - built - in response to an existing set of conditions which may be purely functional in nature, or they may also reflect in varying degrees the social, political and economic climate. From these definitions of the term 'architecture', it could be argued that the main attribute of architecture is the synthesis it provides for 'science', 'art' and 'technology' in relation to the social scene and the environment. In other words, architecture is a solution for solving problems of a set of conditions that are based on science, art and technology. Therefore the act of architecture is a 'problem solving' and 'design process' (Ching 1996). Design is the achievement of creativity of logic in adapting natural creations to certain values. Design also affects everyone at all times in both their daily lives and their business affairs. Design implementation is thus a synthesis connection between the creative development of vernacular forms and the adaptation of contemporary conditions and requirements within the context

of technology, the economy and ecological issues. Moreover, architectural designs express the identification of cultural heritage, in this case vernacular architecture that also expresses the symbolic value of a particular place.

With the benefit of western knowledge, technology and the Enlightenment or the new syntheses for contemporary architecture that are able to be responsive to culture, nature and climate and may provide inspiration for a new architectural language. The result would be a creative transformation of vernacular imagery in contemporary built forms that contain within them elements of culture, aesthetics, technology and environment from the past. This architectural language would not only localise art forms and aesthetics but would also be rooted in the past and help to articulate the present for our fast moving society. The language would also be an integral parts of the manifestation a society's cultural expression. The crisis of architectural identity faced in urban areas would be met by the choice of this new architectural vocabulary.

### VERNACULAR PRINCIPLES AS TOOLS OF DESIGN

In the case of Javanese vernacular houses, the belief system, socio - cultural sense, human proportion and basic climatic conditions of the area affects the form of vernacular buildings. The arrangement of settlements exhibited certain values of orientation and hierarchy of space. The plan of the houses was such as to differentiate space, in that there were separate areas for public, private, sacred and service use. The principles that contemporary architecture can expect to learn from vernacular values can be generalized in terms of **open to nature, harmony with surroundings and humanness of scale**.

There are two main approaches to vernacular concepts; **the theoretical** and **the practical**. The 'theoretical concept' relates to belief, religion and ritual, and these are expressed in symbols, planning, spatial arrangement and orientation. The 'practical concept' relates to the natural environment, climate, social and human considerations and these are expressed in shape, scale, and space organisation, materials used, technology and construction. All these effects of interaction within **the vernacular paradigm** and **architectural discourse** result in temptations and

challenges since the new tradition of society in urban areas holds a different point of view compared with traditional society in rural areas. The belief system, way of life, technology and materials are all specific to particular areas.

### **THE WORK OF REGIONALIST ARCHITECT**

The following design philosophy illustrations deal with architecture especially in Third World countries as cultural productions today, in the sense of architecture thought to be responsible for what social, cultural and environmental needs. The work of the architect whose emphasis is concentrated on the historical and spatial context, is based on understanding the materials, techniques and forces which constantly shape an environment and its characteristic authenticity and individuality fitting with the social and cultural situation of the place. In this respect the work Geoffrey Bawa the regionalist architect Srilangka became relevant.

Architectural work is a product of social, economical and cultural aspects. These aspects are vital and active in giving human environments their fundamental and integral characteristics and links of continuous existence that distinguishes one place from another. Bawa's architectural conception is based on the context of this specific cultural history and natural landscape of the place in the tropical environment of an architectural context.

The objective of Geoffrey Bawa's proposed scheme is to respond to socio-cultural needs by proposing an appropriate physical environment and architectural expression, a continuing from the past through reading its values and morals, and to stimulate the present and future. Most of his buildings are strongly influenced by the character of a climate and its vegetation. Indeed, Bawa considers those elements such as the angle of the sunrays, air movement and rain to control the climate within buildings. In architectural form, the expectation is that different elements make up a building. Vertical and horizontal surface will express its character.

Bawa transposes these concerns through architectural elements such as roof, wall and ventilation, opening to landscape surrounding, inner courtyard, terrace and verandah, and local material and technology. In a tropical climate people need a habitation that provides protection

from both the sun and rain and also provides ventilation. The architectural elements are strongly related to these aspects of climate, therefore light and shade are important in modifying form in Bawa's work. Ventilation is usually accomplished in tropical climates through architecture that allows a maximum breeze during the day

### **DEVELOPING CONTEMPORARY DESIGN IN AN EDUCATIONAL SETTING**

From the evidence presented above, it is clear that vernacular buildings have not been built by architects but by society, with its relationship with the natural environment in mind, over generations. We are also able to be the witnesses of the gradual change of vernacular buildings in the quest to modernise and grow away from old-fashioned society. Indonesia also imported new Western technology in the form of contemporary designs that in the context of our culture and climate are inappropriate. In architecture, the vastly increased productive capacity of mechanised mass production, associated with this new technology, changed the dimensions of the environment of buildings. As a consequence, architectural design has come to accept out of date modern technology as being the dominant building strategy.

Vernacular buildings provide solutions in a great variety of designs related to the conditions where people live, as well as the local culture and symbolic interpretation of these conditions and their definition of comfort. The designs of vernacular buildings are not usually individual solutions but group or social solutions or responses to the characteristics of their climate, environment and culture.

By studying vernacular building we can understand past generations and their attitude towards nature and how it has affected our social culture. The advantage in studying vernacular buildings is that we can gain an insight into aesthetics, anthropology, belief systems, appropriate technology and the relationship between humans and nature that can be beneficial for judging the direction of development, in terms of the influence of professional and Western industrial know - how in developing countries. This section attempts to discuss possible attitudes toward contemporary design policies and practices that take account of vernacular concepts. Various examples of

vernacular phenomena such as building elements, settlement planning, orientation, climate control etc, that in some cases have already appeared as architectural expressions will be discussed and compared with contemporary ones, which may help to inform the future directions of contemporary design. The following part of the discussion will explore more deeply the contrast in the design criteria and the background concepts of both terms; 'vernacular' and 'modern architecture'

## CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this thesis, therefore, is that there is a need to create and convey a new and more enlightened process of design that includes historical features, which searches for cultural roots and sociological perspectives, and develops a common vocabulary of architectural concepts that can integrate theory and practice in design, which makes the best use of both traditional and local technology, as well as modern technology. Only then will the benefits of modern building techniques be integrated with vernacular designs in such a way as to preserve the cultural identity of indigenous people such as those found in Indonesia. What is needed in architectural education today is a deeper understanding of the process of change and continuity, a renewable view of the past values to provide for future perspectives.

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